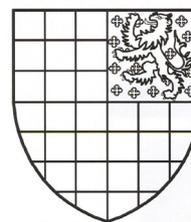


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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

Of the meeting of **Lewes Town Council**,
held on **Thursday 29th August 2019**, in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall**, Lewes at **7:30pm**.

PRESENT Cllrs J Baah; R Burrows; S Catlin (Wischhusen); G Earl; R Handy; O Henman; J Herbert; J Lamb; I Makepeace; Dr W Maples; Dr G Mayhew; M Milner; R O’Keeffe; S Sains; J Vernon; R Waring; K Wood.

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*); Mrs F Garth (*Assistant Town Clerk & Civic Officer*)

Observing: Ms V McLachlan (*Finance and Admin. Officer*); L Symons (*Town Hall Manager*) and B Courage (*Town Ranger*).

The Council’s Chaplain, Canon Richard Moatt, offered a few words before the meeting, reflecting on the popular understanding of “working life” and what its future shape might be; highlighting the commonly mentioned motivations of a sense of self-worth and contribution to the community.

FC2019/43 QUESTION TIME: There was one member of the public present. No questions were received.

FC2019/44 MEMBERS DECLARATIONS of INTERESTS: There were none.

FC2019/45 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Bird who was on holiday.

It was resolved that:

FC2019/45.1 Reasons submitted for absence from this meeting are noted.

FC2019/46 MAYOR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

a) The recently rescheduled Bowling match would be held at Mountfield Road on Thursday 12th September 2019 starting at 2:00pm. Players were still needed, and Members were asked to inform Fiona if they wished to play.

b) Heritage Open Day would be on Sunday 15th September with tours of the Town Hall at 10.00am, 12.00pm and 2.00pm. Cllr Dr G Mayhew and Michael Chartier would be leading the tours.

c) On Thursday 19th September the Mayor would host a “Building a Sustainable Lewes” forum in the Council Chamber at 7:30pm, for United Nations Climate Action Day. Many groups representing the town were invited and all Members would be very welcome.

d) The annual Allotment Show would be held in the Town Hall on 22nd September from 2.00 – 4.00pm.

e) The mayor briefly recounted his visit, with the mayoress, to the annual *Chilbi* festival in Waldshut-Tiengen. He had discussed various matters of common interest over the weekend visit, and one idea was a tri-partite climate change conference among schools from each twin town.

f) Cllr O’Keeffe reminded everyone that Lewes Societies Fair was to be held on 7th September in the Town Hall.

g) The mayor reminded everyone of the need to observe appropriate standards of courtesy especially during any Member’s presentation to a meeting. Paper and pencils were provided and intrusive individual conversations should be avoided.

FC2019/47 MINUTES:

It was resolved that:

FC2019/47.1 Minutes of the Council meeting held on 25th July 2019 are received and signed as an accurate record.

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) East Sussex Association of Local Councils 1st August 2019: Cllr O'Keeffe recounted her recent attendance at a meeting of East Sussex Association of Local Councils. She noted that the association was working to address member Councils' needs in areas such as training; visioning, and conflict avoidance/resolution. There was engagement with Civilian & Military Partnership Boards, which may give rise to events in the future. She sought and gained agreement to offer herself for a vacancy on the national Larger Councils representative group.

It was resolved that:

FC2019/48.1 The oral report on the meeting of the East Sussex Association of Local Councils on 1st August 2019 is noted.

b) Audit Panel 13th August 2019: Cllr Milner presented the minutes of this meeting (*copy in Minute book*).

1. TC had outlined the annual cycle which began with budget preparation; setting of precept; covering daily operations and periodic scrutiny by the Panel and the Internal Auditor; and culminating in the publication of annual accounts and the statutory Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) for submission to the external auditors appointed on behalf of central government. He had explained the in-built checks and balances in the Council's daily routines and the role of the panel in oversight; which was itself overseen as part of the specialist assessment by the professional auditors, and noted how these all worked together to produce the 'confidence' for Council to formally approve the statements that were required each year. There had followed several questions and short discussions on various points of detail.

2. *Routine financial monitoring:* Members had been furnished with detailed information following the end of the first quarter of the financial year 2019/20.

3. *Budget monitoring update* – this showed actual expenditure and income values as posted to the Council's SAGE accounting system for all transactions processed in the period. 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.

4. *Oversight as required by the Governance & Accountability Code of Practice:* TC had introduced the file of periodic bank reconciliations, for review of the scrutiny already conducted, and the Chairman had appended his signature to verify these.

It was resolved that:

FC2019/48.2 The Minutes of the Audit Panel meeting of 13th August are received and noted.

c) Commemorations Committee 27th August 2019: Councillors considered the Minutes of this meeting (*copy in the Minute book*).

1. There had been a brief update on matters in progress:

There would be a small exhibition in the Town Hall foyer between 11th and 16th September, to cover the Heritage Open Days weekend, on the life and work of the architect Rowland Hawke Halls; mounted by his grandson, Mr David Scott Cowan.

It was noted that the European Film Academy Young Audience Award international project held at The Depot in May with support from the Council, had been hailed a success by the organizers.

2. The meeting had welcomed Graham Festenstein, Director of the Lewes Light Festival, who presented a request for financial support for the event planned for February 2020.

The Council had supported earlier Festivals with grants to pay for basic expenses (insurance; technical operators, general running costs *etc*) that would not easily attract mainstream grant funding. Numbers attending had continued to grow and the last year had seen record attendances. Links with educational establishments continued to expand and the 2020 event would also involve partnerships with the Environment Agency; Lewes Railway Land Wildlife Trust and The Depot. The theme was to be “water and moonlight” and installations would include the Railway Land Nature Reserve; The Pells, and Grange Gardens. Arts Council funding was applied-for, and other funds were being approached. The Town Council was asked to contribute up to £8,000. Members were most interested in the details of the planned Festival and broadly supportive of the project. Although sympathetic to the proposal, it was remarked by several Councillors that more detail was required to explain the financial structure of the Festival and to help identify the application of any Council funding. It was agreed that a further meeting be held at which such detail could be considered, in time for recommendation to Council at its meeting on 3rd October.

3. Members had welcomed Tom Reeves, representing Lewes High Street Traders’ Association. Mr Reeves recounted the formation of the Association, in late 2018, as an initiative to ensure a vibrant late-night festive shopping event with appropriate road-closures *etc*. The Council had previously given an annual grant to the Chamber of Commerce towards the underlying costs of their Christmas event, but this had not been requested when the Chamber ceased to arrange road-closures and last year Council had agreed to grant £2,000 to the Traders association to achieve the same end. The Association had started with enormous energy and an encouraging number of members had entered membership; now grown to around ninety. It was hoped that a mid-summer late-night shopping evening could be introduced, and this was one of several initiatives being considered. The 2019 winter event planning was well-progressed and an application for a road-closure Order was pending. The Association asked that a similar grant be made, to offset the cost of the Order and associated barriers; signage; marshalling, insurance *etc*. and Members considered this as a ‘transfer’ of the previous funding to a new organizer. Following a number of questions, they agreed to recommend that Council establish a grant at £2,000 per year, subject each year to a post-event expenditure report; this being in place of the grant previously given to the Chamber of Commerce.

4. Mr Reeves also described the Association’s position regarding a recent proposal, made by a major festive lighting company. for a comprehensive ‘turnkey’ arrangement to provide festive street lighting for three years – running from St Anne’s Hill to Cliffe and from the railway station to Fisher Street. The company suggested that it could arrange all necessary licenses or permissions for attachment to buildings and street lighting columns *etc* and provide the equipment; out-of-season storage; annual installation and dismantling, and all associated services, for a three-year initial period and then a follow-on arrangement once capital costs were recovered. Details were still being established but encouraging responses had been received from the District Council and others. Costs in the first three years would be over £44,000 per year, but the Association was hopeful that its members could finance half of that amount and hoped for contributions from Councils and others. The association considered this an important project in protecting the High Street from the threats of austerity and, increasingly, conversion of shops to residential dwellings. There followed a lengthy discussion on various details and members agreed to suggest that Council consider provisional grant of up to £10,000 for each of the first three years, dependent upon further detail and evidence of the Association’s ability to realize the project this year or in 2020. Mr Reeves was invited to bring any latest developments for consideration in this regard, to the meeting proposed earlier, in order to facilitate decisions by Council at its meeting on 3rd October.

5. In light of the decision to hold a further meeting before Council in October; it was also agreed to invite the organizer of the Lightbox project to present a request for extended funding that was understood to be imminent.

It was resolved that:

FC2019/48.3 The Minutes of the Commemorations Committee meeting of 27th August are received and noted, and Council supports the approach of the committee to the matters under consideration.

FC2019/48.4 The Council will establish an annual grant to Lewes High Street Traders' Association at £2,000 per year in respect of the winter late-night shopping event; subject each year to a post-event expenditure report (this being in place of the grant previously given to the Chamber of Commerce for that purpose).

FC2019/48.5 The Council provisionally agrees funding in-principle as requested by Lewes Light (for grant support of <£8,000 for the February 2020 event) and the High Street Traders Association (for a contribution of £10,000pa towards cost of a three-year festive lighting agreement) subject to final details and recommendations to Council by the Commemorations Committee.

d) UN Sustainability Goals Working Party 28th August 2019: This meeting had taken place the night before, and a brief oral report was offered to Council by Cllr Baah, who had been elected as Chair. The meeting had revisited the findings of the earlier Working Party and found that the Council had a good baseline upon which to build in most of the areas where it had influence. There was an expectation that the upcoming Mayor's event "Building a Sustainable Lewes" would identify many areas where collaborations and further developments were possible.

It was resolved that:

FC2019/48.6 The oral report on the meeting of the UN Sustainability goals Working Party held on 28th August 2019 is noted

e) Changes to Members' appointed duties: Report FC007/2019 (*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:**

FC2019/48.7 The individual responsibilities of Members for the remainder of the 2019/20 municipal year shall be amended as:

Cllr Makepeace is appointed to the Open Council Working Party

Cllr Makepeace is appointed to the Finance Working Party

Cllr O'Keeffe has stepped down from the Finance Working Party

FC2019/49

RETENTION of INTERNAL AUDITOR:

A report (*FC006/2019 – copy in the Minute book*) proposed retention of the current Internal Auditor. It was explained that:

1. The Council is subject to a statutory audit regime defined by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI2015/234).
2. All local councils were required at least once a year to confirm "in accordance with proper practices", a review of their system of internal control including a review of internal audit. Since 2003, when such regulations were first extended to Parish Councils, this had been reported as part of Lewes Town Council's published accounts booklet and repeatedly described as good practice by internal and external auditors.
3. It was noted that the term internal auditor (IA) can be misleading, as this is an independent external consultant, commissioned direct by a Council – contrasting with the external audit carried out by contractors on behalf of central government.
4. The IA has a role in reviewing the effectiveness of control measures that a council decides to put in place and Lewes Town Council had been consistently fortunate to retain the services of IA's who were extremely experienced in high-level local government financial management.
5. Both the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and The Sussex & Surrey Associations of Local Councils (SSALC) maintained lists of "jobbing" internal auditors, but few considered to offer experience and qualifications appropriate to the work of a

larger Parish. Mark Mulberry is a Chartered Certified Accountant, Registered Tax Advisor; and Registered Auditor with a private practice based in Surrey who, coincidentally, manages SSALC's own finances and finance-related training for councils, and who also provides audit services to several other larger councils. Mr Mulberry had acted as IA for Lewes Town Council since the 2011/12 financial year, and developed a thorough understanding of the particular operating environment.

6. A practical programme for internal audit at Lewes was conducted in two parts; the first concentrating on systems and procedures and the second on financial aspects. These were carried out in the autumn and spring respectively. As part of the process a written plan and other associated information were provided to ensure the council can fulfil its obligations. At the end of the process a comprehensive report was submitted to council.

7. Fees were charged based on time spent and, as members of SSALC, Lewes enjoyed a significant discount. In addition, there was a small charge for travel cost but not for travel time. The fee was considered extremely reasonable; compared very favourably with other audit costs.

There followed a general discussion and a question was raised as to the principles of the audit, and the scope to extend it into areas such as sustainability. It was noted that the current programme addressed the required statutory reviews, and additional types of audit or scrutiny would be a matter for separate consideration.

It was resolved that:

FC2019/49.1 Mr Mark Mulberry, of Mulberry & Co., 9 Pound Lane, Godalming, Surrey, GU7 1BX be retained as Internal Auditor to Lewes Town Council for the 2019/20 financial year.

FC2019/50

TRAINING PROPOSAL:

A motion (*NOM012/2019 – copy in the Minute book*) proposed that all staff and members should receive training by a recognised and currently practicing sustainability trainer.

It was proposed that this would assist staff and members in the implementation of the Council's declared intention to proactively engage in environmental change reduction, mitigation and adaptation in the context of Climate Emergency.

At an earlier meeting the Council had agreed to send out a statement recognising a Climate Emergency and the need to act at every level of government to limit the effects of climate breakdown. It was suggested that these clear declarations should be followed-up with positive action. In order to do this, there was a need to understand what behaviours, practices and policies can and should change, and to be certain the actions taken and the policies implemented do what was intended. It was said that while the UN Sustainability Goals Working Party sought ways to promote positive and desired changes, it would be the informed knowledge, skills and support of all Councillors and staff members that render these changes into existence.

It was resolved that:

FC2019/50.1 Lewes Town staff and Councillors shall receive training by a recognised and currently practicing sustainability trainer.

FC2019/51

URGENT TREE WORKS:

A report (*FC008/2019 – copy in the Minute book*) was presented to apprise Council of the advice received from the District Council's Special Advisor (Arboriculture) regarding urgent works needed to trees in the Council's ownership, to ensure public safety.

1. The Special Advisor (Arboriculture) [SAA] had identified wooded areas on land owned by both Lewes Town and District Councils where there was urgent need to carry out major works to ensure public safety, and this affected trees in the Town Councils ownership at Landport Bottom, on the slope adjacent to the A275 Offham Road.

2. Both Councils were advised of the need to undertake clear felling of dead, dying and dangerous trees along public highways this Winter. It was also likely that many companion

trees would need to be felled to negate progressive, or cascade, 'windthrow', where fallen trees expose new trees to the prevailing winds; creating a domino effect.

3. The SAA had commissioned a Sylviculture specialist to produce a woodland management plan; plan of operations; application for a Felling Licence from the Forestry Commission; an outline for recovery of costs where possible, and any other pertinent factors or issues for us to consider. This would also cover the Town Council land.

4. Provisional cost estimates had also been sought for a coordinated programme of works and were awaited at time of writing. At this stage it was advised that it was prudent to estimate that the share of cost for works on the Town Council land could exceed £30,000 as they were extensive and would require traffic management on the A275 for the duration of the programme. It was possible that some modest offset to cost might arise from sale of cut timber for fuel, and grants may be available for replanting.

5. The Special Advisor (Arboriculture) had provided helpful and informative background information explaining Ash dieback and its effects on Ash and other *Fraxinus* species of trees. Once infected, most trees would die.

6. Trees located within the woodland environment and effectively sheltered had not made adaptations for lateral forces generated by strong winds, which would make them all vulnerable to catastrophic failure or wind-throw. The threat of progressive, or cascade wind-throw where fallen trees expose new trees to the prevailing winds creating a domino effect was a recognized phenomenon and an important factor in woodland management.

The woodlands in question were, until quite recently, open downland but post-WW2 they had become colonized by predominantly Ash and Sycamore. As the woodland was essentially created in a short period this had resulted in a narrow age range with a majority of the trees being around 70 years old. This mass of young trees competing with each other had unfortunately created etiolated (tall and spindly) trees with poorly tapered stems which were highly dependent upon one another for stability.

7. For these reasons, the removal of a large number of Ash trees would leave the few remaining trees exposed and highly vulnerable to wind-throw. In addition to felling all the infected Ash, therefore, it was likely that this would demand clear felling of any surviving species excepting a few clumps (subject to a rolling assessment by the SAA), that should be able to withstand such radical changes to their local environment.

8. The Council was warned of the risk of ignoring this phenomenon, particular to the location alongside the A275 highway.

9. It was noted that no immediate works were proposed, and a comprehensive report was in preparation that would be brought to Council before any work was contemplated. There followed a general discussion on the matters raised and several suggestions made by Members. It was accepted that the specialist expertise needed to address the matter could not be found in-house and the advice of the District Council's Special Advisor (Arboriculture) should be heeded. Members noted their thanks for the timely intervention and awaited with interest the specialist consultant's report in due course.

It was resolved that:

FC2019/51.1 Report FC008/2019 (*copy in the Minute book*) regarding urgent tree work, is noted, and thanks are offered to Lewes District Council's Special Advisor (Arboriculture) for his assistance.

FC2019/52 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.

FC2019/53 NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT

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

The establishment of a working party to continue development towards the UN goals, and the agreement to grant-aid the High Street Traders Association.

Dates to note were given as:

- The next Member's Surgery would be between 10am-12noon on Tuesday 3rd September August in the Corn Exchange (corner of Market café). Cllrs Catlin; O'Keefe and Maples volunteered to attend.
- Next Planning Committee meetings would be at 7:00pm on Tuesdays 3rd and 24th September.
- The Grants Panel would meet at 11:00am Wednesday 18th September; TC's office.
- All Saints Centre Steering Group would meet at 11:00am Thursday 19th September, in the Main Hall of All Saints.
- Buildings Working Party would meet at 11:00am Friday 20th September; Council Chamber.
- Landport Bottom Management Committee would meet at 7:00pm Wednesday 25th September; Council Chamber.
- The Personnel Panel would meet at 3:00pm on Thursday 26th September in the Council Chamber.
- The 'Open Council' Working Party would meet at 7:00pm Thursday 26th September; Council Chamber.
- Equality/Diversity/Inclusion Working Party would meet at 7:00pm Tuesday 1st October; Council Chamber.
- Pells Land Exchange Working Party would meet at 7:00pm Wednesday 2nd October; Yarrow Room (provided Lewes District Council has offered further information by that time).
- The Commemorations Committee would meet at 3:00pm on Wednesday 2nd October, in the Yarrow Room – to consider further details of applications for support first seen on 27th August.
- The next Council meeting would take place on Thursday 3rd October at 7:30pm, with a deadline for agenda items to reach TC by noon on Monday 23rd September.
- The Transport Committee would meet at 3:00pm on Thursday 10th October in the Council Chamber.
- Next deadline for grant applications is 22nd November, for a Panel sitting on 4th December – Council decision 12th December. 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).
- Meetings to be arranged: Devolution W-pty (pending info from LDC); UN Goals W-pty.

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 9.10 pm

Signed: Date: