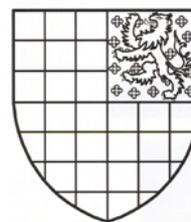


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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

Of the **Meeting of Lewes Town Council**,

held on **Thursday 30th July 2015**, in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall**, Lewes at **7:30pm**.

NB if a record of voting was requested, this is shown in a table appended to these Minutes.

PRESENT Councillors F Addecott; A Ashby; A Barker; Dr A Bolt; R Burrows; S Catlin (Wischhusen); M Chartier; D Cooper; W Elliott; I Makepeace (*Deputy Mayor*); Dr G Mayhew; M Milner; R Murray; S Murray (*Mayor*); O'Keeffe; T Rowell; E Watts.

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk*); Mrs F Garth (*Civic Officer & Asst Town Clerk*); Mrs E Tingley (*Committee Administrator*)

Observing: Ms V McLachlan (*Finance Administration Officer*); B Courage (*Town Ranger*)

FC2015/33 QUESTION TIME: There were none. There was 1 member of the public present.

FC2015/34 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS: There were none.

FC2015/35 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Apologies had been received from Cllr J Lamb who had a family bereavement. Condolences were offered and it was **resolved that:**
FC2015/35.1 Reasons submitted for absence from this meeting are accepted.

FC2015/36 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The Mayor informed Council of a recent conversation with Matthew Moulding, Co-ordinator of the Helping Arms Eco Project. This cooperative group had received a grant from the Council for a project to help grow their own fresh fruit and vegetables on land off Cockshut Lane. The project reported that a first crop was imminent, and that there was an anticipated surplus of produce, which was to be donated to Lewes foodbanks. The group had acquired several fruit trees that were to be planted shortly. Mr Moulding wished to pass-on the Group's thanks to Councillors for their invaluable support, and to illustrate the good use to which the money had been put.

The Mayor thanked all Councillors who had attended the dedication earlier that day of a stone tablet commemorating 2nd Lt. Sidney Clayton Woodroffe VC; on the 100th anniversary of his brave but fatal action in battle at Hooze, Belgium, during the First World War. Thanks were recorded to the Mayor and all staff of the Town; District and County Councils who had organized and assisted this very moving event, which was part of a national initiative for local commemoration of recipients of the Victoria Cross.

It was noted that the following week – Thursday 6th August, was Hiroshima day, which would mark the 70th anniversary of the dropping of the first atomic bomb.

A moment's silence was observed.

FC2015/37 MINUTES: Some Councillors considered that comments made during debate on the matter of the Town Hall fire alarm system should have been detailed, and that the tone of the minutes did not reflect the intensity of feelings expressed. It was also suggested that the resolution did not accurately record the decision taken. After lengthy discussion and contributions from several members a vote was called, and **it was resolved that:**
FC2015/37.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 18th June 2015 are received and signed as an accurate record.

FC2015/38 INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES of COUNCILLORS 2015/16:

A report (FC007/15) was considered, regarding changes to allotted individual duties. An

Continues...

error in the text of the report was identified and clarified. Duties had been allocated to individual Members at the Annual Meeting on 21st May 2015. Acknowledging that there had been only a short period since election of the new administration in which newly-elected councilors could assess their position, minor amendments had subsequently been approved by Council on 18th June 2015. Since then, further amendments had been submitted. The effects of these were shown on an appended table (*copy in the minute book*). There was debate regarding the established size and composition of the Personnel Panel, during which it was noted that those Councillors who did not serve on the Panel were reserved as an appeals body. Also; whilst not technically relevant to a parish council, it was observed that all five current appointees were members of a political party. Consequently; amendments proposed re-establishment of the original six-Member limit, and appointment of a sixth Councillor who was not a member of a political party (*a recorded vote was requested on these proposals, details of which are appended to these minutes*). Following a discussion **it was resolved that:**

FC2015/38.1 The individual responsibilities of Members for the remainder of the 2015/16 municipal year shall be amended as:

Audit Panel – Cllr Cooper’s resignation from this appointment is noted.

