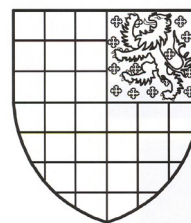


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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

Of the **meeting of Lewes Town Council**,
held on **Thursday 11th April 2019**, in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall**, Lewes at **7:30pm**.

PRESENT Councillors J Baah (*Mayor*); R Burrows; S Catlin (*Wischnusen*); M Chartier;; H Jones; J Lamb; I Makepeace; R Murray; S Murray (*Dep^y Mayor*); R O’Keeffe.

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

Observing: None

The Council’s Chaplain, Canon Richard Moatt, offered a few words before commencement of the meeting; noting that in modern society choices were too-often hastily made from a position of opinion without facts, or knowledge and experience. He cited some personal anecdotes which reinforced his encouragement that Councils should always make considered decisions based upon knowledge.

FC2018/100 QUESTIONS: There were none.

FC2018/101 DECLARATIONS of INTEREST: There were none.

FC2018/102 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Apologies for absence were received from Cllr A Ashby who was on holiday; Cllrs A Barker and E Watts who were both working; Cllr Mayhew who was unwell; Cllr Milner who was attending a family illness, Cllr Renton who was on a protest march. No message had been received from Cllrs Elliott or Rowell.

It was resolved that:

FC2018/102.1 Reasons submitted for absence from this meeting are noted.

FC2018/103 MAYOR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

a) The Mayor announced that this would be the last Full Council Meeting of the administration. Ten colleagues were standing for re-election. The Mayor thanked everyone for their support in her position of Mayor and wished all her colleagues well. The Mayor singled out one particular Member for special recognition on behalf of the Town – Mike Chartier. Cllr Chartier has served for 36 years on the Council including 6 terms as Mayor. Cllr Chartier had also served on District and County Councils and served as Chairman of Lewes District Council three times. During that time he was commuting daily to Croydon working as a teacher and Head of Department in a busy secondary school, yet still found time to serve as a Trustee on Lewes Priory Trust, Sussex Archaeological Society, Lewes Old Grammar School and Lewes Exhibition Fund. Members gave a round of applause and wished Cllr Chartier a well-deserved retirement.

b) The Lewes Neighbourhood Plan was formally “made” earlier that day by unanimous resolution of the National Park planning committee, which had been accompanied by several complimentary comments from the Chairman and members of the committee. The Council’s Steering Group Chairman, Ian Linton, was in Normandy but was still celebrating, and had sent a whimsical photograph to all members to prove it!

c) On Thursday 18th April the Mayor would be hosting an Easter Tea from 3pm – 4.30pm in the Assembly Room.

d) On Thursday 25th April the Mayor would be hosting “Girls for Change – Lewes – Dignity-Hope” in the Town Hall from 2:00pm – 400pm.

e) On Thursday 25th April 2019 the Mayor would be hosting the Lewes Civic Awards in the Mayor’s Parlour.

f) The Annual Town Meeting would be held in the Council Chamber at 8:00pm on

Continues...

Thursday 25th April 2019.

g) The Mayor announced that Maria Caulfield had replied to her letter regarding the "Save Lewes Schools Campaign". Ms Caulfield supported this campaign and stressed that she was lobbying the Government for more funding for local schools and had recently met the Secretary of State to discuss this.

h) Following recent events regarding climate change there had been much activity within schools and the Mayor reported that the Lewes Railway Land Wildlife Trust was to hold a workshop on 15th April with young students to identify their concerns on climate change. It was hoped that climate change would be incorporated into the school curriculum. All Head Teachers in Lewes were supporting this, and all Members were invited.

FC2018/104 MINUTES:

It was resolved that:

FC2018/104.1 Minutes of the Council meeting held on 7th March 2018 are received and signed as an accurate record.

FC2018/105 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) Citizens Advice update: Cllr R Murray gave an oral report. Members had received an e-mail forwarded from Citizens Advice which could be forwarded to their constituents for the information provided in it regarding Universal Credit.

