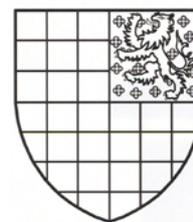


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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

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

held on **Thursday 22nd February 2018**, in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lewes** at **7:30pm**.

PRESENT Councillors A Ashby; J Baah (*Deputy Mayor*); R Burrows; S Catlin (*Wischhusen*); M Chartier (*Mayor*); W Elliott; H Jones; J Lamb; M Milner R Murray; S Murray; R O’Keeffe; C Renton and A Rowell.

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk*); Mrs F Garth (*Civic Officer & Asst. Town Clerk*) and Mrs E Tingley (*Committee Admin.*); Mr I Linton (*Chairman; Lewes Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group*).

Observing: Ms V McLachlan (*Finance Officer*) and Mr B Courage (*Town Ranger*)

FC2017/93 **QUESTIONS:** There were five members of the public present. One question was submitted. The question, together with the answer given, is appended to these minutes.

FC2017/94 **DECLARATIONS of INTEREST:** Cllrs S Murray and R O’Keeffe both declared an interest *iro* item 6d on the agenda (*re: Grants Panel recommendations*) in that they were affiliated to applicant organisations. It was noted that these interests had been declared at the meeting of the Grants Panel. Cllrs M Chartier and R Murray also declared an interest *iro* item 6d on the agenda in that they were both affiliated to the Landport Youth Club.

FC2017/95 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Apologies had been received from Cllr A Barker who was on a training course, Cllr I Makepeace who was on holiday and Cllrs G Mayhew and E Watts who were unwell.

It was resolved that:

FC2017/95.1 The reasons submitted for absence from this meeting are noted.

FC2017/96 **MAYOR’s ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

The Mayor announced that the Annual Civic Awards ceremony would be held on 19th April 2018. The closing date for nominations had been extended to 28th February 2018.

FC2017/97 **MINUTES:**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th January 2018 were received, and

It was resolved that:

FC2017/97.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 18th January 2018 were received and signed as an accurate record.

FC2017/98 **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) Buildings Repairs Working Party 17th January 2018: Council considered the minutes of this meeting (*copy in minute book*):

The meeting had welcomed Grant Crossley, Project Manager for BLB Chartered Surveyors; Sandy Scott, of LA Architects, and James Porter of Delta Green Environmental Designs.

Energy Strategy – consultant’s report: Mr Porter had presented his energy assessment for the building and viability of various optional systems for power and heating. There were some options which had been discounted without detailed assessment as it was expected that these would be impractical on technical grounds, or would be disproportionately expensive, given the scope of the proposed refurbishment. A question arose as to the

relative effectiveness of some of the possibilities which had not been pursued, such as solar-thermal panels and electric immersion-heater combination systems to provide hot water with minimal fossil-fuel usage. Members were also interested in the practicalities and effectiveness of larger arrays of PV panels (to the maximum area possible), and the latest options to resell surplus power generated. Capital outlay was recognized as higher for such suggestions, but members were interested to see a wider range of comparison figures and relative costs. It was acknowledged that some systems could be introduced or augmented at a later date, provided adequate pre-installation modifications were made during the refurbishment (*eg* roof-strengthening for PV panel supports).

It was generally agreed that the mix of sustainable energy technologies could be usefully debated further, with the benefit of more data and cost estimates, and that the design should allow for flexibility in that regard. Consequently, it was resolved that the Working party would consider sustainable technologies in more detail at a later meeting, to be convened as soon as practical once more data was available.

Design proposals: Layout plans for the refurbishment had been displayed at the Centre since before Christmas, and comments invited. Mr Scott had received a number of suggestions regarding deployment of storage space in the revised floor plan. He had perused the comments sheets deposited and these had also informed his thoughts on possible solutions.

The users present sought assurances that facilities would be maintained for their groups, especially the Foodbank. The Chairman noted that it was hoped that existing users would see improved facilities and Centre usage generally expanded. Some groups sought more space, but it was acknowledged that the project was not for a new building but a refurbishment designed to modernize and increase flexibility, and this was unlikely to be possible. There followed a number of questions such as retention of a stage; bowls mat dimensions; alternative orientation of bowls mats allowed-for in a revised floorplan; toilet facilities potentially available to the general public out-of-hours. The architects had originally been provided with the results of a Malling Community Association/LTC survey which showed the relative ranking in importance of respondents' aspirations for the future Centre, and it was considered they had addressed these very well given the constraints of a refurbishment. A number of points were raised on ancillary matters such as local parking pressures, but no solutions were apparent and the meeting could not practically address these. Following the wide-ranging discussions, questions and answers, it had been resolved that (*BRepWP2017/24.2 refers*) the Working Party re-affirmed its decision that the design option labelled "Option C/Optimum" was their choice to proceed for implementation, and LA Architects had been asked to refine the details of this, so far as possible, in light of points raised at this meeting.

Community representatives offered their thanks, also reflected by all members of the Working Party, to the Town Ranger, Brian Courage, for his valued support and assistance with a number of practical problems in the building.

It was resolved that:

FC2017/98.1 The Minutes of the Buildings Repairs Working Party held on 17th January 2018 (*copy in minute book*) are noted; and Council supports the approach taken by the Working Party and its conclusions as described in those minutes.

b) Commemorations Working Party 30th January 2018: Council considered the Minutes of this meeting (*copy in minute book*):

The meeting had welcomed Ms Brigitte Lardinois and Dr Diana Wilkins, attending to introduce Members to the "Suffrage to Citizenship" initiative affiliated to the ongoing Reeves Photography Archive project; Ms Julie Van Ackeren, LRA Supervisor at Sussex Downs College, attending with a view to potential collaborations; and Phil Rose and Graham Festenstein, attending to report on the Lewes Light Festival (LLF).

Sussex Downs College – Ms Van Ackeren had explained the areas in which she could see potential for collaborations and a long-term working relationship with the Council, and

members were generally welcoming of these. It was suggested that she and her colleagues liaised with TC in the near future to define any specific prospects.

Lewes Light Festival 2017 – Mr Festenstein and Mr Rose had described the outcomes of the 2017 LLF which had seen a threefold increase in visitors compared with the previous event. Involved were more than 50 students from five institutions, including a primary school, and more than 100 local businesses were engaged in some way. There had been a marked increase in both direct and indirect support from within the lighting industry, and local engagement had extended much further than before with a wider age range among volunteer helpers. This had allowed young and older people to be paired as tour guides and an impressive number of young helpers from previous years' events had returned, even after having moved-on from full-time education. Young people had also been linked with industry professionals and the organizers would like to recognize the benefits of this concept in future, by issuing an "apprenticeship certificate" for inclusion in a student's personal portfolio.

In 2018 the theme of the LLF event was to be "*Lost...*" with reference to 'lost' roads/buildings/public houses/key businesses. Links to play-schemes at Landport and Malling were planned. It was noted that the event had been shortlisted for a lighting industry award, and that improved 'profile' meant that financial support needed may be less than anticipated, with a funding balance shifting to reduce dependence on elements such as LTC grant.

The 2018 event would run on 12th; 13th and 14th October and detailed planning would begin in earnest shortly. Members had indicated their support in-principle and looked forward to learning more in due course.

"Suffrage to Citizenship" initiative – Dr Wilkins and Ms Lardinois had outlined this initiative, which was part of the broader project "Lewes seen through a glass plate" based upon the Edward Reeves Archive. 2017 and earlier events had been very successful partnerships with the Town Council, and it was hoped that this newest project would similarly integrate with LTC's plans for commemoration. This project would focus upon the 1910-1920 period in the archive and hopefully inform a Lottery bid for work covering a wider period. A bid was already in preparation to The Women's Vote Centenary Grant Scheme – set up by the Government Equalities Office.

There would be an open exhibition on 13th December, and the team were promoting Lewes's Kate Fowler-Tutt for inclusion in a programme run by The Women's Local Government Society, who set out in March 2017 'to identify and celebrate the lives of 100 women and men who were active in the campaign for extending the vote to all women and who went on to use their extended rights of citizenship in a positive way in their local areas'. Ms Lardinois explained that they sought Council support when making various grant applications to third-party funds, to boost chances of success, and possible occasional use of rooms for training event volunteers and school parties. Working Party members had welcomed this partnership, agreeing to support the Equalities Office grant application and to assist the project where practical. It was suggested that there may be an opportunity for Archive project members to attend the annual International History Conference in Blois, Lewes's French twin town, where the 2019 theme was to be "Imagery". This attracted thousands of historians each year and was the largest event of its kind in France.

Commemorative Plaque – Royal Sussex Regimental Association: The stonemason proposed to visit the Town Hall to assess the fixing method most suitable. Once this was done it had been stated that the normal lead-time for production could be as long as eighteen weeks. This was acknowledged as unfortunate but unavoidable.

International Day of Peace 2018: there was a suggestion that there might be an opportunity for working with the Pestalozzi Village charity, which had been tentatively broached the previous year at a social event. Dr Mayhew and TC would pursue this. An approach would also be made to local schools, at a suitable point in the school year.

Other matters – Members were interested to consider a suggested performance by The Bard's Buskers to mark Shakespeare's birthday on 22nd April. It was noted that the fee for performing at All Saints would be only £200 and Members were happy to agree this, recognizing that prompt booking was needed.

Principal Councils were being asked to mark the 1918 Armistice and various opportunities would arise for the Town Council – it was proposed that a partnership with the Depot might be arranged in a similar way to recent Holocaust Memorial Day film screenings – perhaps utilizing both Depot and All Saints Centre. Members recognized that the November 1918 ceasefire agreement was actually a temporary measure, and was renewed on 13th December 1918; 16th January 1919, and 16th February 1919 before the eventual signing of the Treaty of Versailles on June 28th 1919 and its effective date of 10th January 1920. Suggestions for suitable, relatively low-key, acknowledgements to mark these milestones would be welcomed. One such included the ringing of the Market tower bell to mark a brief, informal, remembrance at the War memorial.

It was resolved that:

FC2017/98.2 The Minutes of the Commemorations Working Party held on 30th January 2018 (*copy in minute book*) are noted; and Council supports the approach taken by the Working Party and its conclusions as described in those minutes.

c) Communications Working Party 6th February 2018: Council considered the Minutes of this meeting (*copy in minute book*):

The meeting had welcomed Mr Simon Turner and Mr Neil Turner, of NTD Internet Solutions Ltd, attending to introduce the draft website (as work-in-progress) and seek feedback on structure and design. Their presentation showed the relative prominence of key elements and their relationship to other features, such as listings of committee papers accessible through both a “Committees” page or a calendar, and photographs and short biographies of Councillors accessible through a “Who’s who” or through committee lists or ward maps. The early pages were designed to introduce the Council and what it does (and does not) do. Members welcomed the overall style and fundamental structure of the site, and made contributions during the presentation to suggest alternative levels of prominence and relative importance of some aspects. Several pages were populated with blank text to show layout, which would be replaced with updated articles, and there was a need for more variety in photographs (a potential source of photographs was identified for investigation). Some items were discussed that represented content, rather than structure, and it was accepted that these would evolve once the Council took editorial control of its new site.

The new site would allow simultaneous posting of items to Facebook and Twitter, and there was discussion as to the most appropriate presentation of these. Mr Turner advised that the design being demonstrated had been optimized for presentation and would automatically reconfigure to adapt for viewing on different devices.

It was agreed that the amendments could be made quite quickly, and that the site could ‘go live’ by the 31st May; allowing time for LTC staff to revise content and take ownership of the site.

Social media training: It was suggested that Members might receive training in use of Social Media. It was contended that individual Members were able to freely use social media of their choice provided they followed the Council's Communications Policy and observed all applicable protocols and regulations, such as the Code of Conduct and Standing Orders. Staff would receive training as required for their roles, but member training in this area was relatively unhelpful. It was proposed that Member training in social media should be put to Council as a recommendation, but this was not supported by the majority of Members present. Members recognized that they could ‘re-Tweet’/re-post official Council output. Staff would be dedicated to this in due course, and the context would feature prominently in the imminent assessment of Council activities demanded by the General Data Protection Regulations.

It was suggested that inviting a young student to a future meeting may be helpful in advising how young people might be better engaged with the Council, and this was welcomed. Staff would approach local schools and Sussex Downs College accordingly.

Presentation of spending/budgets: There was general agreement that presentation of figures could be made more easily digestible by use of well-designed graphics. A case in point was a design presented by Stone Parish Council (Kent) on their website, which had won an award for its clarity. This was discussed at some length and acknowledged to be, in essence, a simple task to invite and assess potential contractors to produce artwork. Members agreed to research designs which they felt appropriate, to offer as examples when briefing designers who may wish to bid for the work. This was considered desirable, but was ultimately a matter for Council to decide.

Other forms of communication: The Newsletter was discussed, and it was noted that the new website would offer wide distribution of newsletter-style items, which may cause reconsideration of the need for printed Newsletters. It was recognized that many people did not engage with digital media, and Members saw a future for some printed versions. Historically, LTC had produced three editions each year in-house, in low numbers, for collection from a few key 'pick-up points' in the town. One edition – usually a greater number of pages, and containing annual report items – was professionally printed and directly distributed to all households. It was agreed that this edition would continue to serve a useful purpose, and it was noted that distribution should not use plastic packaging.

Communications Officer: It had been suggested that LTC might need a Communications Officer, but the majority agreed that this was not appropriate at present. This raised a discussion about the structure of the modern local Press, their general approach and treatment of press releases. TC suggested that it would be a simple matter for him to seek at each meeting a confirmation of those items that Council wished to publicize in a dedicated Press Release, and he would introduce this. Members were welcome to submit to TC or Asst. TC, draft copy for suggested articles at any time or to seek advice on material of their own.

It was resolved that:

FC2017/98.3 The Minutes of the Communications Working Party 6th February 2018 (*copy in minute book*) are noted; and Council supports the approach taken by the Working Party and its conclusions as described in those minutes.

d) Grants Panel 7th February 2018: Members considered report FC013/2017 (*copy in minute book*) containing recommendations for payments of grants for the fourth cycle (of four) for the year 2017/18 and **it was resolved that:**

FC2017/98.4 The grant payments recommended in report FC013/2017 (as shown in column **G** of the appended table) be approved.

e) Lewes Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group 13th February 2018: Mr Ian Linton, Chair of the LNPSG, gave an oral report. Mr Linton explained that good progress had been made on the NP in the last few weeks. The latest draft of the Plan had been received from FERIA (Consultants) and the Steering Group had been working on final editing of the Plan. Two studies had been received that had been awaited; the Low Cost Housing Study and the Flood Risk Assessment that had been carried out by FERIA on all of the sites. This had proved that all sites that had been selected so far were acceptable, although the SDNPA had asked that more work be carried out on what they classed as alternative sites that had not been selected for the Plan. Mr Linton had been carrying out research on housing costs and rental costs in the area, to refine context for the policies described in the plan. This research had been shown to the Steering Group at their meeting on 13th February, and he had met with SDNPA officers who had agreed with the findings except in some minor details. Mr Linton had also met with Friends of Lewes to discuss 'leftover' issues with the Plan. The final draft recommended for submission to the SDNPA for the last phases of scrutiny before a referendum should be

available to present to Council on 29th March 2018. Councillors recorded their thanks to Mr Linton and Cllr Susan Murray for their hard work in bringing the Plan to this stage over a four year period.

After a lengthy question and answer session it was agreed that once it was confirmed when the final draft of the Plan would be available, an informal meeting for Councillors would be convened to allow the maximum time for Members to familiarize themselves with it. Subsequently, **it was resolved that:**

FC2017/98.5 The oral report of the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was noted.

f) All Saints Steering Group 14th February 2018: Council considered the Minutes of this meeting (*copy in minute book*):

The meeting had been preceded by a site-visit to the ASC.

Film@AllSaints (F@AS): Performance statistics had been presented for the season from September 2017 to February 2018. This was the sixth season and analysis of the ‘performance’ of each film title was provided. Screenings had been reduced in frequency to allow for the presence in town of The Depot. Fifteen films had been shown over 16 screenings. The season to date had yielded an operating loss of £1,512 although over the previous five years the operation had achieved an overall surplus of £5,717. There had followed a discussion as to the best course of action, and it was understood that continuing losses could ultimately erode, cancel, or exceed the aggregate surplus. Two further films were already booked and publicized to be screened in early March, which were expected to be popular, but it was agreed that further film screenings should focus upon themed topics and run only two or three times per year. It was agreed that this would be recommended to Council. There was understood to be a growing national ‘underground’ following for films in 35mm format and the ASC could liaise with the British Film Institute (as it had done recently for the special 35mm presentation of *Dunkirk*), to capitalize on this and obtain skilled projectionists to operate the Council’s 35mm projector for special event weekends.

Demand: It was recognized that the demand for weekend availability of the Centre for uses which had been effectively blocked due to regular cinema screening had already picked-up and bookings were in place for choirs; opera; live music events and solo performers; weekend use by Musicians of All Saints; a Bonfire fundraiser; dance; discotheque; political party fundraiser; a pre-run for an Edinburgh Fringe event, and the Lewes Chamber Music Festival had returned to the Centre. It was noted that these hires would yield income which should offset the current-year loss attributable to Film@All Saints. The new sound and light system was working well, and already 39 hirers to the end of 2018 had paid the premium for use of the advanced features. One user had brought their own ‘old technology’ light system, and Members were advised that it was wise to retain useable old equipment as it offered a unique character which was still desirable for certain occasions.

General matters: Members had reviewed an analysis of all operating and hired hours dating from the Council’s first employment of staff for the Centre. This showed the increase in hired hours across 12 years, and the effect of key events. There followed a lengthy discussion regarding the theoretical maximum hours that might be taken by hirers (with intervening periods for cleaning, set-up and arrangement of seating/equipment *etc*), and it was acknowledged that there were only a few short ‘gaps’ in any week which could, practically, be promoted. Members undertook to bring suggestions to the next meeting, for appropriate events which might reduce vacant hours, as they were interested to investigate further. In terms of income and cost, it was not straightforward to make year-on-year comparisons, and there was a discussion on the philosophy of subsidized community facilities and appropriate levels of support. It was suggested that the audit panel might look at details, but accepted that the overall budget for the Centre was subjected to the same level of scrutiny that all services endured as a fundamental aspect of the annual budgeting process and subsequent routine oversight. A question had arisen

as to the corporate overheads absorbed by the ASC, and TC had explained the principles of time/cost apportionment across the Council's services, which was a fundamental first-step in each annual budget process.

Members were pleased to learn that the Toy Library, which the Council had taken-over in late 2016, was thriving and regularly attracted new users. There was a diverse range of users with many children accompanied by grandparents. There were around 40 regular attendees and a steady number of casual users. Popularity of toys constantly varied, and was kept under review in consultation with parents.

All Councillors were encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Centre, and to support events held there. All were welcome to visit (although appointments were necessary to avoid conflict with hirers) to familiarize themselves with its operation.

It was resolved that:

FC2017/98.6 The Minutes of the All Saints Steering Group held on 14th February 2018 (*copy in minute book*) are noted; and Council supports the approach taken by the Group and its conclusions as described in those minutes.

g) Audit Panel 15th February 2018: The Minutes of this meeting (*copy in minute book*) were presented:

Routine financial monitoring: Members had been furnished with detailed information (*copies in minute book*) following the end of the third quarter of the financial year 2017/18.

Budget monitoring update – this showed actual expenditure and income values as posted to the Council's Sage accounting system for all transactions processed. There was some discussion on salient points of detail, and TC responded with reference to the identified sources. Apparent variations were related to known events, such as specific payments in respect of works and purchases, or perceived 'overspend' which are attributable to Reserves in the final accounts prepared at year-end. There were no items of concern.

Auditor's Interim report for year ending 31st March 2018: Members expressed concern at some comments in the interim report of the Internal Auditor for the current year, which had been seen by Council in December. They were pleased to note that he had once again reported satisfaction with all aspects of the Council's governance but wondered how serious were the comments related to his repeated warning that the General Fund (unallocated reserve) was "a little low". TC explained the context of these comments, especially those regarding appropriation of existing earmarked Reserves. The Auditor was fully-aware and comfortable with the measures already taken by Council, in its budget-setting for 2018/19, to gradually reinstate the General Fund. He would expect to see this now continually increase across the next few years toward the "reasonable" level of 50% of precept conventionally recommended.

Buildings Working Party decision: Cllr Rowell had asked for review by the Panel of a decision taken by the Buildings Repairs Working Party on 27th September 2016. He had raised this with the Working Party itself at its next meeting, and the matter had subsequently been comprehensively reported to Council on 10th November 2016. There followed a protracted discussion on the submission that the Working Party had insufficient authority and had exceeded its remit, and a perceived weakness in Financial Control Procedures. Various relevant Minutes were presented and TC confirmed that the Council's Auditor had reviewed the matter at the time and was entirely comfortable with the process. As to potential flaws in adopted regulations: these were founded on a national model, but were in any event due to be reviewed, along with Standing Orders and other key policies, by the end of this municipal year as a matter of routine. This review would accommodate any alterations to recommended national models, and could invite input from the auditor. Members considered this a satisfactory position. It was suggested that Working Party agenda should carry a statement of the remit. TC pointed-out that this was already done, although dropped when a long-standing Working party had become suitably established, as Members by then have a firm understanding of their role. The Buildings Repairs Working Party agenda at the time of the contentious

decision had, in fact, carried a statement of the original remit and its subsequent expansion by Council.

Oversight as required by the Governance & Accountability Code of Practice: TC introduced the file of periodic bank reconciliations, for review of the scrutiny already conducted. The Chairman appended his signature to verify this in each instance.

Conclusions: Members had considered information on the Council's financial status and management, and found no items of concern.

The Buildings Repair Working Party decision to retain BLB Surveyors (*BRWP2016/14 refers*) was considered validated. When reviewing Financial Control Procedures, Councillors appointed to the role are asked to pay particular attention to regulations presently detailed in section 11 "Contracts".

In accordance with the national audit and governance guidelines: where Member oversight is required, the Chairman of the Panel signed to attest the veracity of reconciliation records presented.

It was resolved that:

FC2017/98.7 The Minutes of the Audit Panel held on 15th February 2018 (*copy in minute book*) are noted.

h) Transport Working Party 20th February 2018: Council considered the Minutes of this meeting (*copy in minute book*):

Bus services in Lewes:

Free travel: Members had considered a motion proposed for Council on 22nd February (*NOM015/2017 copy in minute book*) which proposed the investigation of free/discounted bus travel in Lewes with a view to implementing a scheme when contracts with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) were next re-tendered. ESCC were the responsible authority, and in response to early approaches they had offered some insight into the order of costs involved. It was understood that the subsidy offered to bus operators would need to recompense fully for lost fare revenue, and this was "significantly in excess of £100,000pa" for the commercial routes. A scheme could not exclude older people, and these already benefit from subsidized travel schemes. Bus companies would be entitled to a guarantee of income in respect of these existing subsidies, should free travel be extended beyond that group. ESCC had advised that the likely levels of such additional subsidy, even if affordable by the Town Council, would breach State Aid limitation rules and be unlawful. Members agreed that the concept of increasing bus usage was attractive and determined that they would research the matter thoroughly.

A representative of the community bus service operator CTLA, offered insights into the real needs that they saw in daily operations across the area, which was primarily for short on-demand journeys such as non-emergency transport for people attending medical appointments. In Lewes a CTLA bus service offered some services of this type, and in Uckfield a car-based volunteer driver scheme had been set up which was described as very cost-effective and well-used. Whilst initial set-up of such a scheme was said to cost several thousand pounds (more if a dedicated vehicle was purchased), regular operating costs were described as only a few hundred pounds each month.

Consequently, it had been resolved that (*TIWPP2017/13.1 refers*) Cllrs Catlin; Murray (S) and Rowell were asked to work collectively and in liaison with the Town Clerk, to research the principles of extending local bus service use and the need for a local scheme to provide non-emergency passenger transport to medical centres *etc.*; reporting-back to a future meeting.

Request for financial support by CTLA: the CTLA representative elaborated upon a report submitted with the agenda (*copy in the Minute book*) which gave details of the route 131 and 132 CTLA services, which the Council had supported for some time. Passenger numbers continued to grow, and it was said to be common for new routes to take five years before attaining financial self-sufficiency. The report described the benefits of improved timetable information and wider distribution, and gave more information on the dial-a-

ride services and increasing demand for it. Research indicated that the ability to leave the home and take a bus in this way had definable health and wellbeing benefits.

CTLA asked that the Council granted in 2018/19 a total of £11,604, comprising:

£3,500 to support route 131 and;

£5,104 to support route 132 (as in previous two years) and;

£500 to allow timetable information to be more widely distributed and;

£2,500 to support the Lewes Dial-a-Ride scheme.

Members compared this with the current budgeted provision of £7,000 and TC confirmed that the difference could be found from Reserves in the first year if Council were minded to do so, with future years considered during the budget cycle. It was agreed that this grant should be recommended.

There was a request for confirmation that CTLA were a Living Wage Employer, which was subsequently received, and also to seek confirmation that CTLA would offer a guarantee of service delivery across the term of the grant.

Request for financial support by Compass Travel Ltd: Council had referred to the Working Party the request of Compass Travel for continuation, and possible extension, of the financial support currently offered.

The Council granted £10,000 towards the cost of running the Lewes town bus routes 127, 128 & 129. These routes needed a subsidy to be viable and this money replaced funding withdrawn by ESCC and enabled operation of two buses on the services instead of one – effectively maintaining peak half-hourly service on the 127 and every 45 mins on the 128/129. Members were aware of the position, described by the company's Managing Director to a previous meeting, that Compass would actually suffer lower losses on these services if they only operated a single vehicle at a reduced frequency.

Compass's MD had submitted the following:

“If it was possible to increase the payment to £15,000 pa then we would be able to further improve the town services as follows:

- 1) Two newer buses to be dedicated to these routes and branded as “Lewes Town Link”.
- 2) The two buses to be fitted with ‘next stop’ displays.
- 3) A timetable leaflet to be produced for the Lewes town bus services. This could be potentially be distributed door-to-door.
- 4) Bus stop timetable displays could be increased and improved – using the same route branding as on the buses.”

It was also asked if funding could be agreed with a two or three year term, to provide stability in planning.

Members discussed the current problems frequently reported by users of these services, and various views were expressed as to the best way to maintain reliability. Some Councillors had travelled the route last year when Compass offered a familiarization tour, and whilst understanding many of the issues faced by drivers “on the ground” there were remaining concerns such as the number of cancelled buses. It was felt that these cancellations were unusually frequent, and there was no warning to travellers who may already be waiting at the kerbside. Members recognized the routes were not commercially viable, and were keen to provide the level of service originally envisaged. They acknowledged operational difficulties, but were hesitant to provide more funding if the current reliability could not be improved-upon. There were a number of suggestions as to how Councillors might monitor performance on behalf of users. After a wide-ranging discussion it was agreed to recommend payment of £15,000 in 2018/19 on the understanding that Compass provide an undertaking to introduce the newer buses in that year; produce the timetable leaflet suggested; maintain the frequency of the services throughout the term of the grant, and further undertake to provide an effective means of warning waiting travellers of late cancellations. There would be a review in September

before any future years' funds were agreed. This review would consider any stipulations which Council may wish to introduce, and practical indicators of service reliability, and Cllr Lamb and TC were asked to liaise in drafting some suggestions along those lines.

Miscellaneous discussion points: A number of points had been submitted for discussion, but this was not practical without more information and these were deferred to a future meeting.

There was a brief discussion on matters in progress, and a submission by Network rail that a long-standing and well-used bench should be removed from under the canopy at the entrance to Lewes Station due to occasional occupation by antisocial individuals. This matter was being kept under review.

Conclusions/recommendations: Council was asked to note these deliberations and the principles underlying the decisions.

The small sub-group would liaise with the Town Clerk and research extended use of buses or "dial-a-ride" car/bus schemes.

Council was recommended to approve grant to CTLA as described above, in the sum of £11,604 in 2018/19.

Council was recommended to approve grant to Compass Travel Ltd as described above, in the sum of £15,000 in 2018/19.

It was resolved that:

FC2017/98.8 The Minutes of the Transport Working Party held on 20th February 2018 (*copy in minute book*) are noted; and Council supports the approach taken by the Working Party and its conclusions and recommendations as described in those minutes.

i) Citizens Advice: Cllr Roger Murray, the Council's representative on the CAB, related salient points on the activities of the Bureau and reported that Universal Credit would be rolled out in Lewes by September 2018.

It was resolved that:

FC2017/98.9 The oral report on activity of the Lewes & Seaford Citizens' Advice Bureau is noted.

FC2017/99 BUS SERVICE SUPPORT:

Member considered a proposal (*NOM015/2017, copy in minute book*) that the Council works with East Sussex County Council to discuss ways of making bus travel in Lewes town free to all or at a discounted rate or for young people. This had been discussed at the Transport Working Party held on 20th February 2018, as described in the preceding Minute, and superseded by the decision for a small sub-group to research extended use of buses or "dial-a-ride" car/bus schemes.

It was resolved that:

FC2017/99.1 Research into extended use of buses or "dial-a-ride" car/bus schemes be supported, and any proposals be initially considered by Traffic Working Party.

FC2017/100 PRIORY PARK SAFETY FENCING:

Member considered a request from Lewes Priory Trust for financial support. The Trust leased the Priory Park from the Council. Fencing and guardrails had been installed as part of the 2010 major works at the site. Though there had been no accidents in the past years, the trustees had identified two locations where children may gain access above steep drops. It was proposed to provide two sections of fencing which matched that existing and their architect had prepared detailed drawings. Because the work involves fence post holes in the ground, Lewes Priory Trust were required to obtain Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) from Historic England. The application had to include an Archaeological Impact Assessment which had been carried out by consultants Archaeology South East (ASE). This was approved and SMC had been granted with the condition that ASE prepare a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), monitor the work on site and provide a final report. The WSI had been approved by Historic England, and quotations obtained for archaeological oversight and the supply and installation of fences.

The Impact Assessment and part of the architect's fees had been paid-for and a date for work was being sought.

Annual Maintenance costs over the last three years had exceeded the Town Council grant but it had been possible to meet this from Trust reserves. A large part of the £7,104 cost of the new safety fencing was due to the required archaeological input and this could increase if underground features were encountered. The total was equivalent to 58% of the 2017 grant from the Council and would severely deplete the Trust's reserves. Additional funds were needed, but most funding bodies were disinclined to give grants for what might be viewed as maintenance or renewal. Lewes Priory Trust had not been able to identify other sources and now approached the Town Council, who own the site, for further help.

It was resolved that:

FC2017/100.1 Lewes Town Council agrees to pay £4,000 towards safety fencing at Lewes Priory, funded from the financial Reserve identified as R4 (*Lewes Priory*) in the accounts (*balance b/fwd at 1st April 2017 £3,472*) with the balance drawn from the General Fund.

FC2017/101 HIGHWAY VERGE MAINTENANCE:

Members considered report FC014/2017 (*copy in minute book*) regarding implications of East Sussex County Council reductions in highways verge maintenance:

A message had been received from East Sussex County Council's Director, Communities; Economy & Transport, which explained a reduction in highway contract costs of £400,000 for grass cutting services effective from 1 April 2018. ESCC would be reducing the number of urban grass cuts from the current six per season to two per season from 1 April 2018. This was a change to their urban grass cutting policy (which currently provided for a minimum of five cuts per season) and a report was to be presented to their Lead Member for Transport and Environment in May 2018 with a recommendation to change the policy to reflect the agreed budget.

A map and table of the total areas of the rural and urban grass verges that were currently cut in Lewes was appended, and it was noted that in reducing the urban grass cutting service from six to two cuts per season ESCC would be managing urban grass for safety reasons only. However, recognizing that grass verges in urban centres have an important aesthetic function for the community, two options were offered for consideration:

- a) A financial contribution to the Town Council equivalent to the value of two urban grass cuts based on current ESCC contract rates which was £2,643 per annum. This could be provided as a basis to commission and employ the Council's own contractor
- b) For the Town Council to pay for additional urban grass cuts over the two cuts per season provided by the County Council. To maintain the current standard of six cuts this would cost Lewes Town Council in the region of £5,287 per annum.

An indication as to which option the Council wished to pursue was requested by 31 March 2018 at the latest.

Details were provided of the financial implications. Lewes Town Council's approved budget for 2018/19 included elements which could be applied or redirected to fund the maintenance of current frequency of cuts, and earmarked Reserves held balances which could be utilized in the short term.

Following discussion **it was resolved that:**

FC2017/101.1 A Working Party be set up consisting of Cllrs Catlin, Lamb, S Murray, O'Keefe and Renton to look in detail at Highway Verge Maintenance. The Working party was asked to suggest detailed exclusions/inclusions, and a letter would be sent to ESCC explaining the Council's approach to these considerations.

FC2017/102 UPDATE ON MATTERS IN PROGRESS

- a) *Annual Plan update distributed:* An update on progress with the Annual Plan was distributed (*copy in minute book*). There were no salient points to note.

- b) *Devolution of Malling Recreation Ground and Landport Bottom:* There had been no further developments in the transfer of these sites. Attention had been drawn to the Lewes District Council (LDC) meeting held on Monday 19th February, during which the Leader of the District Council had misleadingly and inaccurately described the process of devolution to Lewes TC, and made arbitrary comments attributing a lack of professionalism on the part of TC. Members who were present confirmed this description of events, and it was described as “disgraceful”. One Member countered that similarly disparaging comments had been made in the past regarding LDC, during Lewes Town Council meetings, but it was insisted that no comment had ever been made without justification and accurate supporting information and no officer had been singled-out for criticism. It was agreed that no officer should ever be subject to denigration by an elected Member in a public meeting. Subsequently, **it was resolved that:**

FC2017/102.1 The Town Clerk is asked to write on behalf of the Council to the District Council, drawing attention to the inaccuracy of their Leader’s description of the devolution process, and the unacceptable and groundless misrepresentation of the Town Clerk, during consideration of Agenda item 9 on Monday 19th February 2018.

FC2017/103 NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT

- a) The next Members’ Surgery was scheduled for Tuesday 6th March 10am – 12pm in the Corn Exchange. Cllrs Lamb and Renton volunteered to attend.
- b) The next Buildings Working Repair party would meet at 11am on Tuesday 27th February.
- c) The Personnel Panel would meet (appointed panellists only) at 7.00pm on Tuesday 27th February.
- d) The Landport Bottom Joint Management Committee would meet at 11am on Tuesday 6th March.
- e) The Schools Market Entrepreneurs Working Party would meet at 11am on Tuesday 13th March in the Council Chamber.
- f) The joint working group on s106-funded Play and Recreation improvements at The Pells and Malling Recreation Ground would meet on Tuesday 13th March.
- g) The next Planning Committee would take place on Tuesday 13th March at 7.00pm.
- h) The Plastics Reduction Working Party would meet at 7.00pm on Wednesday 14th March in the Council Chamber.
- i) The next Council meeting would take place on Thursday 29th March at 7.30pm, with a deadline for agenda items to reach TC by noon on Monday 19th March 2018.
- j) Meetings to be arranged were: Pells Pool Community Association Liaison; Diversity Working Party.
- k) Member training on law and finance was still being finalized.

There being no further business the Mayor closed the meeting. *The meeting ended at 9:30pm*

Signed:

Date:



QUESTION RECEIVED:

E-mail received 21st February 2018:

Please could I submit the question below for the TC meeting tomorrow evening, in regard to item 9 on the agenda, 'highway verge maintenance'?

There is a problem nettle patch on the verge by the cycle path from the A27 to hope in the valley. This is labelled as 'rural' as opposed to 'urban' on the supplementary map to the TC agenda, and as such does not represent an area to be reduced in cutting frequency. However the current very limited maintenance means that nettles overgrow substantially on to the cycle path for the whole summer period, restricting the width to an extent that two cyclists (or pedestrians) in opposite directions cannot pass without being stung. Would the TC consider allocating some of the monies proposed to substitute for ESCC reductions to dealing with this problem nettle patch that affects all cyclists entering and leaving Lewes via this route? For example, a wildflower mix could be planted akin to those recently established in several locations throughout the town, which have been led on by Wildflower Lewes. This would mean the foliage likely becomes less overgrown, cyclists and pedestrians can pass each other and not get stung or have to merge with 40mph+ road traffic, while retaining some wildlife habitat.

I hope this is clear but do let me know if anything further is required

With many thanks

Charlotte Rae

ANSWER:

Thank you for drawing to our attention the practical effects of the current maintenance regime. The Council will be pleased to give consideration to this when deciding a response to East Sussex County Councils announcement.

Cllr M Chartier, Mayor of Lewes 2017/18
