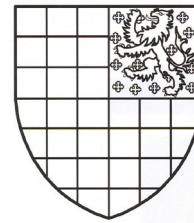


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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

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

held on **Thursday 24th June 2021**, in the Corn Exchange, Lewes Town Hall, at **7:30pm**.

PRESENT Councillors Dr J Baah; M Bird; R Burrows; S Catlin (Wischhusen) (*Mayor*); G Earl; R Handy; J Lamb; I Makepeace; Dr W Maples; 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*); L Symons (*Town Hall Manager*)

Observing: B Courage (*Town Ranger*); Ms F Willis (*Asst Manager Malling Community Centre*). Ms L Chrysostomou (*TC designate [attending prior to appointment]*).

MAYOR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- a) The Mayor encouraged all present to remember that the Covid-19 pandemic was far from over and that, whilst the ‘physical’ meeting was required for Council to make lawful decisions, the measures taken to ensure social distancing and minimize risks of transmission of the virus should be scrupulously observed throughout the evening. The meeting should be as brief as practical to ensure business was properly conducted but with the shortest possible contact-time. Meetings which could legitimately be classified as advisory would continue to be held online via Zoom.
- b) All present welcomed Laura Chrysostomou, the Town Clerk Designate, who was attending prior to taking up her appointment to familiarize herself with the Council. Councillors joined in wishing Julie Dean, the Council’s Reception/Administration Officer and also Town Hall Cleaner, a speedy recovery from emergency cardiac treatment. Julie had now returned home and was expected to have a four/six week period of recuperation. Flowers and a card had been sent.
- c) Members were reminded that Lizzie Zeyfert, All Saints Centre Manager, was to start maternity leave later in the year – that was now confirmed as 10th September. The Council wished her well, and it was announced that Claire Tully, ASC Assistant Manager, had since announced that she is expecting her second child and would start maternity leave on 22nd October.
- d) The Mayor mentioned a recent attendance at a meeting of the Lewes Twinning Association, and was pleased to report that the organization was looking forward and planning possible scenarios for the resumption of a programme of activities, post-Covid.

FC2021/13 QUESTION TIME: There were no questions.

FC2021/14 MEMBERS DECLARATIONS of INTERESTS:

Cllr Bird advised that he was a member of the executive group of the Ouse Valley CARES initiative which was the subject of a motion on the agenda for this meeting.

FC2021/15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies had been received from Cllr Henman, who had a work commitment; Cllr Herbert, who was forced to isolate due to family contact with a positive Coronavirus case, and Cllr Dr Mayhew; who was unwell. **It was resolved that:**

FC2021/15.1 Reasons submitted for absence from this meeting are noted.

FC2021/16 MINUTES:

It was resolved that:

FC2021/16.1 Minutes of the Council meetings held on 29th April and 5th May 2021 were received and agreed as an accurate record.

FC2021/17 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) Personnel Panel: Council received a report (*Report FC005/2021 copy in the Minute book*) which apprised Members of the conclusion of the recruitment for a successor to the present Town Clerk.

1. Following the series of workshops held by the Personnel Panel since June 2020 (each previously reported to Council), the post of Town Clerk (designate) had been widely advertised and ten applications were received by the closing date, 8 from within the Parish Council sector. Applicants had indicated where they had seen the post advertised and the report offered a summary of these responses.
2. At a meeting facilitated by the Council's consultant, the Regional Director of Southeast Employers (SEEmp), Jennifer McNeill, seven candidates were selected for first-stage interviews. Candidates were asked to complete, in advance of their interview, a CREDO™ self-assessment to gain insights into their personal management style and approach. These were independently assessed and the Panel briefed on each. Candidates were asked to present a briefing note on a hypothetical scenario designed to test knowledge; awareness; flexibility; insight; empathy, reporting and presentation skills *etc.*
3. Interviews were conducted in two tranches, on 10th and 14th May 2021 by all Personnel Panel, members, assisted by Ms McNeill, the Assistant TC/Civic Officer, and TC. Candidates were asked questions arising from their presentation, and a set of questions related to their match with the Personal Specification plus individual questions arising from analysis of their completed CREDO report.
4. Three candidates had been selected for second interviews, held on 21st May 2021. At these interviews Panellists further investigated responses to questions from the first stage, and candidates were asked to identify a key success, event, or development of which they were particularly proud. This was in detail and gave rise to further questions in depth. There was further exploration of the profiling reports, and candidates were asked to describe their need in the area of personal development in the event of success.
5. Following the final interview, the Panel and advisers reviewed all three in depth and were unanimous in their selection of candidate to be offered the job. This was Ms Laura Chrysostomou, currently Deputy Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer at Littlehampton Town Council.
6. Ms Chrysostomou's acceptance had been received, and referees had submitted very positive remarks. A starting date was agreed as Wednesday 1st September 2021, and she expected to be able to participate in the recruitment of a new Responsible Finance Officer, which would commence before then.
7. All unsuccessful candidates were sent a copy of their personal CREDO assessment with hopes that these may be helpful in their present, and any future, roles.
8. Council were advised that TC would retire on 14th December 2021, remaining employed until then, but would cease work on 29th October, to partially-offset accrued leave entitlement. Once Ms Chrysostomou has established herself and before TC effectively left, an interim probationary review would be conducted as a matter of good practice, following which it would be necessary for Council to formally designate her as the Council's Proper Officer and transfer those responsibilities.

It was resolved that:

FC2021/17.1 Report FC005/2021 (*copy in the Minute book*) detailing the conclusion of the recruitment for a successor to the present Town Clerk is received and noted.

b) Grants Panel 2nd June 2021: Members considered report FC001/2021 (*copy in minute book*) containing recommendations for payments of grants for the first cycle (of four) for the year 2021/22. Following some questions on particular applications **it was resolved that:**

FC2021/17.2 The grant payments recommended in report FC001/2021 (*copy in minute book*), as shown in column G of the table appended to that report, be approved.

c) Mallig Community Centre Steering Group 11th June 2021: Council considered the Minutes of this meeting (*copy in the Minute book*).

1. *General overview:* The Group had reviewed the evolution of the project to refurbish the Centre; beginning with the responses to original public consultation on desired facilities and

showing the drawings depicting the vision for the wider area and recreation ground, to be funded from planning agreements on development of the North Street Quarter/Phoenix area. For the benefit of Members who had not yet visited the rebuilt Centre there followed a series of photographs depicting the refurbished Centre and the facilities offered, which illustrated how the project had met those requirements as far as practicable. It was noted that the improved space and general amenity value of the building would inevitably alter the usage profiles compared with the previous layout and management model.

TC had described the position regarding ‘snagging’ following the practical completion of building works – photographic examples illustrated some of the elements being addressed. These items were more extensive and complex than indicated in the original list produced at the point of handover by the building contractor, but were now progressing steadily, and various sub-contractors were scheduled to visit to complete rectification jobs.

Fire risk assessment had been carried-out and the maximum safe capacity of the spaces was established. Contracts were in place for hygiene services, alarm monitoring *etc* and the ground-source heat pump installation was now accredited with the government Renewable Heat Incentive. This is a financial incentive scheme designed to increase the uptake of renewable heat technologies and reduce carbon emissions and will return payments to the Council for up to 20 years based upon periodic submission of usage data.

Telephones & data connections were being arranged and the Centre was currently using a mobile number (07708 648028) which would ultimately become the emergency phone. Email was in place and messages could be sent to mallingscentre@lewes-tc.gov.uk. Almost-new office furniture had been obtained free of charge from a charity supplier.

There followed a general discussion on several aspects of the building and prospective operations, including such things as bicycle stands and ‘basic’ equipment for use by hirers. It was recognized that a new profile of use would emerge once operations commenced.

2. *Prospective re-opening and relaxation of covid-19 restrictions:* TC gave an update on the position regarding allowable events under Covid-19 regulations and noted that it was anticipated that some events should be possible once restrictions eased subject to the government’s announcement planned for the 14th June. It was noted that ‘headline’ information in the media was often not consistent with the actual regulations or government statutory guidance. The appropriate guidance was monitored, and plans adapted as appropriate to any developments in that regard. Re-opening would follow the government programme – anticipated 21st June – although the building would not be fully-equipped. It would be desirable to hold a ‘Grand re-opening’ to celebrate the project, but this was likely to be later in the year.

3. *Catering:* General licensing was under review as the building had been substantially altered, and it was likely that a new license would be required for all purposes. Specialist advice had been sought as to the practicalities of offering a concession to a professional caterer to equip and operate the café/bar. It was not thought appropriate to allow hirers to use the kitchen, as in the past, and the redesign had anticipated a more professional, managed, service. The facility had been independently assessed as likely to be very attractive to prospective concessionaires, and it should not be necessary to offer a rent-free period in recognition of their initial investment in equipment. It was proposed that a contract be drafted for approval by the Group, with assistance from experienced specialist agents, which could specify requirements for any aspects unique to the Council’s policies and overall management of the building. It had been recommended that as the proportions of business rates, utilities consumption *etc* attributable to the café operation were likely to be quite small, an all-inclusive contract was appropriate and this was expected to yield significantly higher income to the Council. When a contract was offered to the market, it should be possible to require a presentation by bidders before a tender was accepted, to assess compatibility with the Council’s outlook. The Group agreed the principles of this proposal and work would begin on drafting a contract. Until catering was fully-established at the Centre, small items of equipment for preparing hot and cold beverages (*eg* boiling urns) could be used.

4. *Fees & Charges:* Members considered comparative fees for public rooms and buildings in the area, and there followed a lengthy discussion on an appropriate tariff to reconcile the

continuing community focus of the Centre with the acknowledged improvements in facilities that it now offered. The Group also considered a list of previous hirers; the periods hired, the original tariff and the facilities that had been used.

After detailed consideration, it was decided that a fair starting-point would be to copy the tariff offered at the All Saints Centre, with an introductory reduction of 30% applied, and this would be comprehensively reviewed after a year. This would recognize the fact that the Centre would not initially be fully equipped or providing catering facilities, and the profiles of demand and usage would evolve over the first few years.

5. *Miscellaneous issues:* There followed a general discussion on various general matters before the meeting ended, including signage; principles of hiring by the hour and Value Added Tax, among other things. In answer to a question, TC confirmed that the contract price for the rebuild had not been exceeded, but provisional elements allowing for contingencies had been fully-utilized. Interim payments had been made to the contractors at each milestone subject to validation certificates issued by the Council's managing surveyors, according to the protocol prescribed by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. Some Members felt that the contractor should be prepared to disclose their final costs, although TC advised this would be considered commercially-sensitive information.

Members who wished to look around the Centre were asked to contact Hannah or Faye at mallingscentre@lewes-tc.gov.uk or telephone 07708 648028. TC would distribute these details.

In answer to a suggestion the Group was asked to consider the provision of a publicly-accessible water fountain. Subsequently, **it was resolved that:**

FC2021/17.13 The Minutes of the Malling Community Centre Steering Group meeting held on 11th June 2021 (*copy in the Minute book*) are received and noted, and the recommendations of the Group arising from that meeting are approved.

FC2021/18 COUNCILLORS' INDIVIDUAL DUTIES:

Report FC002/2021 (*copy in minute book*). was received, regarding changes to Members allotted individual duties. The effects of these were shown in an appended table. Subsequently, **it was resolved that:**

FC2021/18.1 The individual duties of Members for the remainder of the 2021/22 municipal year shall be amended as (shown in the appendices to Report FC002/2021 [*copy in minute book*]):

Cllr S-A Sains is appointed to serve on the Grants Panel and All Saints Steering Group.

Cllr J Lamb is appointed to serve on the Executive body of Lewes Chamber of Commerce.

FC2021/19 OUSE VALLEY CARES INITIATIVE:

Council considered a Motion (NOM006/2021 *copy in the Minute book*) proposing that support was pledged to the Ouse Valley CARES Partnership and there should be involvement in joint initiatives where appropriate. It was explained that the OUSE Valley CARES project - (Climate Action, Ecological Resilience, Sustainability) was a partnership initiative that aimed to support community projects that tackle the climate and ecological emergencies.

It was coordinated by the South Downs National Park and included partners such as Lewes District Council, Sussex Community Development Association, Community Energy South, Seaford Community Partnership, Railway Land Trust, Transition Town Lewes and other Town and Parish councils within the project area.

The area follows the river valley downstream from Barcombe, through Lewes and the villages of the lower Ouse Valley to Newhaven and includes Seaford.

Ouse Valley CARES was one of only 21 proposals to be awarded funding from around 550 submissions. The £151,000 funding was earmarked for the employment of two outreach posts and the development of local projects. A full bid (£2.5 million) would be submitted in April 2022

Two outreach officers had recently been appointed and were hosted by the Sussex Community Development Association (SCDA) and the South Downs National Park. They would be responsible for supporting potential projects throughout the year.

These would include projects which;

- > Create more green corridors across and between communities and connections to the wider countryside and the South Downs National Park. These include projects such as tree planting, wildflower corridors and improving habitat quality at nature reserves.
- > Enhance wellbeing, knowledge and skills around climate change reduction, such as community gardens, community orchards, training for groups and schoolchildren, climate cafes, Forest School development, sustainability advice and events.
- > Reduce carbon footprint, such as supporting residents to reduce energy bills, training volunteer 'climate and energy champions', identifying new sites for community-owned energy schemes and helping to increase accessibility to electric vehicles and active travel projects.

Ouse Valley CARES would use the Climate Action Forum website as a vehicle for signposting activity in the project area: www.climateactionforum.org.uk

It was resolved that:

FC2021/19.1 Lewes Town Council pledges its support to the Ouse Valley CARES Partnership and its willingness to be involved in joint initiatives where appropriate.

FC2021/20

CORPORATE RISK ASSESSMENT 2021/22:

Members considered report FC003/2021 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 300 risk elements within 37 functions/areas of operation. Not all were relevant to LTC, but scores had been awarded to 290 risk elements, and there were no salient points of concern. A summary report extract was appended; the full report (159 pages) being available on request to TC if required. **It was resolved that:**

FC2021/20.1 Lewes Town Council notes the Corporate Risk Assessment report, reference FC003/2021 (*a copy is included in the Minute book*) and the summary table of assessed risks for 2021/22 appended to it.

FC2021/21

INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT:

Council received the final report from its retained Internal Auditor on the financial year ended 31st March 2021 (*copy in the Minute Book*). The audit had been conducted in accordance with current best practice and statutory guidelines. Areas covered in the final and earlier (November 2020) interim audit included:

- > Books of account (interim audit)
- > Financial regulations, governance and payments (interim and final audit)
- > Risk management and insurance (interim and final audit)
- > Budget, precept and reserves (interim and final audit)
- > Income (interim and final audit)
- > Petty cash (interim audit)
- > Payroll (interim and final audit)
- > Assets and investments (interim and final audit)
- > Bank and cash (interim and final audit)
- > Year end accounts (final audit)
- > Limited assurance review (interim and final audit)
- > Transparency (interim and final audit)
- > Exercise of public rights – inspection of accounts (final audit)
- > Publication requirements (interim and final audit)
- > Trusteeship (interim audit)

It was noted that the Internal Auditor's report forms the key element of the Council's internal control regime and the structure of this was designed to confirm that every element of the

statutory audit framework was satisfied and, supported by the routine work of the Audit Panel, was to give Council the confidence that it should affirm each statement on the statutory Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR).

Councillors were pleased to note the comments, made in the Auditor's introduction, that

"It is our opinion that the systems and internal procedures at Lewes Town Council are well established and followed." and that criteria for all control assertions required on the AGAR had been met.

Consequently, it was **resolved that:**

FC2021/21.1 Lewes Town Council notes the report of Mulberry and Co on their Internal Audit work for the Council for the year ended 31st March 2021 (*a copy is included in the Minute book*).

FC2021/22 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN:

Members received report FC004/2021 (*copy in minute book*) which presented the requisite accounting information and draft Annual Governance & Accountability Return (Year ended 31st March 2021) 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 assured itself that all responsibilities are satisfied.

Consequently, it was **resolved that:**

FC2021/22.1 Lewes Town Council approves the Annual Governance Statement, shown at section 1 of the statutory Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2021.

FC2021/22.2 Lewes Town Council approves the Accounting Statements shown at section 2 of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for the year 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021, for submission, with supporting documents as required, to Messrs PKF-Littlejohn LLP; the External auditors appointed by the national sector-led body.

FC2021/23 ANNUAL ACCOUNTS:

Alongside the Annual Governance & Accountability Return, the Council's external auditors required the submission of various supporting documents and analyses, one of which was the statement of accounts published each year in a conventional format to show a Balance Sheet; Income & Expenditure account; statements of Reserves and assets, and various explanatory notes. The Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2021 were considered by Council and following some questions from Members it was agreed that anyone having a particular question or desire to inspect more detailed ledger records should email TC with their enquiry. Subsequently **it was resolved that:**

FC2021/23.1 The Financial Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2021 are received and noted.

FC2021/24 UPDATE ON MATTERS IN PROGRESS:

TC gave an update on progress in various areas:

Town Hall heating: The mandatory survey of ambient noise in the area proposed as the site of the Air Source Heat Pump was still awaiting a return to more typical levels of activity. Meanwhile the remaining functioning boiler had failed, although a makeshift repair had been successful. TC gave a brief summary of the background to the project; prompted by complete failure of one of the two current boilers in 2018/19. The phasing of the project to replace the system had been planned to install the Heat Pump first but would be amended to accommodate the new urgency created by the recent boiler failure.

Staffing: TC reviewed the position at the All Saints Centre caused by one current vacancy

(Venue Assistant) and the imminent maternity leave of the Manager and Assistant Manager. Three Venue Assistants would be recruited on fixed-term contracts, and the permanent position could be addressed at the end of the term. Interviews were imminent and the appointments would commence in time to offer a period of training before the commencement of maternity leave. Managerial oversight would be provided as required, by officers experienced with the Centre. The new post of Communications Officer would be advertised shortly. In due course the new post of Responsible Finance Officer would be advertised, and it was hoped that Ms Chrysostomou would be available to join in shortlisting and interviews.

Bus shelter – South Downs Road: In answer to a question – TC confirmed that the necessary licence to conduct works on the highway was still awaited. Liability for the destruction of the shelter (impact by a commercial vehicle) was not disputed, and the incident had been captured by CCTV on a nearby building development site and TC held a copy of the very clear recording. The shelter would be replaced as soon as possible following receipt of the licence.

FC2021/25 NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT

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

- › Support for Ouse Valley CARES initiative.

Dates to note etc for forthcoming meetings and events were:

- › The next cycle of applications (Cycle 2 of 4) to the Council's grants programme has a deadline for applications (now online-only) of 3rd September 2021 with an online meeting of the Grant Panel on Weds 15th September to formulate recommendations to Council on 7th October.
- › The next Council meeting would take place on Thursday 29th July 2021 at 7:30pm, with a deadline for agenda items to reach TC by noon on Monday 19th July.
- › Other meetings would be scheduled in due course according to need, taking account of developments in response to Covid-19.

There being no further business, the Mayor closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their attendance.

The meeting ended at 8:55pm

Signed:

Date: