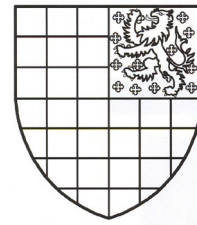


Town Hall  
High Street  
Lewes  
East Sussex  
BN7 2QS

☎ 01273 471469 Fax: 01273 480919

✉ [info@lewes-tc.gov.uk](mailto:info@lewes-tc.gov.uk)

🌐 [www.lewes-tc.gov.uk](http://www.lewes-tc.gov.uk)



**LEWES  
TOWN  
COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES**

Of the meeting of **Lewes Town Council**,  
held on **Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2021**, in the Corn Exchange, Lewes Town Hall at **7:30pm**.

**PRESENT** Cllrs Dr J Baah; M Bird; R Burrows; S Catlin (*Mayor*); G Earl; R Handy; J Herbert; J Lamb; Dr W Maples; DR G Mayhew; M Milner; R O’Keeffe; S Sains (*Deputy Mayor*) and R Waring.

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

*Observing:* Ms L Chrysostomou (*TC designate*); Ms L Zeyfert (*All Saints Centre Manager*); B Courage (*Town Ranger*).

**FC2021/39**

**QUESTION TIME:** There were six members of the public present, and a question was posed on behalf of Lewes Operatic Society, regarding the Council’s position on continued measures to mitigate risk of Covid-19 infection and restriction of audience numbers within the Town Hall. The question prompted the suggestion that the item scheduled as item 11 on the agenda be brought forward and dealt with following necessary formalities, at which point an answer would be forthcoming – this was **agreed**.

**FC2021/40**

**MEMBERS DECLARATIONS of INTERESTS:** There were none.

**FC2021/41**

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Henman, who was working; Cllrs Makepeace and Wood, who were on holiday, and Cllr Vernon; who was detained on family business following a bereavement.

**FC2021/41.1** Reasons submitted for absence from this meeting are noted.

**FC2021/42**

**MAYOR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

a) Councillors welcomed Laura Chrysostomou, the Town Clerk Designate, who had started her employment with the Council the previous day.

b) A request had been received from the LEWES WASPI group (Women Against State Pension Injustice) to display a small banner on the Town Hall on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> September (WASPI day). This would simply say “WASPI Lewes Area” and would not be fixed – the building’s listed status made that problematic - but it could be draped from Council Chamber windows or fixed to the frame surrounding the Martyrs’ Steps viewing pane for the day. As background it was stated that the Government Ombudsman had found, some years earlier, that the Dept for Work & Pensions was guilty of maladministration in that they did not notify changes, despite their own research that showed the majority of women were not aware that their state pension age had increased by up to 6 yrs. There are approximately 6,500 women in the Lewes constituency, born in the 1950s, who have been affected by the changes to their state pension age. Councillors were happy to support this request.

c) Members noted that Cllr Dr Baah was now appointed to the South Downs National Park Authority Partnership Board, and the Council’s congratulations were offered.

**FC2021/43**

**MINUTES:**

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2021/43.1** Minutes of the Council meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2021 were received and agreed as an accurate record.

**FC2021/44**

**POLICY on COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS:**

The Council had earlier decided to continue with some prudent measures to mitigate risk of Covid-19 infection (*Resolution FC2020/35.1 refers*). There was in place a temporary policy as set out in report FC007/2021 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 50% of a room/hall’s normal capacity. This policy was to be regularly reviewed

following monitoring of published Covid-19 conditions, and the question by Lewes Operatic Society (LOS) prompted this to be brought-forward on the agenda.

Members were interested to know what effect the restrictions had on LOS and the Society's representatives offered their insight into this. Council considered the most recent Covid-19 infection rate statistics for the town (source: gov.uk ) and it was apparent that there had been a slight decline in risk, although acknowledged that with pupils returning to school and other factors this was likely to rise again. The local 'R-rate' (factor for exponential infection) had risen from between 0.8 and 1.0 at the time of the Council's decision to 1.0 – 1.2 the day before the meeting. A discussion ensued in which various views were expressed regarding a relaxation of the current restrictions on numbers. With the caveat that LOS would be asked to encourage the wearing of masks by their audience, **it was resolved that:**

**FC2021/44.1** The previously-agreed temporary policy on Covid-19 risk mitigation is revised 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.

**FC2021/45**

### **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) Audit Panel 5<sup>th</sup> August 2021:** Council received the Minutes of this meeting (*copy in the Minute Book*) which had carried-out routine financial monitoring: Members had been furnished with detailed information (*copies in minute book*) following the end of the first quarter of the financial year and miscellaneous comparative values *iro* status compared with previous years. a Budget monitoring update showed actual expenditure and income values as posted to the Council's Sage accounting system for all transactions processed in the period. There was some discussion on salient points of detail, and TC responded with reference to the identified sources.

Ordinarily the Chairman would append his signature to the file of periodic bank reconciliations to verify the scrutiny already conducted, but this could be done in arrears at any point during the year. Scanned copies of the first-quarter reconciliations were shown on-screen and verified by the Panel.

There had followed a general discussion on various matters including: provision for equipping Malling Community Centre (adequate funds remained in the earmarked Reserve); grant recipients who did not appear to acknowledge the Council's support (this would be taken into account by the Grants Panel); ethical banking (it had previously been agreed that the new Responsible Finance Officer would be asked to research this); environmental auditing (outside the remit of the Panel, which addressed statutory requirements, but could be addressed); structural repairs at the All Saints Centre (programme underway).

The Panel had considered information on the Council's financial status and management for the first quarter; and found no items of concern.

#### **It was resolved that:**

**FC2021/45.1** The Minutes of the Audit Panel meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2021 (*copy in the Minute book*) are received and noted

**b) Commemorations Committee 12<sup>th</sup> August 2021:** The Minutes of this meeting were received, and a number of recommendations considered. The meeting had considered:

1 *Lewes climate festival:* The plans were progressing well, and a successful event was anticipated, weather permitting, including musicians; presentations; performances and science experiments. There were some minor problems, such as the need to find an alternative provider for a cake stall. A poster had been produced, and copies would be provided to the Town Hall. An electronic version was also requested.

2 *Lewes arts council:* It was reported that Lewes District Council (LDC) was believed to be about to announce a revised focus on Tourism & Culture. It was agreed that the most appropriate way to progress aspirations for a Lewes Arts Council might be to await

developments in this regard and to offer LDC assistance, such as facilitating a Lewes sub-group.

3 *The Queen's platinum Jubilee 2022:*

a) *Celebratory event:* Preliminary discussions had been held with representatives of Lewes's bonfire Societies who were beginning to plan a weekend event in June 2022 involving local area street parties followed by processions through the town culminating in a firework display, possibly from the Martyrs' Memorial. This would be the finale to a day-long public event, likely to be on Malling Recreation Ground. The Civic Officer had proposed that a partnership in these events would be an ideal way for the Council to recognize the Jubilee, given its own limited staff resources. The cost of fireworks for a suitable display was estimated to be of the order of £15,000, and the Committee agreed to recommend this level of support to Council, to be included when 2022/23 budgets are set. It was noted that there should be a requirement for an environmental impact assessment. It was suggested that the Mayor might also host a "seniors tea" on the day, as had been popular for similar events in the recent past, and perhaps a schools art competition with a display of the work in the Town Hall similar to that held for the Queen's diamond Jubilee.

b) *"Queen's Green Canopy" initiative:* this was a national project although there was some confusion as to whether the intention was to plant single or multiple trees. It was acknowledged that multiple trees had a greater chance of survival, and it was suggested that a pair of Pomegranate trees might be planted in the Peace Garden. An alternative might be a Mulberry to complement the existing tree in Southover Grange Gardens planted in 1951 by the then Princess Elizabeth. The Civic Officer would investigate the costs and practicalities of these ideas

4 *Lewes war memorial centenary 2022:*

a) *"Roll of Honour" Book:* The town's Grade 2\* heritage-listed war memorial would reach its centenary in September 2022, and Council had earlier agreed the principle of a book to be published by the Council to coincide with this, to commemorate all those who lost their lives. This followed research commissioned from Cllr Dr Mayhew into those recorded upon, and those omitted from, the memorial - which had commenced with the start of the national period of commemoration of WW1 between 2014 and 2018, and now represented an impressive body of work comprising biographies of 389 individuals in total. It had become apparent at the outset that the names recorded included several individuals with tenuous or no actual links to Lewes due to the method of applications for inclusion that had applied following the end of the war, whereas many Lewes people were not recorded there. Material from the project had been displayed in the Town Hall in 2018 to much popular acclaim. Cllr Dr Mayhew had conducted extensive research in the 7 years since then and had also prepared a comprehensive introduction explaining the socio-political background to the period. Maps and photographs were still required to finish the work, and incidental issues to resolve such as Ordnance Survey permission for reproduction, but over 181,000 words had been written. It was estimated that a sum of £10 – 12,000 might be needed to produce a volume of suitable quality, but accurate details of costs would need to be established. Conventional production timescales for such projects suggested that to publish the finished book by September 2022, work should start without delay. Colleagues wished to record their thanks to Dr Mayhew for his work on this project and agreed to recommend to Council that a sum of £12,000 be reserved pending establishment of costs for production of a suitable book (attributing authorship and research credits to him), and that the Commemorations Committee be authorized to complete the project.

b) *Rededication:* The war memorial was upgraded by English Heritage to 2-star status in 2014. The principal reasons given included:

*Historic interest: as an eloquent witness to the tragic impacts of world events on this community, and the sacrifices it made in the conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century;*

*Sculptural interest: by Vernon March, a sculptor of considerable renown notable for the vigour of his figures, whose premature death makes his war memorials his main legacy. That in Lewes is the finest of his memorials in England. The tight composition and verticality of its design are particularly well suited to its constricted site.*

A rededication ceremony was proposed, in 2022, and this might be combined with the Queen's jubilee celebrations with invitation being extended to the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment and regimental band, who might also be prevailed upon to play at the evening public event. It was agreed that this idea should be recommended to Council.

5 *Black History Month:* It was suggested that for 2021 the Council should again purchase some BHM Society education packs (cost approximately £50 each) and offer these to interested local schools. Cllr Dr Baah and Mrs Garth had been invited to meetings at The Depot with a group, Diversity Resource International, who were planning events for BHM across three nights in October 2021. It was proposed that a closing event be hosted by the Mayor in the Town Hall on 23<sup>rd</sup> October and there would be events at All Saints Centre and the town library.

6 *Tom Paine Day:* This item was deferred in the absence of Cllr Milner, who had promoted it.

7 *Pells historic interpretation boards:* The Pells Local History Group had prepared the basis of some attractive historic interpretation material as part of their aborted (due to Covid-19) commemoration plans for the area. These could be designed in similar graphic format to the Council's existing 'lectern' style boards advising on wildfowl feeding, at a cost of around £1,000. The Group had initially approached the Council in 2019 to partner in this project, with two boards proposed – one at each end of the lake detailing different historic contexts - but it had subsequently been affected by Covid-19. It was proposed that production of two boards be supported.

8 *Public art project:* A project was proposed to sponsor a 'waste artwork' that commemorates Mary Ann Woodhouse and Gideon Mantell, as well as to recognise the connection between fossil fuels and plastics. The artwork would be an Iguanodon, that litter pickers can fill with plastic bottles and bottle tops. There is a similar idea here seen at Betwys-y-Coed in Wales: <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/383509724517837029/>

There were residents who had for many years been interested in creating a Mantell/Woodward commemoration, and would probably be happy to be involved, as might Litter Free Lewes/Climate Hub and possibly the Sussex Archeological Society. The Council could commission the work, with a specification that includes the outline above, but with input from the Mantell enthusiasts, Litter Free Lewes, Climate Hub and the commissioned artist(s). If young people could be involved in some way, this would be ideal: perhaps conducting the initial litter picks or, perhaps the commissioned artist may wish to work with them. Costs were unknown, but it was an attractive project that the Committee agreed should be pursued and Council would be asked to support further research into costs *etc.*

9 *Sussex Day:* It was proposed that the Council should purchase a Sussex Flag to be flown on Sussex Day each year (16<sup>th</sup> June – St Richard's Day). The Civic Officer was currently updating the Council's flag calendar – following the protocol approved by the Government Department of Media Culture & Sport. Sussex day had been recognized since 2013, and a flag could be purchased for approximately £100.

10 *Miscellaneous items:* The idea of a "tourist-cam" webcam installation was agreed as an interesting suggestion that could be investigated as a future project.

The Minutes were received and noted, and Council then discussed each recommendation:

*The Queen's platinum Jubilee 2022 celebratory event:* There was a protracted debate on the funding proposal, in which several members spoke. Views were expressed that fireworks were not consistent with a climate emergency and a celebration could be mounted that was appropriate, without the inclusion of fireworks, although it was acknowledged that this was a Lewes tradition that was deeply embedded and appealed to a broad cross-section of the local community. It was proposed that the funds recommended should be subject to the Council's process for assessing requests for 'major funding'. TC explained that this was not a grant application by third-parties but a proposal, originating from the Civic Officer, that the Council become a partner in the planned events. This meant that, effectively, the money was for use by the Council itself and a formulaic approach was not appropriate. If there were concerns regarding the nature of the proposed event, then individual Members should vote accordingly.

Following further discussion and questions regarding the basis of the cost estimate, a vote was called on the amended proposal that the matter be subject to the Council's 'Major Funding' assessment process. The proposed amendment was not agreed, and a further vote was subsequently taken on the substantive recommendation, and **it was resolved** (9 for:5 against) **that:**

**FC2021/45.2** A sum of £15,000 be included in budgets for 2022/23 for participation in the Lewes bonfire Societies' joint project for a Queen's Jubilee firework display, as described at Minute FC2021/45 b) 3a) (*copy in the Minute book*).

*Lewes war memorial centenary 2022; "Roll of Honour" Book:* Cllr Dr Mayhew recounted the background to this item and noted that all the relevant Minutes from inception of the project in 2014 were available on the website. The matter of the Roll of Honour (working title only) was first recorded in August 2014, when he had been asked to apply his expertise to research and some form of solution to what was seen then as 'missing' names from the War Memorial. The research was regularly reported to Council, culminating in December 2018 with a report that the research was almost concluded and there was currently an exhibition of photographs in the Baxter corridor to accompany lectures in the Council Chamber. To complete the project, it was agreed that a booklet similar to that produced for the 'Our Pictures' project, and an online version, would offer a suitable legacy for the project. The proposed date to complete was the 1922 centenary of the dedication of Lewes War Memorial. The Committee now recommended in-principle agreement to the production of a suitable book, containing photographs, maps, and biographies to honour 389 names. Research was needed into the costs of design and production, before a final commitment was made, but the estimate of around £12,000 was based upon previous experience and anticipated a print-run of 500–1,000 copies of a book that might also be sold with a cover price of up to £10. Councillors made various suggestions and asked questions, and it was noted that the book could go online once printed copies were all distributed or sold. Thanks were recorded to Cllr Dr Mayhew for his work on the project, which had involved an enormous amount of time and effort. It was subsequently **resolved that:**

**FC2021/45.3** A sum of £12,000 be agreed pending establishment of costs for production of a suitable "Roll of Honour" book, and the Commemorations Committee be authorized to complete the project, as described at Minute FC2021/45 b) 4a) (*copy in the Minute book*).

The further recommendations of the Committee were all agreed without comment - **it was resolved that:**

**FC2021/45.4** A rededication ceremony shall be planned for the town's War memorial in 2022.

**FC2021/45.5** Support be given to the Black History Month events planned, as described at Minute FC2021/45 b) 5) (*copy in the Minute book*).

**FC2021/45.6** Support be given to produce two historic interpretation bards at the Pells, funded from agreed revenue budgets, as described at Minute FC2021/45 b) 7) (*copy in the Minute book*).

**FC2021/45.7** In-principle agreement is given to develop a public "waste artwork" project as described at Minute FC2021/45 b) 8) (*copy in the Minute book*).

**FC2021/45.8** The Council shall purchase a Sussex Flag at a cost of approximately £100, to be flown on Sussex Day each year (16<sup>th</sup> June – St Richard's Day).

**c) Open Council Working Party 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2021:** The Minutes of this meeting were received, and it was noted that the meeting had considered:

*1 Public Participatory Budget Pilot:*

Council had asked the Working party to consider ways to engage the public with the agreed Public Participatory Budget (PPB) pilot scheme, asking the community to help prioritize the list of projects (37 in total) contained in section 11 of the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan; all being eligible for funding from accrued Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts.

A sub-group consisting of Cllrs Catlin, Vernon, and Dr Maples had met to develop outline proposals along the lines of these discussions, and notes of their meeting were presented:

As a pilot scheme, it was recognized that the breadth of communications and outreach should not be disproportionate to the amount of CIL money available. Nevertheless, it was desirable

to engage across the spectrum of online, face-to-face, focussed and more 'casual' communication. Using a range of communications and discussion activity would give a better idea of what is scalable for future exercises (should the pilot be successful). Meetings/communications were proposed as:

*First set of resident participation:*

The first set of resident participation would involve using "Top Trump" cards/A5s (*see below*), as discussion facilitation, as well as additional information provided by interested members of the community before and during the event. The aim of these sessions would be to explore as many of the 37 potential projects/activities as possible and to come up with a resident-determined short-list of around 10 items:

1. Face to face 'World Café' event, at the Town Hall, with anticipated participation by 30 - 50 people, as soon as possible.
2. A Zoom 'World Café' event, within 24/48 hours of the face-to-face session.
3. Participants would be invited in the following ways: using Town Councillor networks, What's On notices in *eg* Lewes News, Council Website, FaceBook, a shared (f-2-f and online) small advertisement in the Sussex Express.
4. Eventbrite could be used to register participants. Communications would also provide the Town Hall phone number and reception email address to enable less-digitally-connected residents to attend.

*Second set of resident participation:*

The second set of resident participation would focus on a short list of CIL items and be more dependent on easy-to-grasp information in the form of Top Trump cards/A5s. During an approximately 21 day period immediately following the World Café events, residents would be able to 'vote' in the following ways:

5. Using drop-boxes (like the supermarket 'buttons' for good causes) at the Town Hall Reception, Town Hall Tuesday Market and Stall at Farmers' Market.
6. Using online voting using *eg* Survey Monkey
7. Residents will be encouraged to participate using similar channels to above.

*Using 'Top Trumps' -style cards:*

8. *Content* proposed is:
  - a. That each card includes: Name of project; Estimated cost of project; 'Considerations' (*eg* other organisations interested/constraining); 'Advocacy' statement, including short description; Ease of implementation ('traffic lights' format); Relevant image (where possible)
  - b. Asking a small number of volunteers from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering group to add short descriptive 'advocacy' content to the CIL list of possible projects.
  - c. That reasonable costings are estimated for each, in order to guide determination of Red/Amber/Green traffic lights
  - d. A sub-group of Open Council to work with TC to manage production and completion within a time-scale that ensures both physical and online versions of cards and other facilitations are ready in good time.
9. *Design* suggestions are:

Ideally, ask the local college Design & Technology students to design a simple, branded template; the timescale for this, however, may be challenging. Other suggestions welcomed.
10. *Production* proposals:
  - a. It was possible to obtain 50 packs for £250.
  - b. Members noted the need to follow Council's 'visioning' priorities and to use local, ethical producers where possible. Suggestions are welcome.

These ideas had been warmly received and it was agreed that Cllrs Vernon and Waring would prepare initial designs for 'Top Trump' cards accordingly, which would be assessed at a further meeting in time to allow a firm proposal with detailed costs to be submitted to the scheduled October meeting of Council. It was agreed that this would be during week commencing 20<sup>th</sup> September. TC would provide details of the CIL projects, although he reminded Members that costing was not possible in many cases – suggesting an 'order/scale-

of-costs' would be the most practical classification. He advised that the CIL fund currently stood at £74,000. Councillors and staff, with their partners, would be asked to act a 'guinea-pigs' to test the scheme at an appropriate point.

2 *Allotment representatives:*

The meeting had 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. These would have regular meetings established between the Representatives and the staff responsible for the allotments service and if there were an Allotments Working Party established at any time – that group. Meetings could take place at appropriately seasonal times, to address *eg*:

- › Allotment Show, *eg* making it more accessible/interesting to new growers, encouraging Tenant participation.
- › Supporting new Tenants.
- › Sharing good practice.
- › Revising Policy in line with good practice.

The Working Party considered such questions as the democratic dilemma posed by individuals as representatives, and the model of an Allotments Society (either pan-Lewes or site-for-site), which could have a number of inherent advantages for the Council and for tenants. Past attempts to promote formation of a Society had, unfortunately, proved unsuccessful. The Council's tenants tended to be independent, and the proposals for individual representatives being suggested may be unpopular. Regular engagement with a range of tenants was desirable, but the method needed further consideration. A Symposium might be held – possibly 'off-season' when tenants were less active on their allotments.

Working Party members were asked to crystallize their ideas on these issues for firm proposals to be drafted at the next meeting, which would be held during the week commencing 20<sup>th</sup> September.

3 *"Connecting Lewes" digital inclusion initiative:* The Council had expressed support for this initiative and the working party received an update on its progress. A steering committee meeting in July had addressed three themes: Age; Gender; and Health. Their recommendations in these areas were aimed at improving confidence in non-users of technology; de-mystifying and highlighting practicality, helping formation of peer groups; trusted helpers; training in a social setting (*eg* "cakes & computers" events); improving understanding of what is available by such as health-service providers *etc*

Cllr Lamb was thanked for his presentation and invited to return if/when the Working Party might assist.

4 *East Sussex Loneliness and Resilience initiative:* This was an initiative by East Sussex County Council, and it was suggested that Town Councillors might engage with a research group when approached. TC should expect an approach from ESCC officers shortly.

5 *Public consultations:* It was suggested that LTC might assist the public with the many consultations arising these days. A recent example was the East Sussex Bus Service Improvement Plan, and Cllr Makepeace suggested that rather than reply to the questionnaire people should instead send individual emails detailing their local concerns; she also asked how the Town Council might ensure that it reflects the views of constituents. It was accepted that elected Councillors should engage with their constituents in their own preferred manner and attempt to represent them in a balanced way. Each consultation would be unique and address its particular audience in a deliberately-selected way. If there were criticisms of a particular format at any time, they could be passed to the body responsible. Libraries were often a focal point for engagement in such areas. The Council was often consulted for a 'corporate' response when it always sought to collate the views of representative Members. The soon-to-be-recruited Communications Officer (CO) could be asked to highlight important consultations on social media platforms *etc*.

Members had asked that the CO attend the Working Party meetings, but TC explained that the deployment of a part-time officer's efforts was an operational management matter and this would not be guaranteed.

6 *Town Council website:* The Council's website had been operational since mid-2019 and a review was proposed. TC advised that this would be a matter for the new Communications Officer and was embodied in the agreed job description. The meeting then became rather distracted by a debate over a particular photograph which was unpopular with some Members. Some complaints had been raised in the past two years over the photograph heading the 'Committees' page on the site, commenting that it did not suitably reflect the diversity of the Council's membership. TC explained that a suitable replacement photograph had been attempted on several occasions since the original item was produced, but none had retained the desired attributes once formatted for the website. Members were free to attempt their own photography in this regard but TC stated that he would not give the matter any attention in his last few weeks before retirement, having many other priorities. Some Members became insistent, and suggested photographs such as the traditional civic group picture taken following elections could be modified, although it was subsequently acknowledged that it was significantly out-of-date and showed an incomplete group. The Civic Officer could be asked to invite all Members to a photocall to update that.

7 *Video recording of Town Council meetings:* It was suggested that video recordings of Town Council meetings could be made and streamed, and TC was asked if this was possible. TC explained that equipment and training would be needed and although he had no sense of likely cost it was relatively straightforward to arrange. He reminded members that if they wished to propose such an initiative, they must put a case to Council. Council could be asked for 'in-principle' agreement and to approve research of costs and practicalities, arising from the Minutes of this meeting.

*CONCLUSIONS:* The next meeting of the Working Party would take place during week commencing 20<sup>th</sup> September to allow proposals to be agreed for the Public Participatory Budget pilot scheme, and allotment tenant engagement. The Chair would include an item to agree recommendations that the Working Party should be established as a standing Committee. The Civic Officer will be asked to convene a photocall for an updated Council group picture for use on the website 'Committees' page.

Council would be asked for 'in-principle' agreement and to approve research of costs and practicalities of video recording/online streaming of Council meetings.

Council received these Minutes without comment. **It was resolved that:**

**FC2021/45.9** The Minutes of the Open Council Working Party meeting held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2021 are received and noted, and the conclusions agreed.

**d) Lewes Chamber of Commerce:** Council received an oral report from Cllr Lamb, the Council's representative on the Chamber of Commerce executive committee. He noted two items of possible interest to Councillors:

The Lewes Business Forum - an online meeting scheduled for 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021. Councillors were invited, and access details would follow in due course.

Christmas Late Night Shopping event – this would be 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2021, and plans were underway in collaboration with the High Street Traders Association.

The Mayor thanked Cllr Lamb and asked that future reports, such as the Chamber's Annual Meeting be made as written reports to Council.

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2021/45.10** The oral report on a meeting of the Executive committee of Lewes Chamber of Commerce is received and noted.

**FC2021/46**

#### **USE of GLYPHOSATE HERBICIDE:**

A Motion (NOM007/2021 *copy in minute book*) was received, proposing that the Council should write to East Sussex County Council (ESCC) requesting they stop the use of Glyphosate and other pesticides by ES Highways and in their own property maintenance practices, making the case outlined in the Notice of Motion. This stated that:



Some Councils across the County and UK have banned the use of glyphosate and other pesticides (glyphosate is a herbicide, a category of pesticide, focused on killing unwanted plants). Lewes District Council only use it in extreme circumstances and use hot foam as an alternative. A national petition is currently being circulated <https://www.pan-uk.org/call-to-ban-urban-pesticides-to-save-insects-and-ourselves/>, in addition to petitions to the Council on behalf of Newhaven and, in 2019, Hastings.

ESCC has significantly reduced its use of glyphosate and other pesticides in recent years but continues a programme of herbicide application using glyphosate as part of a solution including other pollinator-damaging surfactants for pavement, road-edge and gutter spraying.

There are six main reasons for stopping this practice:

1. Glyphosate and the other spray solution ingredients, including surfactants that help the spray 'stick' to plants, have been shown in peer-reviewed scientific articles to damage and in some cases kill individual insects who are themselves sprayed or alight on or eat already sprayed plants and, in the case of some bee species, affect the hive potentially leading to hive collapse.
2. There is increasing evidence that glyphosate also damages soil invertebrates such as worms and beetles essential for soil health.
3. There is clear evidence that glyphosate damages, and in some instances kills, plants and animals in waterways. While good practice reduces the amount of glyphosate entering waterways, UK weather is not reliable enough to ensure a full 48 hours of sunshine, post-application. Because solution is not spot-sprayed only on plants, but is streamed along gutters, the solution may not be subject to plant uptake, and therefore remains on the surface of the road until it is washed away, into our waterways.
4. Glyphosate is generally accepted as a human carcinogen (World Health Organization report 2015) and is particularly dangerous for children and pregnant women. While the risk is relatively low compared with some other herbicides, Bayer/Monsanto has already lost several court cases where *eg* non-Hodgkin's lymphoma has been accepted to have been caused by exposure to glyphosate (both commercial and home use). This risk to human health is neither acceptable on moral grounds, nor financial grounds: the County/ES Highways are in no position to defend court cases that may follow continued use of a known carcinogenic substance in public spaces.
5. The current ESCC/ES Highways practices are simply breeding glyphosate-tolerant weeds. Glyphosate spraying is at best a short-term solution. Where only glyphosate is sprayed and no alternating weed-removal practice used, the efficacy of spraying reduces. The trajectory is: efficacy at a standard solution level for 2-5 years, then rapidly diminished efficacy, requiring either massively increased amount of glyphosate, or the use of a different weed removal practice.
6. There are well-established alternatives such as hot foam and acetic acid\*.

Council noted the proposals and some suggestions and comments were made.

\*It was agreed that point 6 should be extended to include mechanical removal of foliage *etc.*

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2021/46.1** Lewes Town Council will write to East Sussex County Council (ESCC) requesting they stop the use of Glyphosate and other pesticides by ES Highways and in their own property maintenance practices, making the case outlined in the Notice of Motion presented as NOM007/2021.

**FC2021/47**

**PROTECTION of BUS SERVICE INFRASTRUCTURE:**

Council considered a Motion (NOM008/2021 *copy in minute book*) that called upon Council to write to the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) to seek assurance that Planning Officers will ensure adherence to the policies contained in the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan and the South Downs Local Plan regarding the continued provision of provision for a suitably-located bus interchange, to support both local and through-town services, in consideration of any development proposals for the existing central bus station.

Information supporting this proposal stated that bus services are a vital service for many members of the community who do not have access to cars or who wish to use the full range

of public transport. To run an effective bus service, the town of Lewes needs to continue to have a central bus station and routes through the town that ensure that passengers can access the service conveniently from both the centre of the town and the surrounding areas.

The motion called upon the Council to both oppose redevelopment schemes that would involve loss of a bus station as a transport facility and hub for the Town and asked the Council to ensure that it supports all attempts to retain bus routes through the town.

Planning proposals were currently being brought forward to convert the bus station and garage in Lewes to a residential property development leaving the Town without a long-term stopping, parking and turning facility and a central point for pick/up drop off that is within walking distance of other public transport hubs eg: the railway station; cycle routes into Lewes and within walking distances of all of the centre of town. Removing this facility would have a substantial negative impact on public transport both within the town and to other villages, towns and cities in East Sussex (Tunbridge Wells, Brighton) and on disabled, less well off, elderly and environmentally concerned members of our community.

As a council that has declared a climate emergency, it should support mass transport and public transport policies as an effective way of minimizing carbon and NO2 emissions, during the period that the transport economy transitions to electric vehicles. To support public transport, the council should take proactive steps to both protect public transport facilities and central arterial public transport routes.

Policies in the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan and the SDNPA Local Plan recognize that the existing central bus station will inevitably be the subject of development proposals, and allow for planning consent to be conditional upon alternative provision and integration with other central strategic sites:

The South Downs Local Plan states (p177)

*Bus Station – although the bus station performs a vital transport role and is well located in relation to many important parts of the town centre, it is not a vital asset. The bus station and garage are unattractive utilitarian features at an important entrance to the historic core of the town. It is the interchange function which it is essential to retain in the area rather than the longer term bus storage.*

Policy SD57 states (p181):

*j) Alternative uses on the bus station site are subject to the facility being replaced by an operationally satisfactory and accessible site elsewhere;*

*8.40 At the same time, there are still concerns over the long-term viability of operating the bus station in its current location. Therefore, the principle of redevelopment is acceptable, providing that attractive, operationally satisfactory interchange facilities for passengers are provided on a site elsewhere of equal convenience in this sector of the town.*

*8.41 Given the shared constraints and opportunities between the two sites, the National Park Authority believes it appropriate that the policy seeks a comprehensive approach to the redevelopment of the whole area. However it is recognised that planning applications will come forward separately, and the policy provides flexibility for this, while ensuring that when detailed proposals come forward they are consistent with other phases/ schemes.*

These policies mean that any developer should be prepared to integrate with other local developments such as the Phoenix/North Street development.

The Lewes Neighbourhood Plan, developed with enormous community assistance and input, reflects this position in:

Policy HC1 'Protection of Existing & New Community Infrastructure' (p47):

*7.9 The existing bus station serves the centre of Lewes very well and will be retained until a suitable alternative town centre site can be found offering the same or better undercover waiting facilities.*

Policy AM2 'Public Transport Strategy' (p117-118):

*- ensuring a bus station with public facilities continues to be provided in a central location.*

Policy SS2 'Social & Civic Spaces' (p122):

*10.9 Lewes Town Council will seek funds from developers and others to:*

*[extract] — The transport hubs at the bus and railway stations need to become more enjoyable public spaces, supporting activities and events and providing a better welcome. The opening of The*

*Depot is a good example. However, a decision on the future of bus station provision in the town is awaited, so wishes for it to become an enjoyable space must at present remain aspirational.*

It was considered essential that these policies are strictly adhered-to.

Councillors spoke to confirm their fears that planning constraints may be inadequate, and to criticize the extant pre-application proposals for redevelopment of the site publicized recently. TC recounted a conversation he had with the SDNPA lead officer on major projects, and it had been confirmed that the policies referred-to were at the forefront of the officer's mind when discussing these proposals with the prospective developer. The developer had been strongly encouraged to approach the Town Council's Planning Committee before taking their ideas further.

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2021/47.1** Lewes Town Council will write to The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) to seek assurance that Planning Officers will ensure adherence to the policies contained in the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan and the South Downs Local Plan regarding the continued provision of provision for a suitably-located bus interchange, to support both local and through-town services, in consideration of any development proposals for the existing central bus station.

**FC2021/48**

**CYCLE STORAGE INITIATIVE:**

A Motion (NOM009/2021 *copy in the Minute Book*) proposed that the Council's Transport Committee be asked to investigate the purchase of parking storage facilities for bicycles for residents with no, or highly restricted, bicycle storage space.

It was stated that many of Lewes's residents live in terraced or apartment properties with narrow entry ways at the front, no front garden space and with no direct access to back gardens or no back garden at all. For these residents, having a bicycle might be desirable, but – because of the layout and facilities of their homes – is impractical.

Although there are some public bicycle racks, most of these were described as being of very poor design and poor quality and there are very few besides those in the main shopping areas. They are mostly not 'safe' for storing bicycles, making new and expensive bikes locked to them 'easy pickings' for thieves. In many other towns and cities, bicycle use is more actively encouraged through the provision of safe bicycle 'lock-ups' for residents who do not have the space to keep bicycles at home. Examples of effective resident bicycle storage including street parking schemes were depicted, with examples of costs. Although it was acknowledged that the Town Council could not expect to recoup its expenditure, it could lead to more people owning bikes in Lewes, more people cycling, less traffic, less pollution and a healthier town. The climate crisis was cited, and it was claimed that anything that could be done to reduce car use and encourage active travel must be done. Such a scheme would accord with Council's Visioning priorities, one of the highest of which was to do with cycling and supporting active travel. It was proposed that a budget of £100,000 should be set aside for the purchase of parking spaces and/or garages in appropriate areas around the town as and when they come on the market, and to set up the initial scheme.

There was some discussion on this proposal, and it was suggested that there could be helpful collaboration with the District Council, who were also looking at cycling provision. An additional element was proposed, to include a review of cycle stands, which was accepted and consequently **it was resolved that:**

**FC2021/48.1** Lewes Town Council's Transport Committee is asked to investigate the purchase of parking storage facilities for bicycles for residents with no, or highly restricted, bicycle storage space; and the general availability of cycle stands. This investigation to be conducted in a timely fashion in order to present findings and recommendations prior to the 2022 budgeting agreement.

**FC2021/49**

**RETENTION of INTERNAL AUDITOR:**

A report (FC009/2021 – copy in the Minute book) proposed retention of the current Internal Auditor. It was explained that:

1. The Council is subject to a statutory audit regime defined by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI2015/234).
2. All local councils are required at least once a year to confirm “in accordance with proper practices”, a review of the effectiveness of their system of internal control including a review of internal audit. Since 2003, when such regulations were first extended to Parish Councils, this has been reported as part of Lewes Town Council’s published accounts booklet and consistently been remarked as good practice by internal and external auditors.
3. It should be noted that the term internal auditor (IA) can be misleading, as this is an independent external consultant, commissioned direct by a Council – contrasting with the external audit currently carried-out by sector-appointed contractors.
4. The IA has a role in reviewing the effectiveness of control measures that the council decides to put in place and Lewes Town Council has been consistently fortunate to retain the services of IA’s who were extremely experienced in high-level local government financial management.
5. Both the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and The East Sussex Association of Local Councils (ESALC) maintain lists of “jobbing” internal auditors, but there is only one prospect registered who offers experience and qualifications appropriate to the work of a larger Parish: Mark Mulberry, of Mulberry & Co; principal of a professional accountancy and auditing practice who, coincidentally, manages ESALC’s own finances and who also provides audit services to other larger councils in Surrey and Sussex. Mr Mulberry has acted as IA for Lewes Town Council since the 2011/12 financial year and has developed a thorough understanding of the particular operating environment (LTC is one of only around 70 [out of circa 10,000] parish councils in England with a precept of over £1million).
6. Mr Mulberry is a Chartered Certified Accountant, Registered Tax Advisor; and Registered Auditor and principal of a private practice based in Surrey.
7. The practical plan for internal audit at Lewes is effected in two parts: the first concentrating on systems and procedures and the second on financial aspects. These are carried out in the autumn and spring respectively. As part of the process a written plan and other associated information are provided to ensure the council can fulfil its obligations. At the end of the process a comprehensive report is submitted to council, confirming that statutory declarations may be made with confidence.
8. Fees are charged based on time spent and, Lewes enjoys a significant discount off the normal commercial rate. In addition, there is a small charge for travel cost but not for travel time. Mr Mulberry’s fee is considered extremely reasonable and compares very favourably with other audit costs, such as the statutory external audit.

A question was raised as to whether the audit could be conducted remotely to minimize environmental impacts. TC advised that, although not always appropriate, this was possible for some elements and was becoming common practice – past years’ audits had been conducted remotely.

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2021/49.1** Mr Mark Mulberry, of Mulberry & Co., 9 Pound Lane, Godalming, Surrey, GU7 1BX be retained as Internal Auditor to Lewes Town Council for the 2021/22 financial year.

**FC2021/50**

**NATIONAL RESILIENCE STRATEGY:**

Council considered a briefing from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) on its position regarding a government call for evidence on development of a National Resilience Strategy.

It was stated that the Covid-19 pandemic had stretched the capacity and resources of governments around the world. This demonstrated the importance of a resilient society with well-developed plans, capabilities, and response structures; able to react appropriately to the unexpected. A National Resilience Strategy is required to help frame such future responses and this needs to include strengthening Local Resilience Forums and examining in some depth how local communities can play their part. The call for evidence sought public views on how best to frame a Strategy supporting UK National Resilience and the objectives required for it, and a link was provided to the main consultation document. NALC would

respond to this call for evidence given many parish councils were already working with partners to support the community.

The main consultation questions were given, and the views of county associations and member councils was requested to help NALC inform its own submission. NALC asked for responses by 10<sup>th</sup> September. It was suggested and **agreed** that Members wishing to comment would submit these by email to TC by 7<sup>th</sup> September to allow a collated corporate reply to be forwarded.

FC2021/51

#### UPDATE ON MATTERS IN PROGRESS:

TC apologized that the tabulated update on progress with the annual plan of major work had not been distributed with the agenda as usual, nor subsequently. TC elaborated on various salient points as:

*Town Hall heating system replacement:* The Buildings Working Party would be convened shortly to address a recently-arisen issue affecting the Town Hall heating system replacement. Preliminary assessment of the electrical supply and distribution connections serving the Town Hall had established that to serve the proposed Air Source Heat Pump an upgrade would be required to the buildings' main supply. This had been submitted to UK Power Networks, who own and maintain the supply infrastructure in the South-East, and it was determined that a local substation would require an upgrade to deliver the new supply. The cost quoted for this was over £140,000, much of which was attributable to basic engineering work such as excavations and groundworks. The effect on the Council's project was therefore significant and it would be necessary to revisit the programme and funding options.

*Communications Officer:* An appointment had been made following recent interviews, and the new officer was expected to start work with the Council on 11<sup>th</sup> October.

*Malling Community Centre:* The Steering Group would be convened shortly to consider the matter of a proposed lease for catering provision.

FC2021/52

#### NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT:

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

- > Support for the Lewes WASPI group
- > Glyphosate use by ESCC
- > Bus station policies
- > Arrival of TC Designate

*Dates to note etc for forthcoming meetings and events were:*

- > The Grant Panel would meet by Zoom at 3:00pm on Wednesday 15th September – applications will be sent to Panellists by DropBox link.
  - > The next Planning Committee would be Tuesday 21st September 7:00pm in the Council Chamber (**face-to-face meeting**)
  - > Pells Land Exchange Working Party would be rescheduled shortly **online**
  - > Open Council W/Party would meet Week commencing 20th September - TBC **online**
  - > Malling CC Steering Group would be convened shortly - details TBC **online**
  - > Buildings Working Party would be convened shortly– details TBC **online**
  - > The next Council meeting would take place on **Thursday 7th October 2021** at 7:30pm, with a deadline for agenda items to reach TC by noon on Monday 27th September.
  - > The next cycle of applications (Cycle 3 of 4) to the Council's grants programme has a deadline for applications (now online-only) of 19<sup>th</sup> November with an online meeting of the Grant Panel on Weds 1<sup>st</sup> December. Council decisions on 16<sup>th</sup> December.
  - > TBC – Landport Bottom Management Committee and others in due course
- There would be a Members' Surgery as usual, on the first Tuesday of the month – 7<sup>th</sup> September. Cllrs Dr Maples & Lamb would attend

There being no further business the Mayor closed the meeting; and thanked everyone for their contributions.

*The meeting ended at 9.30pm*

Signed:

Date: .....