It was resolved:

FC2018/105.1 The oral report on Citizens Advice update is noted.

b) All Saints Steering Group 19th March 2019: Council considered the minutes of this meeting, which had discussed the Open Day held at the All Saints Centre the previous Saturday, and the views of those Members who had attended. Few Councillors had supported the event, and there had been no visitors from the theatre/events sector which had been the intended focus. It was acknowledged that the Centre was operating at near-capacity and that opportunity for extended productions or events was limited, although bookings could be accommodated in the longer-term. The ASC Manager intended to hold a 'general public' open day in the Autumn and the Centre remained as popular as ever with regular hirers and enjoyed a steady stream of new and occasional bookings. It was generally perceived as well used and well-run. There followed a discussion about publicity, including use of the window at the Tourist Information Centre, and various 'domestic' matters related to the Centre.

Members noted that the Chairman, Cllr Catlin, had been invited to sit-in on interviews, the following week, of candidates for the vacant Venue Assistant post.

It was resolved that:

FC2018/105.2 The Minutes of the All Saints Steering Group meeting held on 19th March 2019 (*copy in minute book*) are noted.

c) Buildings Working Party 26th March 2019: Council considered the minutes of this meeting:

The meeting had welcomed Grant Crossley and Paul Rawlinson of BLB Surveyors; attending to assist Members. They had prepared a report on their assessment of the three tenders received by the due date, and elaborated on salient points, Members first having resolved to exclude the press and public due to the commercial status of the discussions.

1. The lowest tender appeared reasonably priced and complete; however, it included additional Provisional Sums which, it was stated, should either be converted to fixed price items or to "Employer Provisional Sums". By converting these items, the Council would assume the price risk. This, it was explained, was contrary to the ethos of a Design and Build contract and so the alternative of requesting the contractor to make revisions to

treat some or all of these items as fixed price lump sums was recommended.

2. Various other aspects of the treatment of elements by individual bidders were discussed. It was demonstrated that most of these were differences in theoretical approach and in most cases these were items placed by one company in the category of (*eg*) Contingency, where by another they were included as a priced component. It was the professionals' view that the lowest bid would retain that relative status even after all adjustments recommended were allowed-for.

3. Since the commencement of the refurbishment project anticipated costs had been revised upward at strategic decision-points, for practicality. The most recent significant decision had been the choice of sustainable energy features such as a ground-source heat-pump and photovoltaic panels. Despite reasonable estimates for such provision the tenders had all exceeded the amount anticipated, and Members heard that this was due in part to rapidly increasing costs in the industry and partly the 'real-world' costs of consequential works required by such features.

4. Members considered the cost from a number of perspectives including potential reduction in quality or removal of certain features; contrasting the benefits of the overall design 'as-tendered' with the implications of omitting features or reducing a quality dimension to save money immediately but which, it was felt, would diminish the building for decades to come. There was consensus that the design was the right one and that to attempt to downgrade any aspect would be short-sighted.

5. It was understood that the amount of money currently available in the Reserve fund, plus any grants that may be obtained, would leave an amount of up to £600,000 to be borrowed. Borrowing from Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) was straightforward; first requiring a borrowing approval, issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and obtained through the local County Association of Local Councils.

6. PWLB rates of interest were low and fixed and loans were conventionally on an annuity basis with half-yearly repayments, over periods up to 50 years. It was acknowledged that the benefits of the refurbishment would serve the community for decades and the period of loan would reflect that. It was understood that a period of 30 years would require annual repayments considerably below the sums which had been drawn from precept in recent years to supply the project reserve fund.

7. After extensive discussion a vote was called on the salient points considered to be at issue, which were: design of foyer to remain unchanged; Ground-source heat pump/PV panel system to remain as designed, and acceptance of the 'higher-than-hoped-for' cost. All these points were agreed unanimously, and it had been agreed that the Chairman should be authorized to work with TC in liaison with BLB Surveyors, regarding discussions with the lowest bidder over adjustments to pricing.