Audit Panel – Cllr Lamb is appointed.

Finance Working Party – Cllr Lamb’s resignation from this appointment is noted.

Finance Working Party – Cllr Cooper is appointed; and

FC2015/38.2 The Personnel Panel shall be limited to six Members of the Council;

FC2015/38.3 Cllr Dr. Mayhew is appointed to the Personnel Panel.

FC2015/39

WORKING PARTIES AND OUTSIDE BODIES:

Members were reminded that anyone who may have attended a meeting of any recognized outside body which has covered issues that deserve attention by the Council, should ensure that TC is aware of this before the Council’s next meeting, and preferably before the agenda deadline. Reports on all activities of the organization are not expected.

a] *Personnel Panel 15th July 2015:* The minutes of this meeting were presented (*copy in minute book*). The Panel had been asked to consider the matter of the Living Wage, and had perused working notes on the current relative pay-scales of Council staff on the national pay spine; the detail of the national job-evaluation scheme that gave rise to current grading; immediate financial effects of implementing the Living Wage (LW) as a minimum for staff; organizations receiving Council grants in the past two years, and a legal opinion on the matter of third party contractors/suppliers

It was shown that the immediate cost of raising three affected posts to the current Living Wage (£7.85) would entail an aggregate cost that was affordable and caused no concern, although it represented a notable individual increase in percentage terms. Other ramifications were more complex. Increasing pay for these posts would bring them very close to a group of others currently graded to recognize greater complexity of roles. The Living Wage Foundation had increased the LW each year since 2012 between 2.61% and 3.47%, set against a pay freeze for local government across the same period. The Chancellor had recently announced restriction of local government rises to 1% until 2019. Such differential rates of increase in the future could rapidly “close the gap” between roles evaluated as more demanding in many areas. Further work was needed to find a mechanism to re-establish differentials and to recognize the disconnected inflationary factors. As a first step, it was considered appropriate to commission a new independent job-evaluation exercise.

Comprehensive advice on the ability of Council to influence third party suppliers/contractors had been provided by the legal advisor to the Sussex Association of Local Councils. This concluded that it was not open to the Council to impose wages clauses on such third parties but it was not prevented from encouraging them to adopt

the Living Wage. Some panellists believed that there were several Councils currently both paying their own staff the LW and requiring third-parties to do likewise. No details were immediately available, and further research was needed to establish the facts and identify any potential for the Council to achieve this aspiration.

Members recognized that the philosophy of the grant scheme, in fostering community projects and benefits, could be compromised if burdens were imposed upon small organizations. Most groups and organizations given financial grants in the past did not have employees. It was considered helpful to gather more information to identify those bodies who may employ paid staff, and agreed that simple questions added to the application form could achieve this straightforwardly and allow proper evaluation in the future. Consequently **it was resolved that:**

FC2015/39.1 The Minutes of the Meeting of the Personnel Panel on 15th July 2015 (*copy in minute book*) are noted.

FC2015/39.2 The recommendations of the Personnel Panel of 15th July 2015 described in minute PersPan2015/08 (*copy in minute book*) are agreed, as:

- 1 Lewes Town Council will apply the current Living Wage of £7.85 per hour, as a minimum, to all employees.
- 2 The Panel will meet again to consider issues outstanding regarding third-parties; the re-establishment of appropriate pay differentials, and a mechanism to recognize and moderate disconnected inflationary factors.
- 3 Questions will be added to the Council's financial grant application form to elicit information on those employing staff.

b] *Audit Panel 16th July 2015:* The minutes of this meeting were presented (*copy in minute book*). The Panel had considered the Council's financial status and management, including detailed information following the end of the first quarter of the financial year 2015/16. There had been some discussion on salient points of detail, and TC had responded with reference to the identified sources. Apparent variations were related to known events, such as specific payments in respect of works and purchases; stock-taking adjustments; errors in posting (*eg* to incorrect accounts) which had since been corrected, or perceived 'overspend' which would be attributable to Reserves when final accounts are prepared at year-end. There were no items of concern.

An operating costs trend analysis showed comparisons in operating costs service-by-service back to the 2003/04 year. Figures showed the nett cost of each service, and analysis as a percentage of Precept and of total costs, and indicated trends in Reserve and General Fund balances *etc.*

The file of periodic bank reconciliations was received for validation of the scrutiny already conducted, as required by the prevailing audit & governance regime. The Chairman had appended his signature to verify this in each instance. The nominal ledger report produced from the Council's *SAGE* accounting system records was similarly introduced (as the source document reconciled to the budget monitoring report during the meeting) and was verified in the same way. Consequently **it was resolved that:**

FC2015/39.3 The Minutes of the Audit & Governance Panel on 16th July 2015 (*copy in minute book*) are noted.

c] *Transport/traffic Working Party 21st July 2015:* Councillors considered the minutes of this meeting (*copy in minute book*). The meeting had welcomed representatives of local bus operating companies Compass Travel; Community Transport in the Lewes Area (CTLA); and Brighton & Hove Buses. There was a brief review of the background to the Council's current support for particular CTLA services (route 132), and passenger information that showed increase in demand since this began. CTLA were preparing a full report which should be available for presentation to Council in September.

Compass Travel's local services were discussed and it was noted that they currently ran with no subsidies except in respect of one little-used route in Winterbourne. The

company had prepared some indicative timetables for reinstated services on route 127 (Landport; Malling) and 128/129 (Nevill; Winterbourne; Spences Lane) which they could introduce from September at an annual cost of £10,000. These would restore many 'pre-cut' levels of service accessibility and frequency, with key half-hourly services at peak times, and improved interconnection with other services. This could be introduced as a pilot scheme, and Compass would provide monthly loading statistics.

All three operators were asked about routes to Newhaven, in the context of access to the new Technical University and the extended job market, and it was noted that the Parishes of the Lower Ouse (POLO) group had recently posed similar questions. Any desire by nearby parishes in other directions to work collaboratively was, as yet, undefined. These matters were to be addressed when the issue was considered by the Lewes District Association of Local Councils.

The meeting moved on to discuss Safety issues near South Malling School. The background to the Council's original intention to provide pedestrian crossings in Church Lane, Malling, was rehearsed. The sites had been evaluated by East Sussex County Council (ESCC) and featured on their listing of sites where improvements were indicated. The Town Council had agreed to finance two crossings in Church Lane, and ESCC had conducted all necessary design and consultation work. One had been installed in 2013 but the second had been deferred upon the request of South Malling Primary School, who feared the effect on their eligibility for a school crossing patrol officer. This situation had since changed, and the school would now welcome reinstatement of the project. The Council held a financial reserve for this although it was not known how the intervening time might affect the cost and feasibility of the project, as there had been some works in the vicinity in recent months, to accommodate the Lewes-Ringmer cycle route. There had been a general discussion regarding the current perceptions of demand for crossings at other locations in town, and a suggestion that the council might compile its own list of sites. Meanwhile, it was agreed to recommend that the Church Lane, Malling, crossing project be revisited – subject to any revised costs and potential for support through ESCC's 'Community Match' programme.

The working party considered the history of the 'Living Cliffe – shared space' project, and issues of concern that had arisen since its completion. These were in the areas of: loading/unloading restrictions being flouted; regulation of moving traffic, access and "rat-running"; confusion caused by allowance of two-way use by cyclists, and signage perceived to be inadequate. Individuals and groups within the local community had raised concerns and conducted independent surveys of traffic issues. Recently, these concerns had escalated and local resentment was becoming more intense. ESCC and Sussex Police had consistently responded to such concerns by citing the technical position regarding signage and responsibilities for oversight and enforcement.

Members accepted that the signage was appropriate to the Conservation Area and compliant with highway legislation, but considered that it was perhaps not well-positioned, and that the general situation could be improved by occasional focus of attention from Police officers/PSCO's and parking officers. It was agreed that approaches should be made along those lines, to ESCC and Sussex Police.

There followed a discussion and several questions from Members. It was suggested that there should be detailed financial performance figures available before deciding on financial support for Compass Travel. It was explained that the members of the working party had scrutinized timetables showing improved services on the routes concerned, and consequently recommended that the sum requested was, in their opinion, good value for the benefits to be gained. The financial efficiency of the operator was not at issue, and the Council did not have the overall industry knowledge that might allow meaningful insight. Two Members had experience of weekend community bus operation and felt confident that the proposals represented "extremely good value". Comparisons were not available, nor appropriate, as this was not a competitive tender for services; but

simply a negotiated improvement by the existing provider, who was contracted to East Sussex County Council. Compass had offered to accept the support in two equal tranches, and to provide monthly passenger loading data on which to base a review, and Members preferred to agree a split, allowing a review in March 2016.

Following this **it was resolved that:**

FC2015/39.4 Lewes Town Council agrees the recommendations of the Transport Working party arising from its meeting on 21st July 2015 as:

- 1 £10,000 is agreed to support improved services to be provided for one year from September 2015 by Compass Travel, on routes 127; 128; 129 as a one-year pilot scheme. This sum to be paid as £5,000 initially, with £5,000 in March 2016 following review of loading and performance figures to be provided by Compass.
- 2 The deferred (from 2013) project to install a pedestrian crossing in Church Lane, Malling, and adjacent South Malling Primary School shall be restarted – subject to revised costs and potential for ESCC's 'Community Match' support.

d] *Youth Focus for Lewes:* Cllr Roger Murray presented a review of his work to create a local youth forum run by young people themselves. Working with youth service officers; fellow councillors and others, a body had been formed which was open to membership for young people from across the town and offered them a voice in developments within the community. A meeting venue was agreed, at Landport Youth Centre; a suitable bank account was now open and a grant of £1,500 already secured and a youth worker appointed. Cllrs Murray; Catlin; Chartier and O'Keeffe, and all other initiators of this project were thanked for their community-spirited efforts and **it was resolved that:**

FC2015/39.5 The development of Youth Focus for Lewes is noted.

e] *Uckfield Line Reinstatement Group (ULREG):* Cllr Catlin, the Council's representative on this forum, related salient points from a recent meeting. It was confirmed that the Government Department for Transport (DfT) was to fund the next feasibility study into the reinstatement of a Lewes-Uckfield rail link, as an adjunct to investigations into Brighton Main Line alternatives/improvements. The structure of the rail franchise had altered, and Southern Rail were now paid an operating fee, with fare revenues returned direct to DfT. Members raised one or two questions, and sought clarification on the current status of proposals known as 'BML2'. It was understood that a Lewes-Uckfield link was seen as a first step in a range of incremental improvements to regional services. Subsequently; **it was resolved that:**

FC2015/39.6 The oral report on activity of the Uckfield Line Reinstatement Group (ULREG) of parishes is noted.

FC2015/40 ALLOTMENTS SERVICE:

Council considered a motion (*NOM010/2015 – copy in Minute book*) proposing the formation of a Working Party to review aspects of the Council's Allotments service. The management and provision of allotments at seven sites within the Town was said to be an important service highly valued by many members of the community.

It was submitted that some issues for consideration were:

- The rules of tenancy.
- The procedure for serving notice
- Maintenance and use of plots
- The annual rent
- The current date for renewal

It was resolved that:

FC2015/40.1 A Working Party is set up to review the Allotments service provided by the Council; comprising Cllrs Ashby; Barker; Catlin; Makepeace; Murray (S), and O'Keeffe.

FC2015/41 AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDERS:

A motion (*NOM011/2015 – copy in minute book*) proposing an amendment to standing order 17d) was withdrawn.

FC2015/42 REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS:

A motion was tabled (*NOM012/2015 – copy in minute book*) proposing that the Council establish a working party to review Standing Orders. During presentation of this proposal it became evident that there had been a misunderstanding as to how recently a review had been carried-out. The current framework had been comprehensively updated in April 2015, and this was contained in the Member's Handbook distributed to all Councillors. Further to a general discussion on the topic, and some clarification by TC, the motion was withdrawn.

FC2015/43 UPDATE ON MATTERS IN PROGRESS:

- a) *South Downs National Park Authority* – elections for two representatives from East Sussex parishes within the Park had been held on 10th July, and the incumbent Councillors had been re-elected. The Town Council's nominee had attracted votes, but insufficient to secure a seat.
- b) *Lewes Athletics Track resurfacing* - Lewes Athletics Club had advised they were now able to commence the planned repairs, having secured funding from a variety of sources including the £10,000 agreed by the Town Council. Works were expected to commence in August.
- c) *Town Hall repairs* - works had commenced, and were progressing according to schedule. The office refurbishment was nearing completion.
- d) *"Our Pictures" project* – The Heritage Lottery Fund had responded, but indicated a number of areas which they considered important omissions. Dr Turner, who had initiated the project, was working towards a revised submission to take account of these points.
- e) *Training* – TC outlined the training provided for the sector, and explained that the most 'standard' seminars were not an effective mechanism for Lewes members. To address this, it had been found more practical to arrange a day of tailored seminars at the Town Hall. In 2011 this had been held on a Saturday between 10:30am and 3:30pm, and had been well-received. It was his intention to arrange a similar day once specialists were available in early Autumn.
- f) *Town Hall fire alarm system* – As discussed earlier in the meeting, three independent inspections had recently been carried out to specify a replacement system. Reports and estimates were awaited, and a report would be brought to Council in due course; hopefully to the next meeting.
- g) *Devolution of land from Lewes District Council* – The District Council had advised that the protracted delay in concluding the ownership transfers of Malling Recreation Ground and their share in Landport Bottom was due to a procedural oversight on their part. A further signed authority was required from the Leader of the Council before the transfers could be finalized. This was understood to be in-hand.

FC2015/44 NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT:

- a) The next Members' Surgery was scheduled for Tuesday 4th August between 10:00 and 12:00. Cllrs Elliott and O'Keeffe would attend.
- b) The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group would next meet on 11th August at 7pm. It was noted that further public engagement events were scheduled for 8th & 9th October and 19th & 20th November
- c) The Environment (energy efficiency of buildings) Working Party would meet on Weds 12th August, and Members agreed an earlier-than planned start time of 6:00pm, at the request of Cllr O'Keeffe.
- d) The next Planning Committee meeting was scheduled for 18th August, but it became

apparent that almost all participants would be unavailable. TC would check practical aspects and, if possible, re-schedule for 25th August at 7:00pm and publicize the change.

e) The next meeting of Council would be on Thursday 27th August – 7:30pm – giving a deadline for agenda items to be submitted to TC of noon on Monday 17th August.

f) The next deadline for grant applications was Fri 18th September – with the assessment Panel meeting on Wed 30th Sept and its recommendations being considered by Council on 1st October.

g) The South Downs National Park Authority would hold a workshop for parishes from East Sussex on Tuesday 22nd September at Southease Youth Hostel – further details to be advised.

h) Dates would be advised for meetings of the Commemorations Working Party (*iro* scheduled events) and a further meeting of the Personnel Panel (*iro* outstanding issues regarding the Living Wage)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

Lewes District Council proposals for housing development in Lewes – Several Members expressed extreme disquiet at the manner in which Lewes District Council (LDC) had introduced consultation on proposals for housing developments in Lewes, at a meeting the day before which had been inadequately publicized. No prior publicity was known, and although it had been claimed that a leaflet-drop had been conducted, no Town Councillor had received anything. It was reported that details of the meeting had only been released on the District Council’s website 24hrs earlier, and the event itself had been poorly-organized with conflicting information given by LDC staff; consultants’ representatives, and others. Members agreed that the Mayor and Town Clerk should draft a letter to the Leader of LDC to express the Council’s strong feelings on this matter and demand that full consultation be properly undertaken. Copies should be sent to the press.

There being no further business the Mayor closed the meeting and invited all present to join her for refreshments in the Mayor’s Parlour.

The meeting ended at 9:35pm

Signed:

Date:

