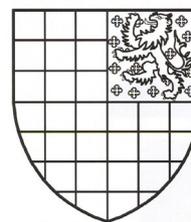


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**LEWES  
TOWN  
COUNCIL**

## ***MINUTES***

Of the meeting of **Lewes Town Council**,  
held on **Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2019**, in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall**, Lewes at **7:30pm**.

**PRESENT** Councillors J Baah; M Bird; R Burrows; S Catlin (Wischhusen); G Earl; R Handy; O Henman; J Herbert; J Lamb; Dr W Maples; M Milner; R O'Keeffe; S Sains; J Vernon; R Waring; K Wood.

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

*Observing:* Ms J Dean (*Customer Services Officer*) and L Symons (*Town Hall Manager*)

**FC2019/16 QUESTION TIME:** There were none.

**FC2019/17 MEMBERS DECLARATIONS of INTERESTS:**

Councillor R O'Keeffe declared an interest *in* item 6b on the Agenda (grant recommended to East Sussex Radio Society) in that she is a breakfast presenter on the show and item 11 (Proposed Tree donation by the Friends of Lewes) in that she is the Vice-Chairman of the organisation.

**FC2019/18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr I Makepeace, who was on holiday and Councillor Dr G Mayhew who had to attend to a family illness.

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2019/18.1** Reasons submitted for absence from this meeting are noted.

**FC2019/19 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

The Mayor welcomed new Members to the Council and reflected on the success of the visioning evening held on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2019 which had proved encouraging for all Members. The Mayor gave a brief summary on the proceedings of Full Council, and also reminded members that there would be several civic events during the year to which they would be invited.

**FC2019/20 MINUTES:**

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2019/20.1** Minutes of the Council meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2019 are received and signed as an accurate record.

**FC2019/21 WORKING PARTIES AND OUTSIDE BODIES:**

*Members are 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) Pells Land Exchange Working Party 24<sup>th</sup> April 2019:** Council considered the minutes of this meeting:

1 The meeting had reconsidered several background documents (*copies in Minute book*) first reviewed at the previous meeting.

2 As Trust land, the Town Council is constrained by the disposal restrictions in s36 Charities Act 1993. The Charity Commission had been approached to assess their inclination to allow a disposal (*eg sale/lease/exchange*), and the response had been to simply refer Trustees to the requirements to ensure that:

*Continues...*

- i) the benefit must accrue to the Trust for use in line with its objects, which are (*1922 Commissioners' Scheme*):
  - a) the provision and maintenance of an open air swimming pool; and
  - b) the provision and maintenance of a recreation ground;both for the benefit of beneficiaries, without distinction of political, religious or other opinions, in the interests of social welfare and with the aim of improving the conditions of life of the beneficiaries.

and;

- ii) that values of land to be exchanged were appropriately valued to the satisfaction of Trustees, and no detriment would accrue to the Trust

3 Council had previously acknowledged that (with reference to the suggested exchange areas A; B and C on an appended plan) the area designated 'A' (170sq m) would be of benefit as it would allow improvements to changing rooms and other facilities of the swimming pool, and provide an ideal location for the installation of solar panels – a long-held aspiration of both the Town Council and the Pells Pool Community Association. The area designated 'B' was understood to include the vestigial Town Brook watercourse and a question had been raised as to the prudence of incorporating a potential water hazard within the recreation ground. This was a valid point, although the ditch had been almost dry for many years and it was thought that this risk could be minimized by culverting, or a similar engineering solution. The area shown as 'C' was seen as simply a 'tidying-up' of eventual boundary demarcation, which offered no other particular benefit. It was noted that there would need to be agreement on responsibilities for the necessary removal of residual footings/service connections, and other structures at this location and a general agreement on legal costs and costs of final boundary structures (*eg* fencing).

4 Overall, the Working Party confirmed its view regarding the overall potential increase in land area; the inherent benefits of some of the land, and the opportunity to tidy boundary lines. There were, however, residual concerns over aspects such as the vestigial watercourse and questions to be answered regarding costs and responsibilities.

5 Members could see no reason to refuse the proposed exchange, and recognized the aforementioned potential benefits. Consequently it had been agreed to recommend that the proposal be agreed, provided there was no cost to the Council (Trust); no technical reasons were discovered regarding the vestigial Brook, and valuations adequate to satisfy the Charities Act regulations supported the exchange.

After some debate **it was resolved that:**

**FC2019/21.1** That Lewes Town Council (as Town Brook Trust) agree to swap the land requested in exchange for areas designated 'A' & 'C' (but NOT area 'B') on the appended plan, subject to agreement with Lewes District Council that:

- a) All associated costs of valuation; technical assessment; legal transfer, and boundary relocation (fencing/railings/walls or other enclosure) and costs of any other engineering which may be required shall be met by Lewes District Council, and no cost shall fall to Lewes Town Council.
- b) Independent valuation of the land areas concerned is undertaken by an independent authority such as the District Valuer Service (DVS) – the specialist property arm of the Valuation Office (VOA).
- c) Engineering assessment of the potential need to culverting the vestigial watercourse of the historic Town Book is carried out by an independent professional authority.

The Working Party is asked to meet again, in due course, as required to confirm details and bring final recommendations to Council.

**b) Grants Panel 5<sup>th</sup> June 2019:** Members considered report FC001/2019 (*copy in Minute book*) containing recommendations for payments of grants for the first cycle (of four) for the year 2019/20. There was also some discussion regarding possible additional criteria, and/or amendments to the agreed grants scheme, and Members were encouraged to

submit any ideas for initial consideration by the Panel, to inform onward recommendations to Council. **It was resolved that:**

**FC2019/21.2** The grant payments recommended in report FC001/2019 (as shown in column **G** of the appended table) be approved.

**c) Community Rail Partnership/Railfutures 6<sup>th</sup> June 2019:** Cllr Catlin gave an oral report on this item. Cllr Catlin reported that during March 2019 there had been no trains between Lewes and Haywards Heath and Brighton to Polegate. This was to allow signalling and engineering work to be carried out. During the closure Southern Rail had expected a 25% drop in traffic, although 75% of rail users had apparently used other means of travel. Work on signalling to the Lewes and Seaford had not been completed and further disruption would follow. Once this work had been completed Lewes signal box would close and be no longer operational, although it would be maintained as it is in the curtilage of a Heritage-listed building.

Cooksbridge level crossing would now be controlled from Three Bridges and not from Lewes. There was no date for any new rolling stock to be introduced, to increase current four carriage trains to eight carriages. Cllr Catlin also reported that there was an issue with staffing the Lewes Ticket office on Sundays and a shortage of Guards on trains between Seaford and Lewes route.

£15,000,000 was due to be spent on passenger benefit schemes, and £30,000 had been allocated to Lewes. There had been several suggestions on how this money could be spent and some examples from elsewhere were presented. Cllr Catlin asked Members to let him know of any suggestions or preferences they may have.

Cllr Catlin also reported that there would again be a curtailment of services stopping at Lewes and other stations nearby on November 5<sup>th</sup> (Lewes Bonfire).

It was resolved that:

**FC2019/21.3** The oral report on the meeting of Sussex Community Rail Partnership/Railfutures held on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2019 is noted.

**d) Personnel Panel 19<sup>th</sup> June 2019:** Cllr Wood, who had been elected as Chairman of the Panel reported that the meeting had not concluded and was adjourned until 28<sup>th</sup> June.

it was **resolved** that:

**FC2019/21.4** The adjournment of the Personnel Panel on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2019 is noted.

**e) Election: E Sx Parish Representatives to South Downs National Park Authority:** The Council was invited to decide its vote for up to TWO candidates to represent East Sussex parishes on the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA).

Members considered report FC006/2019, which explained the background to these elections. It was noted that the SDNPA has 27 Members, comprising: 14 Councillors from Local Authorities within the South Downs National Park. There are 15 local authorities within the Park; each entitled to a seat on the Park Authority: two authorities had decided to share a seat. 6 Councillors from Town/Parish Councils within the South Downs National Park. Two (2) councillors each are appointed from East Sussex, West Sussex and Hampshire. These appointments follow elections organised by the parish County associations, and serve for their term as a Councillor. 7 Members were appointed by the Secretary of State following a national, open competition. There are 176 eligible parishes in the Park, although some have only a tiny area within the boundary. East Sussex has 32; West Sussex 63 (including one with only 200sq metres “inside”!); and Hampshire 81.

Parishes were expected to reach agreement on nominations between themselves, although the chosen mechanism must be credible and robust. This was led by the County Associations, and both East and West Sussex were represented by Sussex & Surrey Associations of Local Councils (SSALC), which operates separate executive committees for the two areas.

Parish members are selected by ballot, with each candidate providing a very short written submission of their case. Further to recent nominations – 5 (five) candidates had been submitted and had provided election statements, which were appended.

Lewes Town Council had nominated Cllr Richard Waring as a candidate.

The Council was invited to vote for up to 2 (two) candidates.

Completed ballot papers were to be received by SSALC no later than 5pm on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2019. The poll would be held during week commencing 24<sup>th</sup> June, in East Grinstead. The SDNPA Annual meeting would be held in Midhurst on 2<sup>nd</sup> July, at which new members will be welcomed.

There was a general discussion and subsequently **it was resolved that**

**FC2019/21.5** Lewes Town Council casts one vote for Cllr Richard Waring to represent East Sussex parishes on the South Down National Park Authority.

**f) North Street Quarter Sounding Board:** TC gave an oral report on this item. TC informed members that the Land Collaboration Agreement (the legal agreement between Santon North Street Ltd and Lewes District Council) was not yet concluded but completion was expected in July 2019. The site would be marketed to potential developers and national advertisements were already booked, which elaborated upon key features and highlighted that sustainability would be a major factor in the development. In answer to a question it had been noted that Springman House was also subject to the Land Collaboration Agreement and the planned Health Hub was subject to the prospective tenants, three local surgeries, being successful in independently seeking grants as well as the Land Collaboration Agreement.

**FC2019/21.6** The oral report on the North Street Quarter Sounding Board meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> June 2019 is noted.

#### **FC2019/22 INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT:**

Council received the final report from its retained Internal Auditor on the financial year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 (*copy in the Minute Book*). The audit had been conducted in accordance with current best practice and statutory guidelines. Areas covered included:

- > Financial Regulations and Standing Orders
- > Risk Assessments
- > Budgeting Process
- > Proper Bookkeeping
- > Salaries
- > Assets

Councillors were pleased to note the comments, made in the Auditor's introduction, that *"it is clear the Council takes governance, policies and procedures very seriously, and I am pleased to report that overall the systems and procedures you have in place are entirely fit for purpose."*

It was noted that the Auditors report formed a key element of the Council's internal control regime and, together with regular reports of the Audit Panel, was an instrument by which it assured itself that all responsibilities were satisfied.

**FC2019/22.1** Lewes Town Council notes the report of Mulberry and Co (*a copy is included in the Minute book*) on their Internal Audit work for the Council for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

#### **FC2019/23 ANNUAL RETURN & ACCOUNTS year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019:**

Members received report FC002/2019 (*copy in minute book*) which presented the requisite accounting information and draft Annual Governance & Accountability Return for approval as required by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (S12015/234).

The relevant pages of the return were appended to the report. It was required that Council resolve its approval of its Annual Governance Statement (section 1) prior to approval of the Accounting Statements (section 2).

The accounting statements had been certified by the Responsible Finance Officer, and the certificate by the Council's independent Internal Auditor had been signed. He indicated

that he had no concerns, and his final report had earlier been presented to the meeting. The Internal Auditor's work; regular reports of the Audit Panel, and occasional reports from other sources, were the instruments by which the Council assures itself that all responsibilities are satisfied.

Consequently, **it was resolved that:**

**FC2019/23.1** Lewes Town Council approves the Annual Governance Statement shown at section 1 of the statutory Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019

**FC2018/23.2** Lewes Town Council approves the Accounting Statements on the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, for submission, with supporting documents as required, to Messrs PKF-Littlejohn LLP; the External auditors appointed by the national sector-led body.

#### **FC2019/24 CORPORATE RISK ASSESSMENT 2019/2020:**

Members considered report FC003/2019 which dealt with the assessment of risks associated with the operations and functions of the Council for the forthcoming municipal year (*a copy is included in the Minute book*). The report explained the principles of the annual assessment and the concepts of tangible risk (*eg physical risks associated with a swimming pool*) and intangible risk (*eg risks associated with publications*) and summarized the annual evaluation. This year's review had taken account of 276 risk elements within 37 functions/areas of operation. Not all were relevant to LTC, but scores had been awarded to 237 risk elements, and there were 8 salient points, six related to third-party management arrangements for Malling Community Centre. Mitigation was effected by close contact with the current managing agents, Malling Community Association, and appropriate insurance. One was related to new data protection legislation and one to increased risk of trespass with the acquisition of Landport Bottom. Both were addressed by amended working routines.

A summary report extract was appended; the full report being available on request to TC with full details available if required. **It was resolved that:**

**FC2019/24.1** Lewes Town Council notes the Corporate Risk Assessment report, reference FC003/2019 (*a copy is included in the Minute book*) and the summary table of assessed risks for 2019/20 appended to it.

#### **FC2019/25 COUNCILLORS INDIVIDUAL DUTIES:**

Report FC004/2019 (*copy in minute book*). was received, regarding changes to Members allotted individual duties. The effects of these were shown in an appended table, and other suggestions and requests were received during a brief discussion. Subsequently, **it was resolved that:**

**FC2019/25.1** The individual responsibilities for Members for the remainder of the 2019/20 municipal year shall be amended as:

Councillor Henman is no longer appointed to the Planning Committee.

Councillor Sains is appointed to the Planning Committee.

Personnel Panel: to be discussed at the next Council meeting.

Audit Panel: will remain at 5 appointed Members (establishment is 7).

Cllr Vernon is appointed to the Landport Bottom Management Committee.

Cllr Bird is appointed to the North Street Quarter Sounding Board.

The appointment of Cllrs Catlin and O'Keeffe to Lewes District Association of Local Councils (LDALC) is confirmed, and it is noted that LDALC has already held its annual meeting and they have been elected as Chair and Vice-chair respectively. Both Councillors have also been elected by LDALC as two of the Association's representatives to the board of East Sussex Association of Local Councils. Council offered congratulations on these

elections.

#### FC2019/26 **PROPOSED DONATION OF TREE:**

Councillors considered report FC005/19 (*copy in minute book*) which introduced an offer by the Friends of Lewes to donate one or more Oak trees, at the Pells Recreation Ground.

Friends of Lewes (FoL) Trees Committee had asked to plant one or more Oak trees within, or near to, Pells Recreation Ground as part of their ongoing programme to increase the number and diversity of trees in Lewes. They would consult with nearby residents and carry out utility surveys and scans before choosing the exact sites for planting mature trees. They would weed and mulch the tree(s) regularly during their first five years to give them a good start. FoL had planted 39 trees since they began their trees initiative in 2015 and all of them were thriving, except one which was vandalised at an early stage. The planting of Oak (*Quercus robur*) at this site would support the development of Tingle's Way Eco Walk, with which FoL's Trees committee had been involved. This walk now links as a loop to the South Downs Way: with the main route being from the Railway Land to Landport Bottom and passing through the Pells. They had already mapped many interesting trees on this route, and had plans to plant more, (for example, along Prince Edwards Road and at the top of Hill Road), and would like to include the Oak(s) in this proposal. The land near the Pells was one of the few areas of Lewes which would enable Oaks to thrive. FoL's recently published i-Tree Eco Survey report stated that Lewes needs to increase tree canopy cover from a current 11.5% towards a recommended 20%. This would help with flood prevention, carbon sequestration and storage, improved air quality, and provision of shade and shelter: all of which are increasingly important with anticipated climate change. The Oaks would also provide extremely useful habitats for birds and insects. FoL wished to plan for planting in the Autumn.

Despite the apparent simplicity of this offer, there were several considerations for the Council. It was noted that:

- › *Quercus robur* was one of those species/varieties identified as suitable for the Pells when a Council replanting policy was drafted in 2010, so the suggestion fits well with that. Several mature trees had been lost in the area in recent years, mainly due to Dutch Elm Disease.
- › The Pells was due to be the subject of landscape engineering once the North Street Quarter (NSQ) development began in earnest – with flood defences to be created at the outset, and eventually a new set of equipment for both children's play and adult recreation. Specific choice of location may avoid delay in planting a new tree, but that would have to allow for anticipated developments at the Pells.
- › Proposals for Pells area play & recreation improvements, to be paid-for by s106 funds from North Street Quarter development, arose from public consultation in 2017/18 and had since received planning consent. The illustrations that were included in that process were indicative only; and likely to be subject to some change as to the *precise* location of equipment once the installations began, to address any ground conditions that may be found – the water table being a constant issue at the Pells.
- › For several years the Council had planned to work with the Pells Pool Community Association to develop the existing kiosk building into a small café/kiosk serving both the pool enclosure and the Recreation ground. This was on-hold for some time pending resolution of the NSQ matters but designs for that were now being considered and may affect prospective locations for trees in the North West area of the Recreation Ground.
- › Another factor was the extant proposal by Lewes District Council to exchange some small areas of land which would alter the shape of the Recreation Ground on the South Eastern; Eastern, and Northern boundaries. These were currently under consideration by Council.

The Friends of Lewes were aware of these considerations, and were to consult with their Trees Committee with a view to either postponing any tree planting until the developments are completed (or at least until the relevant detail was confirmed); or select a specific position(s) unlikely to be affected by prospective works. Meanwhile, they suggested it would help them to know that the Town Council would accept such planting, even if it had to be delayed.

It was **resolved that:**

**FC2019/26.1** Lewes Town Council accept the offer by the friends of Lewes to donate one or more Oak trees, at the Pells Recreation Ground, subject to final agreement on specific location.

#### **FC2019/27 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT – ‘OPEN COUNCIL’:**

A motion (NOM008/2019 *copy in minute book*) was proposed, that Lewes Town Council should establish a working party to identify methods for improved public engagement and greater provision of information to residents of Lewes.

The proposal suggested that this should include:-

- › A review of information sharing and the methods used to share key events and policy developments
- › Consideration of good practice on methods of online deliberation and social media, such as on key town-wide issues
- › Identifying ways to provide more joined-up support for community engagement in and around Council-owned buildings

The information provided suggested that recent years had seen a significant growth in community engagement in local government, these changes being characterised by a move towards more open and inclusive decision-making, often incorporating the use of new online tools for deliberation and participation. While many citizens were actively involved in key single issue campaigns they did not always know how best to incorporate these initiatives into local government decision-making.

There are a number of methods and approaches that had been tested in various parts of the country, including: a) more regular information sharing, including newsletters both online and offline; b) online deliberation; c) participatory budgeting where residents have a role in deliberating on priorities for budget allocation; d) more open meetings for public Q&A with Councillors on key issues for the Town.

With a new website, new Councillors and the high levels of engagement from local residents of Lewes, there was said to be an opportunity for a wider review to consider best practice from around the country and set out a strategic plan for improved public engagement with Lewes Town Council.

Consequently it was **resolved that:**

**FC2019/27.1** Lewes Town Council establishes a Working Party to identify methods for improved public engagement and greater provision of information to residents of Lewes.

**FC2019/27.2** Appointed to the Public Engagement working party are Cllrs Bird; Catlin; Henman; Herbert; Maples; O’Keeffe; Sains; Vernon; Waring and Wood.

#### **FC2019/28 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**

A motion (NOM009/2019 *copy in minute book*) was proposed, that the Council set up an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Party.

It was suggested that this should:

- › identify and catalogue over the forthcoming year improvements and moderations to the current policy
- › meet annually to update and refresh council principles.

- › demonstrate to the public that the Council is fully committed in developing Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity.

It was **resolved that:**

**FC2019/28.1** Lewes Town Council establishes an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Working Party with a remit as described in Motion NOM009/2019 (*copy in the Minute book*)

**FC2019/28.2** Appointed to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion working party are Cllrs Baah; Bird; Catlin; Handy; Herbert and Maples.

**FC2019/29 UPDATE ON MATTERS IN PROGRESS**

- a) *Annual Plan update distributed:* An update on progress with the Annual Plan was distributed (*copy in minute book*) and TC elaborated on various salient points.
- b) The office IT update was scheduled to commence on 1<sup>st</sup> July, and there may be some short breaks in such things as email services during transition to new systems. Members’ email addresses were likely to be live by the end of July.
- c) *Devolution:* TC gave a brief summary of the recent history of devolution negotiations with Lewes District Council (LDC). He indicated that it may be desirable to reconstitute a Working Party to take forward devolution matters as LDC were expected to reach key decisions and decide policies in the next few months. There had been key developments in valuation of assets in which the Town Council had expressed interest, and it would soon be necessary for the Town Council to decide its wishes with regard to these, and other areas in prospect. These issues also involved decisions about future Council staffing structure and accommodation, which would initially be considered by the Personnel Panel.

**FC2019/30 NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT**

*Members were asked to consider items, arising from this meeting, worthy of a Press Release, and indicated:*

Setup of Working Parties - Public Engagement and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

*Dates to note were given as:*

- The next Member’s Surgery would be between 10am-12noon on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July in the Corn Exchange (corner of Market café) Cllrs Catlin and Lamb volunteered to attend.
- The next Planning Committee meeting would be at 7:00pm on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July.
- Members were invited to join Ringmer Parish Council for a training evening on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> July at 7:00pm in St Mary’s Room at Ringmer Village Hall, which would cover the specific topic of Management of Trusts, and also offer a comprehensive introductory briefing for new Councillors. Members were asked to let TC know if they planned to attend – to assist Ringmer in planning seating *etc.*
- The Audit Panel would meet at 7:00pm on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> July to conduct the first routine review in the 2019/20 year. **NB:** *this date was subsequently changed to accommodate the Ringmer training evening*
- The next Council meeting would take place on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> July at 7:30pm, with a deadline for agenda items to reach TC by noon on Monday 15<sup>th</sup>
- The next deadline for grant applications would be on 6<sup>th</sup> Sept, for a Panel sitting on 18<sup>th</sup> Sept – Council decision 3<sup>rd</sup> October. If Members know of any organization who may be planning to apply, please draw their attention to these dates (all 4 cycles are on the cover of the Application Pack, available on the website).

There being no further business the Mayor closed the meeting; thanked everyone for their contributions and invited all present to join him in the Mayor’s Parlour for refreshments

*The meeting ended at 10.05 pm*

Signed: ..... Date: .....