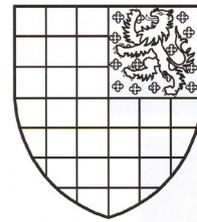


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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

Of the meeting of **Lewes Town Council**,
held on **Thursday 7th October 2021**, in the Council Chamber, Lewes Town Hall at

7:30pm
PRESENT Cllrs Dr J Baah; M Bird; R Burrows; S Catlin (*Mayor*); G Earl; R Handy; J Herbert; I Makepeace;
Dr W Maples; Dr G Mayhew; M Milner; R O'Keeffe; S Sains (*Deputy Mayor*); J Vernon; R Waring and K
Wood.

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*); and Mrs E Tingley (*C'ttee. Admin.*)

Observing: Ms L Chrysostomou (*TC designate*) and B Courage (*Town Ranger*).

FC2021/53 QUESTION TIME: Cllr Makepeace asked a question regarding a previous decision of the Council. The question, together with the answer given, is appended to these minutes.

FC2021/54 MEMBERS DECLARATIONS of INTERESTS: There were none.

FC2021/55 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Were received from Cllrs Henman and Lamb who both had a family commitment.

FC2021/55.1 Reasons submitted for absence from this meeting are noted.

FC2021/56 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

All Councillors, staff and their families were invited to attend a trial run of the 'Top Trump' cards *iro* the Public Participatory Budget pilot scheme on Thursday 14th October at 2:00pm in the Council Chamber.

FC2021/57 MINUTES:

It was resolved that:

FC2021/57.1 Minutes of the Council meeting held on 2nd September 2021 were received and agreed as an accurate record.

FC2021/58 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 15th September 2021: Council considered report FC010/2021 (*copy in Minute book*) containing recommendations for payments of grants for the second cycle (of four) for the year 2021/22.

It was resolved that:

FC2021/58.1 The grant payments recommended in report FC010/2021 (*copy in minute book*) (as shown in column G of the table appended to that report) be approved.

b) Open Council Working Party 20th September 2021: The Minutes of this meeting were received, and the recommendations considered. The meeting had considered:

1 Public Participatory Budget pilot: A sub-group consisting of Cllrs Vernon and Waring were to develop designs for 'Top Trump' cards but had unfortunately not been able to meet since the previous meeting. There was some discussion on the concept and principles of Community Infrastructure Levy; the fund that was to be subject to the public participation. Cllrs Vernon and Waring would endeavour to meet later that week. A timetable was agreed as:

) Cllr Vernon and Waring would bring draft designs to a focussed meeting of the Working Party to be scheduled for Week commencing 4th October.

) 'Friends and family' of Members would be used as guinea-pigs to test the impact of the scheme during week commencing 11th October.

} The Working Party would meet again during week commencing 25th October, or earlier if possible, to refine proposals for Council on 11th November (deadline for Council agenda items was 1st November)

There was a question as to the timescale, and TC had advised that the CIL fund was a ring-fenced sum held on account, and this project was not directly linked to the annual budget process. What the project aimed to do was seek input from the public on priorities for expenditure of that existing fund, related to the list of identified items in s11 of the Neighbourhood Plan. He recounted the timing of the incoming annual tranches of CIL received, which each had to be disbursed within 5 years or risk being reclaimed by the Planning authority. He advised that it was not necessary to define the amount to be spent, as the principle was to prioritize importance. Some Members felt that it was important to declare the amount available. Members were asked to consider practical points for consideration at the next meeting, such as recommended printers.

2 *Allotment representatives:* The working party had previously considered suggestions put forward by an allotment tenant for having more Tenant engagement across and between sites, through a system of representation at Council Allotment Group meetings – and a request for regular Allotment meetings. It was suggested that volunteers be representatives for each of the Council sites, initially by invitation and subsequently following an election process. The Working Party had considered such questions as the democratic dilemma posed by individuals as representatives and contrasting models such as an Allotments Society (either pan-Lewes or site-for-site). Members had been asked to crystallize their ideas on these issues, and these were discussed. In essence these were:

- a) To canvass all allotment tenants regarding formation of an allotment society.
- b) To appoint (by selection or election) representatives from each site on an arithmetical basis according to the size of the site.
- c) To postpone a decision on representatives pending a series of open meetings across the next year (3 or 4) to which all tenants were invited.
- d) To hold a Symposium for all tenants, to be held once clocks had reverted to Greenwich Mean Time for practical reasons, at which the general question of representation could be openly debated.

A question arose regarding practice at other Councils, and the TC Designate offered to source a role description for a volunteer site representative. The discussion continued and ultimately an informal vote was taken on these options it was agreed that the option to hold a Symposium later in the Autumn (shown as d) above).

3 *Working Party status:* It had been suggested that the Working Party should have a continuing remit beyond the tasks set by Council originally, and some Members wished to promote the recommendation that the Working Party should become a standing Committee. TC had advised that it was open to Members to take that forward and present a case to Council, and the Chair had undertaken to prepare an argument in favour of this. The reasoning was given as:

- } There will continue to be regular changes in how the community is reached.
- } The Communications Officer might find it useful to have a standing committee as a ‘sounding board’
- } Recent proposals at other levels of government such as ‘Citizens’ Assembly’ offer opportunities which, although addressed by the Communications officer, might also require strategic decisions to which a standing committee could have helpful input.
- } A standing committee would act as a conduit for supporting communication.
- } A standing committee could usefully scrutinize communications strategies on behalf of Council – currently subject to informal comment by individual Members.

There followed a debate in which Members stated that these points were not new, and already adequately addressed by the *ad hoc* nature of the Working Party. Many of the things mentioned were part of the routine functioning of Council and the engagement of individual Councillors, adequately addressed by Council at its regular meetings. TC was asked to comment and

recounted the legal distinctions and the reasoning behind the original formation of the current Council structure, with a minimum number of standing bodies and using ‘task & finish’ working groups to address matters when it was impractical for an issue to be considered appropriately at a Council meeting due to complexity or scale. The list of suggested benefits appeared to be no more than the principles already underlying the roles of individual Members and officers and Council corporately. It was commented that there was little evidence of adequate scrutiny of communications, although other Members considered the matter was properly covered, and it was acknowledged that once Council set a principle it was executed by officers with professional discretion. A Member suggested that the working party should focus on its original remit, which was not yet fully addressed. It was proposed and **agreed**, in accord with this view, that once the Participatory Budget project issues were addressed, the next general Working Party meeting should focus upon the main remit originally set and it should then be clear if there was any merit in a change in status.

It was resolved that:

FC2021/58.2 The Minutes of the meeting of Open Council Working Party held on 20th September 2021 (*copy in minute book*) are received and noted, and its recommendations are approved.

c) Buildings Working Party 23rd September 2021: The Minutes of this meeting were received, and the recommendations considered. The meeting had considered:

1. *Town Hall Heating system refurbishment:* The meeting had welcomed Ben Campbell of Delta Green Environmental Design, the Council’s commissioned consultants; attending to advise. Members of the working party had been furnished with a set of documents for reference and TC advised that he had originally anticipated the focus of the meeting would be a recently-arisen issue which significantly affected the project.

Preliminary assessment of the electrical supply and distribution connections serving the Town Hall had established that, to serve the proposed Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP), an upgrade would be required to the buildings main supply. This had been submitted to UK Power Networks (UKPN), who own and maintain the supply infrastructure in the South-East, and they had determined that a local substation would require an upgrade to deliver the necessary supply. The cost quoted for this was over £150,000, much of which was attributable to basic engineering work such as excavations and groundworks. Quotes had earlier been received from five potential installation contractors which were broadly in line with the expected range, but the effect of this additional cost on the Council’s project was significant, and it had been expected that the meeting would revisit the programme – TC having identified various funding options which might allow it to continue with only slight revision.

Air Source Heat Pumps consist of an outdoor condenser or heat exchanger unit, which extract ambient air and transfer the heat through refrigeration pipework to indoor plant. A system would be capable of providing 100% of heating demand within the building during mild temperatures (*eg* Autumn/Spring), but the flow temperatures which they generate (around 55°C) is considerably lower than required (around 80°C) to adequately ‘drive’ the existing internal heating system during colder periods, when the system would need topping-up by an additional boiler. As the existing heating system (cast iron radiators and distribution pipework) was to be retained, the chosen system would install a hybrid heating system, comprising an air source heat pump supplemented by gas-fired boiler plant, based upon the ASHP providing approximately 75% of the heating requirements.

Immediately before commencement of the meeting a further quotation had been received, in respect of the acoustic enclosure required by the proposed Air Source Heat Pump, and this was an impractically large structure and such a high cost as to completely alter the viability of the project as it currently stood. TC’s advice now was that a comprehensive review of the project and the technical specification were called-for, as it now appeared that the total cost of the preferred option could be between £400,000 - 500,000.

Some Members robustly expressed their concern that these factors were not discovered earlier, but it was explained that this was the first practical opportunity to address the matter as necessary preliminary assessments of both the existing electrical supply system and the ambient sound levels in the area of the homes adjacent the rear yard had been delayed by the

Covid-19 pandemic. Estimates had been included for these elements, but not of the order of cost now being quoted.

Members, some with technical professional backgrounds, questioned the high quotations and asked if they were likely to reduce if investigated with the providers. There were elements that appeared to be open to further competition, but it was reluctantly acknowledged that there were unlikely to be significant reductions, given the nature of the industry. Mr Campbell was challenged as to whether he might have foreseen the order of costs now quoted, and he stated that this was unprecedented in his experience. The costs were not quantifiable until completion of the surveys and it was unfortunate that UKPN's infrastructure in the centre of Lewes was inadequate for this type of installation. It was an unfortunate fact that since the original project estimates were presented many elements had increased in price, but the installation contractors and machinery costs were still acceptable. What could not be foreseen was the extremely high charge for upgrading a sub-station, groundworks, and the acoustic shielding.

A member questioned the cost of the acoustic enclosure, citing the likely cost to build a music studio as a comparator, and Mr Campbell explained that the self-supporting structure had to allow free passage of air to the air-source heat pump yet mitigate the sound transmitted via the same air. This was a technical conundrum that required specialized materials and construction, although he had been surprised at the size of enclosure determined by the acoustic requirements, and the cost. It was noted that the surrounding area was relatively quiet for most hours of the day, which demanded more insulation, and ASHP equipment was accepted to generate low-frequency sound which 'carried' and was the most difficult to mitigate.

Mr Campbell confirmed that the model of ASHP was the same as originally specified, and Members were reminded that this had been selected having taken account of such factors as the ecological impact and sustainability and future availability of the refrigerant used in its operation. The original report had shown the investigation of alternative locations for the equipment, but none were feasible. There may be alternatives worthy of consideration if the project was to be reviewed, as the industry and the relevant technologies had continued to develop rapidly over the past two years. Members suggested that separation of multiple smaller ASHP units could be feasible, or the ASHP/boiler contribution could be profiled differently, placing greater load on boilers.

Original estimates had anticipated a simple upgrade of cable from a local substation but the supplier needed to effectively recommission the substation. In answer to technical questions regarding the existing electrical supply capacity, Mr Campbell advised that the capacity was inadequate for most of the options considered, and modern regulations prevented many of the 'workaround' suggestions being mooted by Members. He was asked if he had ever experienced such disruption or inflation of an ASHP-focussed project, and he confirmed that this was unprecedented.

It was agreed that a comprehensive review of the fundamental options for a more sustainable heating system was needed, and work on the project would reluctantly be halted until that was available. There was an acknowledged risk that the single functioning boiler at the Town Hall could fail and may be irreparable, but this was unavoidable. Members noted that recent global developments suggested non-gas options might be more attractive now. Mr Campbell agreed that his company could produce a new report in 4 - 6 weeks. The Working party agreed that it should meet again in mid-November once this was available. Mr Campbell was thanked for his report and advice, and he was invited to contact Cllr Milner if it was thought his technical input might be helpful – either his own or his professional colleagues.

2. *Insurance Risk Assessment Surveys:* The meeting received reports, recently submitted by Zurich Insurance Risk Engineering, on the Town Hall and All Saints Centre. These had been prepared following visits in August and September 2021 by the Council insurer's technical Risk Analyst and were comprehensive assessments of risks perceived in the buildings and operations. The surveyor's reports – intended as advisory, but ultimately relevant to an underwriter's evaluation of premium - were detailed and broadly complimentary. The executive summaries confirmed that:

In the case of the All Saints Centre – two items were noteworthy: one was classified as ‘advisory’ and related to the provision of a lightning conductor. This should accord with the standard BS EN 62305 - Protection against Lightning, and subject to scheduled, annual, testing and maintenance by a specialist, or suitably qualified electrical contractor. This was straightforward and should be accommodated within routine maintenance budgets.

The other was classed as ‘important’: the implementation of a Hot Work permit scheme. Significant fire risks are associated with hot work processes such as welding and cutting, grinding and the use of bitumen boilers - which may be undertaken in connection with structural alterations and routine maintenance work. These risks may be further aggravated by contractors who are not familiar with the premises, and who may not be aware of the potential risks. A Hot Work Permit Scheme should control all hot work - whether done by contractors or own employees – and is fundamentally a specific project risk-assessment. The surveyor had kindly provided a template and link to Zurich’s approved protocol. There was no direct cost associated with this recommendation and it would be incorporated into the building’s management immediately.

The report on the Town Hall cited three ‘advisory’ items – lightning protection (as for All Saints); Police response to intruder alarms (not available in this area – our alarms are monitored by the system provider); review of Fire Risk Assessments (to be scheduled).

Four ‘important’ notes were: A Hot Work certification protocol (as for All Saints); regular inspection and cleaning of kitchen extraction ducting (could be included with existing service contractor); electrical installation minor defects (previously identified by our own electrical contractor and scheduled for repair/replacement) and the need for a Rebuilding Cost survey for insurance purposes (not done since purchase of the building in 1998/9). This last would require a Chartered Surveyor to be commissioned specifically, as the present Building Sum Insured may not reflect the current rebuilding costs, having risen annually according to a theoretical formula.

3. General Discussion: A question had arisen as to maintenance of box-tombs in the churchyard of the All Saints Centre, showing encroachment of ivy and couch-grass. It was believed that Lewes District Council had commissioned a survey of repairs needed but no work was apparent. TC recounted the principle of responsibility for maintenance of a closed churchyard (distinguished from de-consecration) and the fact that the responsibility had been passed-on to the District Council under statutory provisions in the early 1980’s. The Town Ranger would enquire of District Council officers regarding the position.

It was resolved that:

FC2021/58.3 The Minutes of the meeting of the Buildings Working Party held on 23rd September 2021 (*copy in minute book*) are received and noted, and its recommendations are approved.

d) Pells land exchange Working Party 23rd September 2021: Council received the Minutes of this meeting, and the recommendations arising. The meeting had considered:

The background to this matter was that a land-swap proposal had been made in early 2018 by Lewes District Council (LDC) in respect of land held by the Town Brook Trust – The Pells swimming pool and recreation ground - to better-align boundaries with the proposed North Street Quarter development. The Working Party was set up to consider the matter in detail and after careful consideration of detail, 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.

A conditional agreement was recommended, provided there was no cost to the Council (as Town Brook Trust); no technical reasons were discovered regarding the vestigial Brook, and valuations adequate to satisfy the Charities Act regulations supported the exchange.

Agenda and Minutes of these meetings (18/9/2018; 24/4/2019 and 25/2/2020) are published on the Council’s website and show all relevant reports, plans etc. Final recommendations were agreed by Council on 27th February 2020, and the relevant Minute is FC2019/109.7.

That position was relayed to LDC immediately and the matter had remained with them since then. LDC had recently submitted amended proposals for exchange including draft Heads of Terms and an independent valuation report. Details were considered subject to business confidentiality although there were general aspects to which Council's attention had been drawn by TC:

- › LDC had discovered, in carrying-out detailed work on the title boundaries, that one of the parcels of freehold land which LDC had proposed to swap takes in part of the Lease demise of another property holding. It was therefore not possible to include this land parcel in the exchange and the Heads of Terms related to two LDC-owned parcels only. The area of land owned by the Town Council which would be transferred was less than the original area valued.
- › There was a proposed 'balancing payment' payable by LDC to the Town Council as part of the exchange, in addition to LDC's two land parcels, to account for the difference in area. This was a modest but useful sum.
- › The valuation report noted the date of valuations as October 2019, and it was not immediately clear if the subsequent sale of the North Street development land (and attendant change in development prospects) had material implications for either value or the proposals in general terms, and this should be established.

The working party had considered the valuation report and Heads of Terms, and debated the points raised. There were questions as to the desirability of asking for a revised valuation on the grounds of updated values and/or certain assumptions underlying the assessment (*eg* current planning position and the costs used as a basis for the likelihood of development and sale of homes on the transferred land). TC had suggested that LDC might be asked to revisit these aspects, rather than commission a full revaluation, but after lengthy consideration of all relevant factors and benefits to the Trust, Members agreed to recommend that the transfer should be accepted, while the offer remained open.

It was resolved that:

FC2021/58.4 The Minutes of the meeting of the Pells land exchange Working Party held on 23rd September 2021 (*copy in minute book*) are received and noted.

FC2021/58.5 The transfer of land between Lewes District and Town Councils, as proposed in Heads of Terms provided by Lewes District Council, is agreed.

e) Mallig Community Centre Steering Group 30th September 2021: The Minutes of this meeting were received, and the recommendations considered. The meeting had considered:

1 General overview: TC had briefly reviewed the current position, in that there were a few 'snagging' issues still outstanding but these were in-hand with sub-contractors as required and should be completed soon. Equipping the Centre continued, with tables and chairs now delivered and items such as window blinds installed. The building license for public entertainment; sale of alcohol etc was expected to be approved shortly by the Licensing Authority. Bookings were increasing, and the Centre Manager expounded upon these. Regular weekly bookings for evenings and mornings were rapidly filling the diary, and there were provisional bookings for single events in 2022. There were questions as to how these would operate under the proposed model of a catering licensee, and this would be dependent upon Council's requirements being met when tenders were offered to the professional market, if that were the model chosen. Most hirers seemed very open to a range of possibilities and excited about the future prospects. The majority of hirers were local groups, and most of the 'original' users had returned and expressed themselves very happy with the new building. One exception was the Scout Group, who were unhappy that they would be unable to offer some of their previous activities (indoor ball games and use of the kitchen for cookery skills training) and other dissatisfactions, including the charges. The Scout's traditional booking times remained open to them, but they were insistent that they must have exclusive use of the whole building. Other 'divisions' of the movement, such as Beavers and Cubs had returned and were very happy. Councillors expressed surprise that these younger age-groups did not have similar exclusivity requirements, and it had been explained that they simply chaperoned any young

member who needed to use facilities elsewhere in the building. Members were sympathetic to some of the Scout leader's points, although recognized that it would not be practical or advisable to agree some of the requirements. Discussions would continue, and any Members who wished to assist in finding a resolution were reminded that they must scrupulously observe the distinction between assisting a constituent, and operational management matters. It was recognized that a new profile of use would emerge once operations commenced, and Ms Roxx explained that there was much interest in the ultimate vision of a fully-operational Centre with the bar/café operating normally. This was attractive to many who used the halls, although some users sought a bar that they could operate themselves as a fund-raising opportunity, as in the past. There had been early discussions with other children's classes and family groups, and a relationship was building with the adjacent County Council's Children's Centre and a local adoption agency/group had expressed interest in regular use of the smallest hall. There followed a series of general questions from Members and discussion on several aspects of the building and prospective operations, including such things as users 'migrating' from other buildings/facilities in the area (a Wellbeing group were understood to have moved from elsewhere); bicycle stands (purchased – exact siting under consideration), and basic equipment for use by hirers. A 'gala' opening event would be planned in due course. A "Festival of Malling" was suggested as a theme, although it was acknowledged that the facility was intended to serve a wider community than the immediate local area. There was interest in the effectiveness of staff coverage for the operating hours that were becoming established. It was explained that these were being managed, and a number of other elements were in place to allow the Council flexibility in future *eg* the recruitment of three staff on fixed-term contracts at the All Saints Centre had covered the current establishment vacancy (Venue Assistant) and the maternity leave of the Manager and Assistant Manager. These would be reviewed in due course and there may be scope to redeploy one of these staff, although there were other factors to consider such as the eligibility for retirement of all operational staff at the Town Hall between mid-2023 and early 2024. Other matters discussed covered online booking systems; 'What's On?' guides; customer feedback opportunities etc, and it was acknowledged that there was scope for review by the new Communications Officer, collaborating with other working parties.

2 *Catering*: Further to the Group's earlier decision draft Heads of Terms (HoT) outlining details and the vision for the café/bar had been given to the Council's solicitor, and a draft lease was available for discussion. There followed a lengthy dissection of various elements of this, notably the opportunities for Council to influence or control hours of operation; locality of operator; use of local produce; sustainability of operations etc. All these aspects could be addressed by an interview process once a shortlist of credible/viable operators had been found through a tender process.

There were several questions regarding such aspects as the retention of the commercial agent, and their fee; the likelihood of attracting suitable operators with no current equipment available and no established clientele; opportunity to model flexibly for use as a community café etc. and it was explained that preliminary advice from the industry specialists indicated that the venue was an attractive proposition. The contract offered would specify requirements for any aspects unique to the Council's policies and overall management of the building, and 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. Cllr Bird argued that the HoT draft was rather prescriptive, and opportunities must remain open for local community operators. He was asked to provide suggestions for alternative text and undertook to provide this to TC after the meeting, for review and forwarding to the solicitor. Council noted these Minutes and it was observed that financial models proposed by prospective bidders must be carefully scrutinized.

It was resolved that:

FC2021/58.6 The Minutes of the meeting of the Malling Community Centre Steering Group held on 30th September 2021 (*copy in minute book*) are received and noted.

FC2021/59

OUSE WATER QUALITY:

Council considered a Motion (*NOM010/2021 copy in minute book*) which proposed that Council

should write to Southern Water and South East Water asking what steps the companies are taking to alleviate the high level of pollution in the Ouse caused by discharges of sewage from sewage treatment works along the river and its tributaries; and the high level of water abstraction that has had a damaging effect on the tributary streams from the South Downs that feed in to the Ouse.

The motion stated that: there are 35 major sewage treatment works beside the Ouse and its tributaries. In times of heavy rain, the treatment works cannot always cope and raw sewage overflows into the river. If the flow into a sewage works exceeds seven times the dry weather flow (DWF) the company is deemed to have consent to discharge raw sewage to watercourses via what are known as Combined Sewage Overflows (CSOs), which results in rivers being charged with pathogenic bacteria and viruses, according to arboriculturalist Mary Parker, who has been researching the water system in Lewes District.

According to a Sussex Ouse Conservation Society (SOCS) newsletter from 2008, on the 23rd June 2008 Southern Water was fined £4,000 plus £845 costs for allowing sewage to enter the Bevern Stream. In 2017 the CSOs at Barcombe Sewage Treatment Works discharged 64 times. That is more than once a week. In 2018 there were 98 incidents covering a total of 635 hours. That is nearly twice a week, for a procedure that is only supposed to be carried out during “exceptional rainfall”.

The risk of pollution is not just from harmful bacteria and solid waste but also from dissolved nitrates, phosphates and other dangerous chemicals. There are frequent reports of people, especially children, swimming or falling off paddle boards becoming ill with dysentery. On many occasions large quantities of fish have been found dead in the river.

The concentration of chemicals in the river is exacerbated by the need for water for human consumption, industry and agriculture. The resulting low flows of the tributary streams of the Ouse are often inadequate to dilute the sewage thereby causing much ecological damage as well as being a threat to human health. In summertime about 60% of the river water at Barcombe Mills is sewage effluent. The water there is then extracted and cleaned to provide potable water.

Lewes District receives water from sources owned and operated by South East Water and Southern Water. Southern Water, which is owned by the Australian investment bank Macquarie, has a licence to remove 77,500,000 litres per day from its downland bore holes. South Eastern Water, which is 50% owned by an American company and 37% owned by a Canadian company, has six boreholes along the South Downs between Lewes and Shoreham. The company has a licence to abstract 5,500,000 litres a day from the boreholes along the foot of the Downs. 6. This high level of abstraction has had a damaging effect on the tributary streams from the South Downs that feed in to the Ouse. In 2016/17 South East Water estimated that every person used 151 litres of water per day but there needed to be a long-term reduction in water use. It is generally believed that Sussex could be faced with severe water shortages in just ten years’ time if predictions from Southern Water prove to be accurate. The National Audit Office (25/3/2020) has called on the government to take further steps to prevent parts of the south of England from running out of water within 20 years.

There followed a lengthy debate during which several Councillors spoke. It was suggested that primary legislation is required and commented that another major flood event (as in 2000) was “inevitable” and that “effluent levels will be a key factor in community suffering”. TC was asked to word the letter “quite aggressively”.

It was resolved that:

FC2021/59.1 Lewes Town Council will write to Southern Water and South East Water asking what steps the companies are taking to alleviate the high level of pollution in the Ouse caused by discharges of sewage from sewage treatment works along the river and its tributaries; and the high level of water abstraction that has had a damaging effect on the tributary streams from the South Downs that feed in to the Ouse.

LEWES PRIORY – Priory Trust World Heritage Site bid

Council considered report (*FC011/2021 copy in minute book*) apprising Members of an initiative of Lewes Priory Trust (tenants of the Council's Priory Park), in alliance with the international Federation of Cluniac Sites, to register as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Councillors were reminded that:

Lewes Priory Trust hold a lease, expiring in August 2041, on the Council's land at Lewes Priory. The permitted uses under the lease are:

- a) The provision establishment and management of a heritage site and other facilities with access for the public and to develop the site as desirable for heritage, heritage related, educational and general leisure purposes.
- b) The repair, renovation, restoration, maintenance and preservation of the remains and the heritage site generally.
- c) The support and encouragement of archaeological and other research related to the premises.
- d) The establishment and development of museums, displays and other exhibitions and to publicize the site in whatever manner is appropriate.
- e) The provision of facilities for the benefit and education of the public and to make such arrangements as are necessary to enable the public to view and enjoy the site (whether free or at a charge).
- f) With the prior agreement of the Council to perform or carry on any other purpose or activity which can in the opinion of the Trust be properly performed or carried on in connection with or ancillary to these uses.

The Council makes an annual grant under the lease as a fee for maintenance of the site as a public park.

Information provided by the Chairman of Lewes Priory Trust explained that Lewes Priory of St Pancras is a Cluniac monastery. It was the major Cluniac monastery in Britain. The Cluniacs were one of the most important monastic orders in the Middle Ages and it means that for some 450 years Lewes Priory was part of a network of hundreds of Cluniac monasteries across Europe. Today the impressive remains of Lewes's priory are owned by Lewes Town Council and maintained on a day-to-day basis by Lewes Priory Trust.

Lewes Priory Trust is one of 186 members of the international Federation of Cluniac Sites. The Federation had announced its plan to register as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Sites fall into two main categories, "cultural" and "natural". There are already 32 World heritage Sites in the UK, including Stonehenge and the Lake District.

What this means for Lewes:

Stage 1 - the Federation is creating a list of Cluniac sites from which a shortlist will go forward in support of the Federation's candidacy. Lewes Priory Trust has already indicated to the Federation that it wishes to be part of that shortlist.

Stage 2: the Federation presents its case to UNESCO. For Lewes this means a lot of paperwork, perhaps over a three-year period, demonstrating that the Priory is properly maintained, that it is part of the community and that local bodies (and indeed all the way up to national level in both the political and cultural domains) are supportive. The Trust feels confident that it meets all the criteria concerned and looks forward to collaborating at all levels in order to bring about the success of the bid. Although there will be some costs incurred during this process (*eg* travel and other costs associated with making presentations etc.) the Town Council should need to do no more than offer its current level of support and assist in maintaining the integrity of the site.

Stage 3: if the Federation's bid is successful, Lewes is then part of a UNESCO World Cultural Site and the town, the county and the country can promote Lewes Priory as such. Although registered as part of a "collectivity" of locations, such as the Route to Compostela and the Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales, Lewes would now stand alongside individual locations of world renown, among them the Taj Mahal, the Pyramids and the Colosseum in Rome.

Councillors considered this a very exciting project and wished to give it every support.

It was resolved that:

FC2021/60.1 Lewes Town Council support the initiative of Lewes Priory Trust (tenants of the Council's Priory Park) in alliance with the international Federation of Cluniac Sites, to register as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

FC2021/61

POLICY on COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS:

There was in place a temporary policy with regard to continued restrictions on visitors to Council buildings. This required the wearing of masks by all visitors and limited audience or visitor numbers to 75% of a room/hall's normal capacity. This policy was to be regularly reviewed. Council considered the most recent Covid-19 infection rate statistics for the town and there appeared a slight decline in risk, although the picture was unclear and certain risk factors were thought to be increasing (*eg* seasonal changes and school-aged vectors)

It was resolved that:

FC2021/61.1 The agreed temporary policy on Covid-19 mitigation remains to allow events at Council buildings with audiences/attendees numbering no more than **75%** of the maximum capacity of a room. This will be reviewed at the next meeting of the Council.

FC2021/62

UPDATE ON MATTERS IN PROGRESS:

An update on progress with the Annual Major Items Plan was distributed (copy in minute book) and TC elaborated on various salient points.

FC2021/63

NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT:

Dates to note etc for forthcoming meetings and events were:

- › The next Planning Committee would be Tuesday 12th October at 7:00pm in the Council Chamber (**face-to-face meeting**).
- › The Open Council Working Party would meet during week commencing 25th October (or earlier) details TBC.
- › The Building Working Party would be convened when a revised options report is received from the Consultants.
- › The next Council meeting would take place on **Thursday 11th November 2021** at 7:30pm, with a deadline for agenda items to reach TC by noon on Monday 1st November.
- › The next cycle of applications (Cycle 3 of 4) to the Council's grants programme has a deadline for applications (now online-only) of 19th November 2021 with an online meeting of the Grant Panel on Weds 1st December to formulate recommendations to Council on 16th December.
- › TBC – Landport Bottom Management Cttee and others in due course.

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

- › Ouse Water Quality (*letter to Southern Water and South East Water*)

FC2021/64

TRANSFER of RESPONSIBILITIES to SUCCESSOR TOWN CLERK:

Council considered report FC012/2021 (*copy in the minute book*) which recommended immediate transfer of responsibilities to the successor Town Clerk.

The Town Clerk (TC) would formally retire on 14th December 2021, but on account of significant accrued leave entitlement would cease work on 29th October 2021, taking leave up to the retirement date and with any balance outstanding at that date paid in lieu in the normal way. This meant that the meeting of 7th October 2021 was the last scheduled opportunity before the Town Clerk was effectively unavailable, for Council to transfer responsibilities without any problematic 'gap' in the conduct of all the Council's statutory and business processes.

The Town Clerk Designate had been in-post since 1st September. The agreed separate part-time post of Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) was not yet filled (recruitment would commence shortly).

TC explained that the Town Clerk Designate had rapidly familiarized herself with the role and already demonstrated a thorough understanding of the duties and responsibilities. He stated that he had no hesitation in proposing a handover of responsibilities earlier than the standard review of a new employee and had no doubt that this would offer a smooth transition for staff and Councillors alike.

As she previously acted as RFO at her previous Council (another 'larger' Council with a Council Tax precept of >£1Million) and would have a thorough briefing from TC (the current RFO) before leaving, during commencement of the annual budget cycle, the practical option to bridge any 'gap' before the new RFO was in post was to confer temporarily these responsibilities on the Town Clerk Designate.

It was resolved that:

FC2020/64.1 All responsibilities and duties of the Town Clerk (TC) as Proper Officer; Head of Paid Service; statutory responsibilities and those conferred by Standing Orders; Financial Regulations *etc.* be transferred with immediate effect to the Town Clerk Designate, as a practical measure in anticipation of the imminent retirement of the present Town Clerk.

FC2020/64.2 Pending commencement of the agreed part-time Responsible Finance Officer (*as defined in s151 Local Government Act 1972*), the responsibilities of that role are temporarily conferred on the Town Clerk Designate.

FC2021/65

VOTE of THANKS

There followed a presentation of gifts to the retiring Town Clerk, and thanks for his service. Three Members – all very long-serving Members and all past Mayors - asked to speak and described the many changes and advances brought to the Town Council by Mr Brigden compared with the organization he had originally 'inherited' in 2002; described as a "complete transformation". He was commended for his extensive knowledge; professional and pastoral care of staff and Councillors, and thanked for his diligence, advice, patience and friendship. Mr Brigden responded and briefly described his perspective on the past and future; thanking Councillors for their gifts and kind words.

It was resolved that:

FC2020/65.1 Lewes Town Council records its thanks to its retiring Town Clerk, Steve Brigden, for his years of service.

There being no further business the Mayor closed the meeting; thanking everyone for their contributions.
The meeting ended at 8.35pm

Signed: Date:



QUESTION RECEIVED:

From – Cllr Imogen Makepeace (4th October 2021)

The Commemorations Committee of 12th August recommended to Council a budget expenditure for a firework display to commemorate the Queen's jubilee in June 22.

The Council has a policy for deciding Major Funding Requests.* Resolution FC2020/07.2 The briefing for this policy is as follows:

"This Briefing Note explains how we will assess requests for 'Major funding', eg normally any request for more than £2,000, falling outside our Miscellaneous Grants scheme."

In answer to my question in an email of 27/09

"Please could you define the difference between a committee's recommendation for allocating funds to a project and what is described as a "Major Funding project"?

I ask, because I am surprised to see that the recommendation for firework celebrations was not subject to our own policy for scrutinising how we spend public funds".

This answer was given:

"The 'Major Funding' principles apply to requests from third-parties as for 'ordinary' Community Grant applications – simply larger amounts.

You are quoting, out of context, a briefing note addressed to third-parties which states that the process applies '..when a relevant application is received'.

Had you attended Council you would have heard that this was not introduced as such, but as a partnership arrangement similar to others over the years where the Council has contributed such things as meeting rooms and assistance with the planning of events; some funds; the Mayor as host of opening/closing events and so-on. The Council will therefore be, effectively, spending its own funds."

Does the Council agree that *all* the money we are responsible for is public money and that we have an obligation to the community to demonstrate transparency and accountability?

Have these obligations been met by the process?

ANSWER: given by the Mayor:

These selective quotes are misleading: the FULL answer given (27th Sept) was:

"This item was debated at length at the Council meeting which you missed (*holiday*).

It arose from the recommendation of a committee which you also missed (*family picnic*).

There was a protracted debate in Council, culminating in a vote which supported the recommendation.

Had you attended the original Commemorations Committee meeting you would have heard that a partnership role in the project envisaged by the Bonfire Societies was proposed by our own Civic Officer as representing an ideal way for the Council to address the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

The Committee agreed. Your own colleague, Cllr Dr Maples, stated that although "not really her kind of thing" she anticipated that the event would be done very well, and that it was "...great if it is partly on our behalf...".

The 'Major Funding' principles apply to requests from third-parties as for 'ordinary' Community Grant applications – simply larger amounts.

You are quoting, out of context, a briefing note addressed to third-parties which states that the process applies '..when a relevant application is received'.

Had you attended Council you would have heard that this was not introduced as such, but as a partnership arrangement similar to others over the years where the Council has contributed such things as meeting rooms and assistance with the planning of events; some funds; the Mayor as host of opening/closing events and so-on. The Council will therefore be, effectively, spending its own funds.

The item was not 'waved through' as you claim but was subject to two votes – one on Cllr Handy's amendment calling for application of the Major Funding process, which failed, and one on the substantive Committee recommendation - which was **carried 9:5**."

..continued

Yes - the Council does have an obligation to the public to demonstrate transparency and accountability.

Yes - these obligations have been met by the process of recommendation and decision making through Committee and Council.

The Commemorations Committee is mandated to consider significant anniversaries, and to formulate recommendation for Council as to the appropriate recognition of them. The Committee did this with regards to the Queens Platinum Jubilee and the recommendation to Council was the sum of £15,000 to be included in the Budget for 2022/23 as support for the Lewes bonfire Society joint project for a Queens Jubilee firework display. The Committee felt this to be an appropriate recognition of the occasion, and by working in partnership with the Bonfire Societies, would be able to deliver a successful event at what was considered to be the lowest cost of a traditional Lewes display.

Transparency and accountability were demonstrated through the published minutes of the Committee, which formed part of the agenda for Council, which is published three clear working days before the meeting, ensuring the public are aware of the business to be conducted at the meeting. The minutes of Council were then also published, ensuring the public are aware of the decisions made by Council.

All Councillors should be familiar with Standing Orders regarding rescission of previous resolutions.