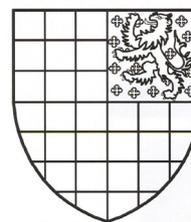


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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

Of the meeting of **Lewes Town Council**,
held on **Thursday 27th February 2020**, in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall**, Lewes at **7:30pm**.

PRESENT Cllrs J Baah; M Bird; S Catlin (*Deputy Mayor*); R Handy; J Lamb (*Mayor*); I Makepeace; Dr W Maples; Dr G Mayhew; R O'Keefe; S Sains; J Vernon; R Waring and K Wood.

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

Observing: Ms V McLachlan (*Finance & Admin. Officer*).

The council's Chaplain, Canon Richard Moatt, offered a few words before commencement of the meeting, reflecting upon the supposed differences between communities in the North and South that had been prominent lately. He perceived many *similarities* and noted how helpful and important the role of a local council could be.

FC2019/104 QUESTION TIME: There were 2 members of the public present. Questions had been received: in relation to the Council's Website, and regarding the Council's Grants Scheme. The questions, together with the answers given, are appended to these minutes. A further message was read by a Member on behalf of a correspondent, although this was noted as a statement of opinion.

FC2019/105 MEMBERS DECLARATIONS of INTERESTS: There were none.

FC2019/106 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Burrows and Earl who were unwell; Cllr Henman who was working abroad; Cllr Herbert who had suffered a bereavement, and Cllr Milner who had a family commitment.

It was resolved that:

FC2019/106.1 Reasons submitted for absence from this meeting are noted.

FC2019/107 MAYOR's ANNOUNCEMENTS:

a) The Mayor presented Canon Richard Moatt with a gift to convey Council's appreciation for all his work and support to the Council over the last 7 years as Council Chaplain. Members offered a round of applause and wished him all the best in his retirement.

b) A Lunch meeting would be held for representatives of the media who cover Lewes, on 24th March in the Council Chamber at 12pm to raise awareness of the work of the Council. All Members were welcome to attend.

c) Members were informed of an invitation to Lewes Operatic Society's production of Sweeney Todd in the Assembly Toom on 1st April. Tickets were available from Fiona.

d) An event - 'Access for All' - would be held on April 17th, an exhibition of technology to aid the less-able.

e) On 1st May a coffee morning would be held in the Council Chamber to celebrate 150 years of the British Red Cross.

f) Stadtmusik; the town band from twin town Waldshut-Tiengen, together with LGB Brass, would be giving a Concert at Priory School on 2nd May at 7.30pm.

g) On Friday 8th May there would be a VE Day event organised by Cllr Mayhew which would be held in the Assembly Room from 6-9pm. Tickets to the event would be free.

h) A meeting had been arranged with the Friends of Lewes, to discuss issues of mutual interest. This would continue the occasional series that had become established over recent years and would take place at 10.30am on Tuesday 17th March in the Yarrow Room.

i) The Mayor had recently attended a Focus Group organised by the Police and Crime Commissioner which gave a brief of priorities of the Commissioner. The group was an opportunity for Parish Councils to ask questions about police work.

FC2019/108 MINUTES:

It was resolved that:

FC2019/70.1 Minutes of the Council meeting held on 23rd January 2020 are received and signed as an accurate record.

FC2019/109 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) Grants Panel 5th February 2020: Members considered report FC019/2019 (*copy in minute book*) containing recommendations for payments of grants for the fourth cycle (of four) for the year 2019/20.

It was resolved that:

FC2018/109.1 The grant payments recommended in report FC019/2019 (as shown in column **G** of the table appended to that report) be approved with the exception of no. 7 (Opendoors Housing Ltd) which would be referred back to the next meeting of the Grants Panel for further discussion.

b) Landport Bottom Management Committee 26th February 2020: Council considered the minutes of this meeting:

Higher-level Stewardship scheme renewal:

1 The meeting had welcomed Ms Outram, Lewes District Council's (LDC) Specialist Advisor - Downland and Nature Reserves, who was contracted to manage the land on the Town Council's behalf. Ms Outram gave a short but extremely informative visual presentation on the nature of chalk downland and its importance and rarity globally. Members were interested to note that the UK holds 5% of the world's chalk grassland and that, although the South Downs appeared to be a large area only 4% of that was in fact classified as 'Lowland Calcareous Grassland' – the greater portion being farmed too intensively; to the detriment of the natural-occurring species and habitats that were so important.

2 The presentation demonstrated the variety of species and varieties of flora and fauna that had evolved to require this specialized environment; and emphasized the fragility of the ecosystems. Whilst the grazing (by sheep) of the land often appeared to observers to be 'farming' it was described as extremely low-intensity and carefully managed to optimum benefit of the landscape.

3 Since the initial reversion of the land in 1992, which had previously been used for arable crops, it had benefitted from successive environmental support programmes funded by European grants. Currently the land was part of an 'estate' entered into the Higher-Level Stewardship Scheme (HLS) and comprising LDC's nature reserves and specialized land-holdings. Due to the importance of Chalk Downland and the land area represented by Landport Bottom, it validated a high proportion of the total grant payable. Whilst this grant was actually 'pooled' and used across all the sites in the estate, it was nonetheless a beneficial scheme as it also offered expert advice services and other ancillary advantages.

4 The present 5-year scheme Agreement expired in April 2021, and the government Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) was already trialling a new ("post-Brexit") Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELM); expected to be in place sometime after 2022. This would follow the evolving Environment Bill, delayed by the national elections and 'Brexit', and was anticipated to match the needs of Landport Bottom extremely well. With this in view DEFRA had offered HLS scheme members with agreements expiring in 2019 and 2020 the option to 'roll-over' for an additional year or more. It was extremely likely that this opportunity would be offered for the current

Agreement, but the decisions had hitherto not been announced until within one year of expiry. An offer was unlikely, therefore, before May or June (or later). Lewes District Council's preferred option would be to apply to roll over the HLS agreement until 2022 (when/if offered). This would involve continuing the current arrangement between LTC and LDC until April 2022 – by which time there should be more clarity on what the new ELM grants scheme would involve and detail of availability/eligibility. This was recommended by Ms Outram and supported by the Town Clerk, who had been closely connected with these issues since original purchase of the land in 1992.

5 There followed a brief discussion regarding possible alternative options, and a question about potential for tree-planting. It was accepted that trees were damaging to an evolving Lowland Calcareous Grassland ecosystem and would essentially destroy it. Also, it was noted that there were likely to be many hectares of conventional farmland available in the future where tree-planting would be more appropriate, especially if farming practices changed to reflect reduced meat production.

6 Members concluded that they would recommend extension of the present HLS Agreement, when/if the option was offered, pending announcements regarding the anticipated Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELM).

Hire of land

The Committee had sought assurance that the prevailing land use Agreement for hire of the land to *eg* local Bonfire Societies, was sufficiently robust in terms related to restoration of the landscape following events. Example Agreement forms, currently used by Lewes District Council as the Town Council's contracted Agent, were considered and it was acknowledged that the relevant clauses were appropriate.

Some discussion followed on the actual experience, in recent years, of both Ms Outram and Mr Courage when dealing with post-event activities by regular hirers. A minor extension to one descriptive paragraph was suggested and accepted, but both officers confirmed that they were confident of proper consideration by hirers, and simply noted that it was helpful to them to know that the Committee was supportive of their role in such day-to-day matters.

Historic sign

A request had been received from Lewes Racecourse History Group regarding location of an historic commemorative sign somewhere on the Council's land at Landport Bottom. The sign had been made by local blacksmith Ben Autie and erected for the 50th anniversary of the closure of the Lewes Racecourse. A photograph had been provided depicting its inaugural ceremony. The two men who had unveiled it were the jockeys who were first and second placed in the last race in 1964. The sign was later removed to safe storage as someone had unilaterally cut it down and re-erected it on another part of the race hill. The Group hoped that the Council would assist in agreeing a permanent place where it could be seen and appreciated as originally intended.

Members were happy to agree this request, and some locations were suggested for discussion with the Lewes Racecourse History Group.

Realignment of fencing to dempond ("Jill's pond")

Ms Outram outlined proposals for extending outward the fencing surrounding Jill's Pond. This area housed an important colony of protected Great Crested Newts (*Triturus cristatus*) and a larger area of protected ground was desirable. The enclosed zone provided a breeding pond, nesting habitat and foraging ground. There were considerations regarding planning consent as the area had been originally protected by an 'Article 4 direction' under planning statutes, which required special permissions. The current status of this Direction following designation of the South Downs National Park Authority was not clear. TC would investigate this, as it also has bearing on other matters which would need to be addressed by the Committee in the foreseeable future. Members were supportive of the extension to the fenced area proposed, in-principle.

Councillors posed some questions to Committee members, which were answered, and it was noted that the next meeting would be preceded by a site familiarization visit to which all Members would be welcome.

It was resolved that:

FC2019/109.2 The Minutes of the Landport Bottom Management Committee (*copy in minute book*) held on 26th February 2020, and recommendations arising, are noted and agreed as:

FC2019/109.3 The Council will agree to an extension of the Higher-level Stewardship Agreement expiring in April 2021, when/if the option is offered, pending future replacement by the anticipated Environmental Land Management Scheme

FC2019/109.4 The siting of an historic wrought-iron commemorative sign, by Lewes Racecourse History Group, at a mutually-acceptable location within Landport Bottom is agreed (at the Group's expense).

FC2019/109.5 Proposed extension outward of the fencing enclosing Jill's Pond, to provide a larger habitat for the important colony of protected Great Crested Newts, is agreed subject to Planning considerations.

c) Pells Exchange Working Party 27th February 2020: Council considered the Minutes of this meeting:

1 Members were reminded that Council had previously acknowledged that (with reference to the suggested exchange areas A; B and C (*plan copy in the Minute book*)) 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 concern, 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).

2 Overall, the Working Party had 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.

3 The meeting noted that: having considered recommendations in June 2019, Council had not agreed them all and had proposed acceptance of only two of the areas offered – areas 'A' and 'C' – given concerns regarding the vestigial watercourse in Area 'B'.

4 Lewes District Council had been advised of this and, in response to the concerns described, commissioned an exercise by specialist landscape architects Macgregor Smith to assess the technical position: reasoning that the Council may wish to reconsider if assurance could be offered with regard to Area 'B'. The Working Party was furnished with copies of the resulting report (*copy in the Minute book*) and welcomed the clearly drafted information.

5 During lengthy re-consideration of the issue, Members reviewed aspects such as surface water run-off currently accumulating in the area and noted the planned engineering measures within the adjoining North Street development which were expected to ameliorate this in future. There was interest in retaining the last vestige of the historic Town Brook and *not* re-profiling the land as suggested in the report. On balance, Members favoured ownership and attendant control of future treatment of the land, rather than exclusion and potential loss of the feature within a bland boundary zone incorporated into the proposed adjacent car parking. It was felt that risk was manageable by judicious placement and maintenance of fencing and signage, and the options to reprofile, culvert *etc*

It was resolved that:

FC2019/109.6 The Minutes of the Pells Exchange Working Party (*copy in minute book*) 27th February 2020 are noted, and the recommendations arising are agreed as:

FC2019/109.7 The Council (as Town Brook Trust) agrees to the three land areas proposed at the Pells (*plans in Minute book*), subject to agreement with Lewes District Council that:

- > All associated costs of valuation; technical assessment; legal transfer, and boundary relocation (enclosure) costs shall be met by Lewes District Council, and no cost shall fall to the Town Council
- > Independent specialist valuation of the land areas concerned is undertaken.
- > 'Area B', containing the historic Town Brook, shall be cleared of existing industrial debris and general detritus and the profile of the vestigial watercourse retained, with fencing to both boundaries retained (as now) including reinstatement when development adjacent to the area's Eastern boundary is completed.

d) East Sussex Association of Local Councils meeting: Cllrs O'Keeffe and Catlin recounted recent attendances at meetings of the East Sussex Association of Local Councils (ESALC) and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) conference.

It was resolved that:

FC2018/109.8 The oral reports on the recent meeting of East Sussex Association of Local Councils and the National Association of Local Councils conference are noted.

FC2019/110 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) *Offham Road Trees:* TC reported that work was going well at the site and was expected to be completed on 28th February.
- c) *Lewes Priory* – TC had received a response from the owners of the area of Scheduled Ancient Monument representing a large section of the Priory of St Pancras, lying to the North of the railway line, which stated that they had no interest in selling the land.
- d) *Malling Community Centre* – The loan for the centre project was in the bank and work at the building would commence on 16th March.

FC2019/111 NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT

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

Malling Community Centre refurbishment.

Dates to note were given as:

- The next Member's Surgery would be between 10am-12noon on Tuesday 3rd March in the Corn Exchange. Cllrs Catlin and Sains volunteered to attend.
- The Audit Panel would meet at 2:00pm on Wednesday 11th March in the Council Chamber.
- A meeting had been arranged with the Friends of Lewes, to discuss issues of mutual interest. This would continue the occasional series that had become established over recent years and would take place at 10.30am on Tuesday 17th March in the Yarrow Room. All Members were welcome to attend
- The next Planning Committee meeting would be at 7pm on Tuesday 17th March. The subsequent meeting would be on Tuesday 7th April.
- The next Council meeting would take place on Thursday 2nd April 2010 at 7:30pm, with a deadline for agenda items to reach TC by noon on Monday 23rd March.

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 9.10pm

Signed: Date:



QUESTION RECEIVED:

Received from Mrs R Ellis 25th February 2020:

When will the town council website be updated?

* Some members' contact nos. are still missing.

* No date has been published for the Town Meeting.

* Generally, the website does not seem at present to be a particularly good means of communicating to the public

ANSWER:

o The website is updated according to priority on a continuous basis.

o There is no legal requirement for Members to publish telephone numbers (or any other contact details) and all those who have provided a number for publication are on the website.

o The parish meeting (which is not a meeting of the Council) is publicized (noticeboard; website, and local newspaper) when the invitation is issued by the Mayor – usually four weeks or so beforehand.

o Our website ‘at-a-glance’ calendar

<https://lewes-tc.gov.uk/your-council/public-notice/at-a-glance-calendar/>

which is accessed from the top line menu, was published in March 2019 and shows the date of the 2020 Town Meeting (23rd April 2020). This will also appear in the ‘live’ calendar a little nearer the date.

It is appreciated that the drop-down menu for the two complementary calendars could be clearer, and their descriptions have been modified.

o Your last comment is not a question.

Cllr John Lamb
Mayor of Lewes 2019/20

QUESTION RECEIVED:

Received from Tony Rowell on 26th February 2020

I would like the following question asked at Council on 27 February 2020. I aim to be there but if not would still like the questions asked and answered as last month a question wasn't put because of my absence.

I am pleased that the Council continues to award grants to organisations providing services to those needing them. However, grants are subject to a number of conditions and I would like to confirm that these are complied with. I would prefer not to receive a blanket answer that conditions are met and confirmation that each of the conditions I list below have indeed been met. After all the Council is distributing public money and in light of the increase in Council tax should ensure it is giving out money appropriately and in line with Council policy.

Questions

1. A general Condition to receive a Grant is 'Applications will not be considered from private organizations operated as a business to make profit/surplus.'

Would you please confirm that all the grants for approval on 27 February meet this condition? If not which organisations don't comply and why are they on the list for approval?

2. A general Condition to receive a Grant is 'The organization must provide a written Constitution that has been formally adopted by the members of that organization or, where their association is less “formal”, similar evidence of agreement between individuals.'



Would you please confirm that all the grants for approval on 27 February meet this condition? If not which organisations don't comply and why are they on the list for approval?

3. A general Condition to receive a Grant is 'The organization is required to submit audited accounts or accounts that have been independently examined by a suitably qualified person, for the previous two financial years or, in the case of a newly-formed organization or less formal group, a comprehensive budget and business plan.'

Would you please confirm that all the grants for approval on 27 February meet this condition? If not which organisations don't comply and why are they on the list for approval?

4. A general Condition to receive a Grant is 'The organization is required to have a bank account in its own name with at least two authorized representatives required to sign each cheque, or similar demonstrable financial control system.'

Would you please confirm that all the grants for approval on 27 February meet this condition? If not which organisations don't comply and why are they on the list for approval?

5. A general Condition to receive a Grant is 'Organizations that receive a grant will be required to submit a report detailing how the grant has been applied, once their project or initiative is underway/complete, using the pro-forma provided with their grant confirmation.'

Would you please confirm that all the grants for approval on 27 February will be made to comply with this condition?

Regards

Tony Rowell

Green Party

for the common good

ANSWER:

Please note that if a questioner is not present, questions *may* be asked on their behalf, at the Mayor's discretion. If the tenor of questions is such that no public interest would be served, or answers could be sought during normal business hours, it is unlikely that this will happen. It is noted that you continue to use the address of a political party which is already well-represented on this Council by seven elected Members; three of whom serve on the Grants Assessment Panel. All Councillors are aware of their responsibilities with regard to the use of public funds.

To address your specific questions, as posed:

- 1 Confirmed
- 2 All appropriate *bona fides* provided and found acceptable
- 3 One 'startup' in the field of youth social development – no history but assessment panel considered detail provided to be satisfactory
- 4 All appropriate *bona fides* provided and found acceptable
- 5 It is, as you have recognized, a condition. Beneficiaries receive an award letter in which is highlighted:

“As a condition of this award, we require that you provide a brief report at the conclusion of the project; USING THE FORM PROVIDED (please do NOT submit alternative formats or supplementary material).

Please provide enough detail to enable Councillors to assess the application of these public funds. **Failure to do so may affect future applications.** Please send this to the address above, or scan and send by email.”

It is difficult to conceive a means by which a beneficiary could be “made to comply”, and any breach of this condition would be dealt-with in a manner appropriate to circumstances.

Cllr Stephen Catlin

Member of Grants Panel and Deputy Mayor of Lewes 2019/20