There was a brief discussion in Council during which the principles promoted by the Working Party were endorsed, and some features of the design were described as a 'beacon for sustainability'.

It was resolved that:

FC2018/105.3 The Minutes of the Buildings Working Party meeting held on 26th March 2019 (*copy in minute book*) are noted.

FC2018/105.4 Council will agree a contract for the refurbishment of Mallings Community Centre with the lowest bidder, in line with their tender, subject to confirmation of the effect of adjustments for pricing method, as recommended by the Buildings Working party.

FC2018/105.5 The balance of cost for the refurbishment of Mallings Community Centre remaining after accounting for any grants which may be received, shall be borrowed from the Public Works Loans Board, to a maximum of £600,000 and a 15-year term on the basis of the annuity option (Capital + Interest paid in fixed instalments).

d) Policies Review Working Party 27th March 2019: Cllr Chartier presented the minutes of this meeting.

The previous meeting had dealt-with amendments to current ‘working’ policies. These were not all statutory and some were included simply to take advantage of the opportunity for scrutiny. Most of these documents had required simple updating and it was simply good practice to review and confirm they remained current and fit for purpose, whilst there were one or two that needed minor updating and some recent legislative changes that ought to be incorporated.

The working party had reviewed and discussed in detail each policy which, in summary, had the effect of:

Minute extract Policies Review Working Party 19th June 2018:

1. **Standing Orders** to be updated to account for areas newly-introduced or updated in the 2018 national model, and to remove outdated references (*eg* Lead Members).
2. **Financial Regulations** updates/insertions to align with NALC latest model, revise values, and incorporate Council’s payments procedure (currently a separate document).
3. *Investments and Reserves policy* minor administrative update needed.
4. *Freedom of Information Act publication scheme* minor administrative update needed.
5. *Anti-fraud policy* no change required.
6. *Code of Conduct for Members* no change.
7. **Communications policy** revise to remove outdated references. Introduce note regarding letters written by Mayor at Council request, and explain treatment of direct incoming questions. Communications Working Party may wish to review Social Media appendix.
8. **Complaints policy** revise to remove outdated references, and add/clarify role of Mayor.
9. **Dignity at Work policy** (*staff discipline; grievance, etc*) add option of Mayor to ‘first steps’, update as required to reflect ACAS 2015 Code of Conduct (current is based upon 2009 CoC).
10. *Equality policy* no change **NB** – *now superseded by the Equality & Diversity Policy adopted by Council 7th March 2019*
11. **Equal opportunities statement** introduce ‘sex’ to lists, as distinct from ‘gender’.
12. *Health & Safety at Work policy* no change

The changes required had been introduced and revised policies had been prepared, and distributed. The purpose of this meeting was for Members to satisfy themselves of this, for the assurance of Council.

There was detailed discussion on the amendments and one or two points of contention were resolved with a vote. It was noted that the Equality Policy, listed as item 10, had been superseded by a new Equality & Diversity Policy; adopted recently by Council as recommended by a dedicated Working Party.

It was resolved that:

FC2018/105.6 The Minutes of the Policies Review Working Party meeting 27th March 2019 (*copy in minute book*) are noted.

FC2018/105.7 Policies submitted for consideration to the Council meeting on 11th April 2019 are agreed and adopted.

FC2018/106 CLIMATE EMERGENCY:

Members considered a proposal *NOM010/2018 (copy in the minute book)* that suggested the Council might hold a half day meeting for all Councillors to look at the evidence for the climate crisis with an expert and discuss its implications; making public its response with an exhibition in the Town Hall, and set up a working party to consider all aspects of council activity and how emissions can be further reduced. This should be addressed

with an appropriate sense of urgency, given the importance of the subject.

Supporting information was presented which noted a United Nations report that climate gas emissions must fall by at least 45% worldwide from 2010 levels by 2030 in order to stay within a 1.5° C rise in temperature since pre-industrial times. Climate gas emissions were, however, still rising steeply. Despite being a parish council, Lewes Town Council was said to be well-placed to take a lead. It is the largest town in a National Park and has achieved a ground-breaking Neighbourhood Plan, establishing a reputation for environmentally-conscious action. There were several local voluntary bodies, it was stated, who would be prepared to work with the Council on such an initiative.

Several Councillors spoke on these proposals, and whilst all agreed the principles espoused it was widely held that the currently-active Working Party on UN Sustainability Goals was already covering the matters raised. Whilst a statement was generally welcomed, there was little support for duplication of effort by an additional working party and it was stated that individuals must 'own' responsibility for their actions. Members stated that they were encouraged by recent demonstrations of feeling by young school students, and could see the scope for future outreach work. It was agreed that the existing UN Goals working party should be asked to consider the issues raised, and the proposer asked to work with the Mayor and Chair of that Working Party to draft a suitably-worded statement on behalf of the Council.

After a lengthy discussion, **it was resolved that:**

FC2018/106.1 Cllrs Baah and S Murray are asked to liaise with Cllr Makepeace to collaborate on wording of a suitable statement expressing the Council's concerns regarding the climate change emergency, and to publish this on behalf of the Council.

FC2018/107

UPDATE ON MATTERS IN PROGRESS

- a) An update on the current Annual Plan had been distributed to all Members, and salient points were highlighted by TC
- b) The Neighbourhood Plan had formally been 'made' by SDNPA resolution.
- c) Devolution – Lewes District Council had confirmed that it has instigated valuations for properties discussed and an assessment of the prospective transfer of charitable Trusts in respect of Convent Field and Stanley Turner recreation grounds.
- d) A new Venue Assistant had been recruited for the All Saints Centre – Claire Tully would commence her employment on 1st May 2019.
- e) Lewes District Council had advised that its calculations related to the number of Band 'D' equivalent properties in each parish for 2019/20 (the 'tax base') contained minor errors. Nonetheless they had requested that parish councils re-submit Precept requests for 2019/20 based upon revised figures and this had the effect of *decreasing* the local precept sum agreed by Council in December 2018 and *increasing* the amount of residual Council Tax Reduction Support Grant payable by the District Council. The total value of the adjustments was only £3,403 and did not affect overall totals (as they balanced), but for the sake of accuracy Members were advised of new figures as:
Number of Band 'D' equivalents now 6138.8
Precept now £1,093,813 with CTRS Grant of £32,624
- f) 'Footpath 51' – proposed surfacing between Spences Lane and Mayhew Way – Following some pressure by the Council's Planning Committee, the South Downs National Park Authority had released £13,186 to East Sussex County Council, arising from local s106 agreement funds that remained unallocated. ESCC Rights of Way officers had confirmed that this would cover the cost and allow Footpath 51 works to be carried out this year, and this was scheduled with an anticipated start of mid- late-summer. This released the £4,387 of Community Infrastructure Levy that Council had previously agreed might be used in that project.

NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT

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

Footpath 51 & Climate Emergency statement

Future items:

- Annual Audit – Statutory Return & Accounts, Auditors report
- Statutory Annual Risk Assessment
- Land exchange, Pells
- Devolution

Dates to note:

- The Annual Town Meeting would be on Thursday 25th April at 8.00pm.
- Elections would be held on 2nd May
- Councillors’ statutory declarations *etc* could be dealt-with between 8th – 15th May by appointment with the Town Clerk.
- Councillors’ induction briefing would be on Thursday 9th May at 7.00pm.
- Mayor-making rehearsal would be held on Monday 13th May at 6.00pm.
- The next Council Meeting (*Mayor-making*) would take place on Thursday 16th May at 7.00pm.
- The next deadline for grant applications was Friday 24th May with the Panel meeting on 5th June and Council considering their recommendations on 20th June.
- Meetings to be arranged were the Pells Land Working Party.

There being no further business the Mayor closed the meeting, and thanked everyone for their support in her role as Mayor during the past year.

the meeting ended at 8:40 pm

Signed:

Date:

