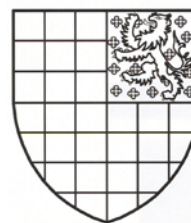


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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

Of the **meeting of Lewes Town Council**,
held on **Thursday 16th June 2016**, in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lewes** at **7:30pm**.

PRESENT Councillors A Ashby; J Baah; A Barker; Dr A Bolt; R Burrows; S Catlin (Wischhusen); M Chartier (*Deputy Mayor*); J Lamb; I Makepeace; Dr G Mayhew (*Mayor*); R Murray; S Murray; R O’Keeffe; E Watts.

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk*); Canon R Moatt (*Council Chaplain*)

Following the tragic killing earlier that day of Mrs Jo Cox, the Member of Parliament representing the Batley & Spen constituency in Yorkshire, the Council’s Chaplain, Canon Richard Moatt, led a brief reflection on the hidden burdens of public service, and a period of silence.

FC2016/14 QUESTIONS:

There were none.

FC2016/15 DECLARATIONS of INTEREST: Cllrs O’Keeffe and Murray (S) declared a potentially prejudicial interest regarding a specific Grants Panel recommendation [item 6d) on the agenda], as they were both Directors of Lewes Town Partnership; a recommended beneficiary.

FC2016/16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Apologies had been received from Cllrs Elliott and Jones, who were unavoidably detained at work; Cllr Milner, who was in Italy on business, and Cllr Rowell, who was on holiday.

It was resolved that:

FC2016/16.1 The reasons submitted for absence from this meeting are accepted.

FC2016/17 MAYOR’s ANNOUNCEMENTS:

a) The Mayor welcomed Cllr Janet Baah, elected at the recent bye-election for Bridge Ward, and confirmed that she had signed her statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

b) Following Council’s commitment to support a Dementia-friendly Lewes, Cllr Watts had arranged a screening of the film “Alive Inside” at the All Saints Centre on Tuesday 12th July at 5:50pm. This was an award-winning documentary exploring the capacity for music to assist those suffering symptoms of dementia, and would be preceded at 5:00pm by a Dementia Friends Session – showing how to be more aware of issues facing sufferers - and an introduction by the Lead healthcare professional from the local Clinical Commissioning Group. More details were available from Cllr Watts, and Members were asked to help by displaying a poster (distributed to all).

There would also be a lunchtime “drop-in” Dementia Friends session at 12:00 on Wednesday 20th July in the Yarrow Room.

c) The All Saints Centre Caretaker/venue assistant, Bill Reay, continued to make steady progress following his major surgery and Councillors wished him a speedy return to good health.

FC2016/18 MINUTES:

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th May 2016 were received and signed as an accurate record.

Continues...

WORKING PARTIES AND OUTSIDE BODIES:

Members were 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) **Homes & Workspaces Working Party 13th April 2016:** Council considered the minutes of this meeting (*copy in Minute book*). TC had reviewed the legal position based upon advice received from Solicitors, in that the Council could directly provide affordable housing only pursuant to the general power of competence, which was not a permanent power (prevailing only for so long as statutory criteria are satisfied, and only then until the next ordinary elections). "Provision", in this regard, could include such areas as:

- the acquisition of housing land or housing units
- grant-aiding registered providers for the provision of different categories of affordable housing
- facilitating other providers through financial assistance or the sale or grant of land
- managing housing accommodation provided directly
- working with other providers to manage
- working with the local housing authority and registered providers over allocations
- financial assistance to prospective tenants e.g. with rent deposits

The Council would not be required to become a registered provider regulated by the Homes & Communities Agency although it would not have access to public grant aid if it were not so registered. It was unlikely that a parish council could satisfy the conditions for registration, as a registered provider was expected to be a body wholly or mainly dedicated to the provision and management of housing, having appropriate expertise and funds. It was also likely that tenants of a registered provider could benefit from a right to acquire or any amended version of the principle of "right to buy".

A parish council *could* act as an affordable housing provider outside the regulatory framework but must have the financial and administrative capability and capacity properly to acquire, allocate-to and manage/maintain a stock of housing and properly to address its role as a landlord and its relationship with tenants. A Parish Council providing houses would not attract the right to buy or the right to acquire. It would need to work out its relationship with the local housing authority and the housing register, and its relationship with the local planning authority over s106 agreements, neighbourhood planning and the right to build. It was suggested that it would be more advantageous to work with a registered provider which has the established expertise rather than invent a new mechanism.

While the principle of a parish council entering the housing market could be argued as a valid exercise of its powers, a thoroughly researched project should be commissioned if it was to contemplate such an initiative.

The Working Party were interested to know if there might be scope to align with Lewes District Council (LDC) in the context of social housing, and it was agreed that the District Head of Housing Services should be invited to the next meeting. It was anticipated that he would be able to elaborate upon the updates to housing legislation currently being considered by Parliament. The status of the LDC '49 sites' programme of development was believed to be under review, following a much-publicized halt to key elements.

There had followed general questions and comments related to:

- the potential to add a "deck" to the railway station car park and provide housing on land thus released (unknown, although understood that Network Rail would be interested to discuss sale);
- the 'Homes for All' group charges for agent's fees (believed too high);

- the structure of Cambridge's social housing agency (Cllr Catlin to enquire of a personal contact);
- the role of Homelink in housing homeless people (research needed);
- the adequacy of current emergency housing availability (LDC responsibility)

With regard to the issue of affordable workspace, members queried the practicality of the 'live/work unit' principle, and acknowledged the position understood to prevail at The Printworks; where ground floor units were designed and classified as live/work, but rarely used as intended. A suggestion had been made that LDC's redundant building known as the Turkish baths might be an appropriate home for a 'FabLab' – a community fabrication laboratory space containing highly-technical equipment. Members would research areas that appeared to offer opportunities for the Council, and the District Head of Housing services would be invited to the next meeting.

There were no questions and **it was resolved that:**

FC2016/19.1 The Minutes of the meeting of the Homes & Workspaces Working Party held on the 13th April 2016 (*copy in Minute book*) are received and noted.

b) **Communications Working Party 19th May 2016:** Council considered the minutes of this meeting (*copy in Minute book*). Members had again been exhorted to ensure they were familiar with, and complied with, the Council's communications policy.

A discussion paper had been submitted, which made reference to issues discussed at the Annual Town Meeting and the frequency of these. TC was asked to explain the legal framework surrounding these meetings, and any imperatives arising which might impact upon the Council. It was noted that there were only two decisions that might demand response, and these were technical issues. It was conventional to acknowledge the discussions at an annual meeting by referring any salient points to Council later in the year. There followed some discussion as to the responsibilities of members to engage routinely with their electorate. A Town (parish) meeting could be called at other times, but was subject to the same legal controls as the statutory annual meeting. This was distinct from a general public meeting, which could be convened by anyone with access to an appropriate room, at any time. It was suggested that Council should be asked to agree facilities and invitations for a mid-year (Autumn) public meeting for general discussion on matters of public interest.

A question had arisen as to the rights of members of the public at meetings of the Council. There appeared to be some prevailing misunderstanding regarding the number of questions allowed, and the distinction between rights to question or present a point or to raise a supplementary question in consequence of an answer during the allotted period, and 'participation' in the actual meeting which followed. TC explained the statutory background to this and noted that the detail was enshrined in the Council's published Standing Orders, and every agenda carried a highlighted panel explaining the basic principles. It was thought that more emphasis could still be placed upon this and agreed that a specific explanatory notice could be placed in a Town Hall noticeboard, and included on the website. Press advertising of individual meetings would be expensive and have limited effect, and would require the Council to revert to a structure using standing committees, with scheduled meeting dates. This was considered to be unhelpful in the operation of a modern Council and the reasoning behind the Council's change to ad-hoc task-and-finish Working parties (in 2005) was rehearsed. Members undertook to promote meeting dates and salient issues using their personal facilities such as Facebook and Twitter accounts, and this gave rise to a brief discussion regarding personal surgeries. TC would revise some of the information on the Council's website, and Cllr O'Keeffe undertook to research information already prepared by ESCC on the distinction between tiers of local government.

The sub-group that had been tasked with research into examples of other websites made a report. There was a general discussion on desirable aspects and wide agreement, and the conversation touched-upon many elements of detail. TC cautioned members that

they must observe the distinction between their role in setting policy and strategic direction, and officers' responsibilities to conduct the actual work. Also; Council agreed an annual plan of major projects, and it would be necessary to seek agreement that a redesigned website should be accorded priority as an addition to the current plan. To support that request it would be sensible to define an estimated cost which, it was suggested, could be up to £10,000 in total.

TC updated Members on the present status of the approved project to provide publicly-accessible Wi-fi in the Town Hall. A comprehensive technical assessment had been carried out by the Council's current IT services provider and a robust scheme designed and costed that fell within the budget provision agreed by Council and could be installed within a few days. This would provide uncomplicated log-in and allow significant numbers to access internet services concurrently – as anticipated when large public meetings were in progress or several rooms in use at the same time. In attempting to satisfy requirements to obtain competitive quotations, it had become apparent that most commercial providers were poorly-equipped to deal with the complexities of the Town Hall; which was not only constrained by Grade 2 heritage listing but several aspects of its scale and construction presented technical problems outside their practical capability. One major national provider had ignored invitations to carry out a technical survey, and technicians representing another had inspected the building at length and determined that the system envisaged was beyond their remit. TC planned to propose to Council that the existing quotation be accepted and the requirement for competing quotes be waived under the circumstances. Members had concurred with this view.

Members were reminded that they had undertaken to provide copy for the Council newsletter. The next edition would be published in August and contain the annual report, and be printed and distributed to every household.

It was suggested that a student, or two, at Sussex Downs College might be invited to advise the Working Party in communication matters. There were some considerations regarding the age and status of such an adviser, but contributions from a young person's perspective would be welcomed.

The Working Party concluded that: Improved promotion of the public's rights to attend meetings and raise questions was desirable. Additional notices and informative panels would be introduced, and Members would individually attempt to improve public understanding through work within their Wards.

Council should be asked to agree an Autumn public meeting, for discussion of topics of general interest to the community.

Council should be asked to agree that a redesigned website should be accorded priority as an addition to the current annual plan, and to allocate a maximum budget of £10,000 for the project. This value was challenged as being too high, by some members, although it was reportedly based upon the recent experience of other parish Councils. There was some discussion on this point, and **it was resolved that:**

FC2016/19.2 The Minutes of the meeting of the Communications Working Party held on the 19th May 2016 (*copy in Minute book*) are received and noted;

FC2016/19.3 Lewes Town Council agrees to convene a 'supplementary' Parish Meeting in the Autumn, for discussion of topics of general interest to the community;

FC2016/19.4 A redesigned website is accorded priority as an addition to the current annual plan, and a maximum budget of £5,000 is agreed for the project (to be borne, in the first instance, by the General Fund), to be reviewed following further research.

c) ***Liaison meeting with Friends of Lewes 25th May 2016.*** Council considered the minutes of this meeting (*copy in Minute book*). Matters discussed were:

There had been a brief review of the current position on the Neighbourhood Plan. It was noted that as East Sussex County Council had recently withdrawn from a transaction to dispose of the site of the former St Anne's school, the site could be considered (at least in part) as potentially available for housing.

Interpretive plaques for historic buildings: It was reported that the previously-agreed batch had not all been ordered as the owner of one building had not given permission for attachment to the property. Two texts agreed in 2015 had been deferred, to await funding. The balance of the Council's earmarked reserve fund in 2016/17 was adequate for these and it was now agreed that these should be proposed to Council for 2016, with an additional two plaques (proposed text was submitted); one to be funded by Council and one by FoL.

Lighting in Pipe Passage: There were three standards in Pipe Passage, that at the North end having been replaced by East Sussex County Council (ESCC) years ago with a modern unit. The remaining two elegant historic fittings had recently been replaced with utilitarian modern luminaires. The Friends had engaged with ESCC's lighting manager on this matter, who repeated ESCC's long-standing position that 'heritage' features more suitable for a Conservation Area would only be provided if funded by a third party. The recently-installed units could be replaced with an appropriate design at a cost of approximately £2,000. A local charity (Lewes Association for Restoration & Conservation [LARC]) would be happy to contribute £1,000 to this end. FoL were able to contribute £500, subject to confirmation by their Executive, and it was confirmed that LTC maintained a financial reserve (shown in Council accounts as R8 'Environmental enhancements') which was intended for such support. Councillors agreed to recommend that the balance of approximately £500 be agreed from this source. It was acknowledged that this area was very popular with tourists and other visitors to Lewes; offering sight of the old pipe-kiln and views to the castle.

Tourist Maps: The large maps produced by FoL and shown in display cases at strategic locations in the town centre (car parks etc.) were becoming out-of-date. It was suggested that it may be sensible to wait until this was a little more advanced before a comprehensive update was drafted. There was agreement in-principle to a future joint project, subject to Council agreement when detail was established. This would be discussed at the next liaison meeting.

Riverside path (South of Bear Yard): FoL nurtured a long-held aspiration to see a path on both sides of Cliffe Bridge. The route from Timberyard Lane was occluded by the electricity sub-station but there was space for a path to be created alongside. UK Power Networks had indicated they had no objection but would seek relief from responsibilities and inclusion of appropriate safety screening. Possible inclusion of the principle within the Neighbourhood Plan was discussed and the question arose as to ownership once any path was established. There were also concerns as to the developer's attitude regarding public use of a path on the adjacent new development, which was a condition of planning consent. These issues would be discussed at a later date.

Land adjoining Castle Ditch Lane ("the Magic Circle"): FoL continued to press ESCC re dedication as a public Right of Way; the process was in hand and the deadline for receipt of any objections was imminent. A two-phase project was proposed: the first to restore the stone circle and the second to create a "peace garden". Cost estimates were being refined. It was agreed to revisit this at the next liaison meeting. The target for completion was 2019, to align with 100 year commemoration of the Treaty of Versailles (formal cessation of the 1st World War) and there was the possibility of partnership with the Religious Society of Friends aka 'Quakers'.

Christmas Lights: There was brief discussion on the Chamber of Commerce lighting of the town, and it was remarked that the Lewes Town Partnership was proposing a Christmas Festival. Communication was established with both organizations, and it was hoped that some coordination would bring enhanced benefits. FoL members and Councillors would all work to this end.

FoL Trees project: It was reported that a question over insurance was now resolved, and the Friends had a planting programme for the coming Autumn:

National Heritage Open Days: FoL reported that these would be between 8th and 11th September in 2016. Two new commercial sponsors had been found, and it was proposed

that the local leaflet would follow the format of the previous year, with around one-third new content. This would include the old Library; Gideon Mantell's home in Station Street; and The Depot. 'The Flint man' would conduct walks when he would explain how to 'read' the evolution of a flint wall. Councillors wished to record their thanks to all those who contribute to making these days so popular and successful.

Overhead electricity cables: The South Downs Society held a sum of money, bequeathed by the late Paul Millmore, to address the issue of unsightly overhead cables. This was a modest amount, but agreement had been reached between the South Downs National Park Authority and FoL that a pilot scheme could be conducted, and originally a suitable scheme was thought to be the installation serving Albion Street. This had since been deemed to be not workable at present, and FoL were seeking alternative suggestions. SDNPA employed an officer dealing with historic buildings, and it was suggested that he might be involved and that the project should be publicized to invite site suggestions. This would be discussed further at a later meeting.

Devolution of recreation sites by Lewes District Council: The latest position (recently reported to Council) was outlined. No transfers had yet been completed and there was no current work in progress by LDC.

White Lion: The absence had been noted of the figure from its position above Westgate Street carpark. It was reported that the lion was being cleaned and refinished by its maker, as he had been unhappy at the rapid weathering noted since installation. No notice had been given regarding the removal, as an opportunity for free use of an elevated work platform had been seized promptly. The figure would be reinstalled in due course.

Lewes Light Festival: Cllr Chartier gave an update on this project, and exhorted everyone to support it.

War memorials: A question arose as to the future of the plaque within Lewes Post Office, commemorating postal workers who had fallen, should plans to relocate the service come to fruition. It was agreed that the Post Office management should be contacted to alert them to a willingness to seek a new site somewhere such as the Town Hall; or All Saints Centre, or perhaps Ann of Cleves House. This was welcomed.

Subsequently, **it was resolved that:**

FC2016/19.5 The notes of the liaison meeting with Friends of Lewes held on the 25th May 2016 (*copy in Minute book*) are received and noted;

FC2016/19.6 Further plaques for local buildings of historic interest are agreed as described at note 4 in the record of the the liaison meeting with Friends of Lewes held on the 25th May 2016 (*copy in Minute book*), with funding from the financial reserve earmarked for that purpose, shown in the Councils published accounts as Reserve P2.

FC2016/19.7 Lewes Town Council will contribute £500 towards the replacement of appropriate street lighting fittings in Pipe Passage, Lewes, as described at note 5 in the record of the the liaison meeting with Friends of Lewes held on the 25th May 2016 (*copy in Minute book*), with funding from the financial reserve earmarked for Environment Enhancements, shown in the Councils published accounts as Reserve R8.

d) **Grants Panel recommendations 1st June 2016:** Members considered Report FC01/2016 (*Copy in minute book*) containing the recommendations for payment of grants for the first cycle (of four) of the 2016/17 year.

It was resolved that:

FC2016/19.8 The grant payments recommended in report FC001/2016 (as shown in column **G** of the appended table) be approved.

e) **Transport Issues Working Party 7th June 2016:** Council considered the minutes of this meeting (*copy in Minute book*). Matters discussed were:

Pedestrian crossing, Church Lane, Malling: The Council was funding a new crossing and East Sussex County Council officers had confirmed that relevant consultation had now been

completed regarding the impact upon parking availability near the site, and some amended design details had been finalized. It was anticipated that construction would take place during the school summer holidays.

Pedestrian crossings: The matter of crossings in Offham Road (A2029) (two sites) and Brighton Road (A277), *adj* Montacute Road was discussed. A residents' group had submitted a bid for funding to ESCC for a crossing in Offham Road close to the junction with Prince Edward's Road, and it was now confirmed that there would also be 'developer match' funding from s106 agreements. There was a long-standing demand for a crossing further toward the junction with the A275, near to the steps giving access to Wallands School, and residents and parents were building support for this.

There was a project in progress, following a petition by residents, for a crossing in Brighton Road (A277) near to its junction with Montacute Road. This would be light-controlled, and would cost approximately £120,000 to construct, plus design costs. An ESCC contribution was agreed for 50% of this and a private individual was prepared to contribute £35,000. Following reports from the previous meeting of the Working Party, the Town Council had earmarked £25,000 as a contribution to this project in its 2016/17 approved budget.

Bus services in Lewes: The meeting had welcomed the representatives from Compass Travel and Community Transport for the Lewes Area (CTLA). As there was no-one present representing Brighton & Hove Bus Company it was agreed that Councillors with questions related to those services should pass details to TC who would write on Council's behalf. These were in the areas of:

- the exclusion of Lewes from the City Saver fare structure;
- timetable changes which offset improvements to late night services by reducing early mornings, which was said to affect many who lived in Lewes and worked in Brighton.
- Delays on service 28 and 29 due to driver changes.
- Compromises to the "Companion Plus" Card, where a companion was no longer able to travel in both directions.

Compass Travel bus services: Early issues with the routes supported by the Town Council were reviewed. These had arisen at the time significant traffic disruption was caused by major road works in the Malling area. Services were now stable, and passenger numbers continued to increase. Questions arose from Members as:

- Q Were the improvements considered to be a trend, or temporary? A: thought to be a reliable trend.
- Q Was the contribution from LTC sufficient to cover the improvements? A: the funds were essential to maintain the current frequency of service.
- Q How was passenger data gathered? A: electronic ticketing
- Q Was the increase in numbers slight or significant? A: significant
- Q Why is Lewes Bus Station not used by all services? A: this is under consideration. Use of the facility is charged.

Some general information was offered which members found interesting: Brighton & Hove Buses had indicated boundary changes long in advance of their implementation, which had allowed various reciprocal agreements to be established. A "Keycard" facility was in use that was not currently operable across providers, but this was being investigated.

A resident raised a question regarding service to the Wallands area. When raised earlier with service operators, it appeared that the area was poorly-understood. Negative factors had been cited as obstacles such as "speed bumps", when in fact there were none in the area, and insufficient demand which, it was argued locally, could be a reflection of the absence of an available service for over 30 years. Compass Travel were investigating the feasibility of an occasional diversion of existing Nevill routes to include the area, perhaps

once or twice each week, and had conducted a route survey. It was noted that CTLA operated their “dial-a-ride” community service for everyone and it was not, as often mistakenly thought, only for elderly or disabled users. This could offer a solution for some passengers from the area. They were also prepared to consider diversion of their Sunday service to include Wallands, and happy to investigate a scheduled service using smaller vehicles. Councillors offered to facilitate a round-table meeting of interested parties if that was thought helpful.

CTLA bus services: The background to the services supported by the Town Council was reviewed. These were considered to be extremely successful and May 2016 had seen record use, following a trend of growth in patronage year-on-year. The increase in Sunday passengers was noteworthy. A new vehicle would soon be deployed on the routes, which offered electronic display, and CTLA would gradually introduce “smart-ticketing”. They had recently secured government grant for the promotion of routes and their leaflets would be more ‘targeted’ in future.

Bus operators were asked whether a single consolidated timetable was feasible. There exists a single timetable published by East Sussex County Council (ESCC), and this was being gradually improved as interlinking of services developed.

Rail services: The meeting welcomed the Station Manager at Lewes, and a representative of the Sussex Community Rail Partnership (SCRP). A number of questions were posed regarding potential changes to services at the station. Ticket office closure proposals were understood to be undecided at present and, if implemented, were described as a change of role for staff rather than a cost-cutting measure although it was conceded that there may be a slight reduction in numbers. It was believed that the changes proposed represented an improvement in customer service at certain times. There had been a long-standing plan to introduce the role of ‘Station Host’. When asked if the demand for this came from passengers, it was reported that an assessment of customer profile indicated less than 30% of tickets were purchased through a counter service.

There was widespread criticism of the website and ticket machines, and information on service problems was described as “hopeless”, being controlled from Three Bridges and often announced only after an event. Cost and value-for-money were said to be detrimental to a healthy rail service.

Recent timetable changes and service disruption were attributed to an ongoing dispute with Conductors, where levels of sickness absence had doubled. Short-notice of absence was extremely disruptive, and so pre-emptive cancellations were put in place to attempt to minimize “shock” to the network.

Regarding the continued absence of effective controls for parking and traffic manoeuvring on the station forecourt, it was understood that discussions were still in progress between Network Rail; ESCC; the parking contractor, and Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR). Concerns were expressed regarding the delays in implementation of a parking Order. It was noted that the station closed at night before the arrival of the last train, and travellers were often confused as to how to exit. The open exit via the car park was not advertised and it was agreed to introduce signage to this effect.

The matter of vacant business units on the concourse was discussed, with Members keen to support local business. SCRCP promoted local opportunities so far as they were able.

It was acknowledged that there was no foreseeable likelihood that replacement bus services on Sundays would cease. There was no plan to reintroduce refreshment trolley services, and it would remain the case that some trains would not offer toilet facilities.

A report was expected in Autumn regarding the potential reinstatement of a Lewes-Uckfield rail link. It appeared that there was no plan to electrify the line beyond Uckfield.

A member of the public had been recognized by the Chairman and stated that her understanding of local opinion on these matters was that no blame was attached to front-line staff, who were seen to be doing their best in trying circumstances, but that unpopular plans and many attendant difficulties were the responsibility of senior

managers and politicians.

The aspect of safety was raised and the effect of reducing staffing levels as proposed. The rail operator's argument was that mobile staff offered more reassurance and could be more helpful in extremis.

It was resolved that:

FC2016/19.9 The minutes of the meeting of the Transport Issues Working Party held on the 7th June 2016 (*copy in Minute book*) are received and noted.

f) **Lewes & Seaford Citizens Advice Bureau:** Cllr R Murray, the Council's representative on the CAB, related salient points from the recent annual meeting. Statistics on the activity of the bureau were presented (*copy in Minute Book*) which analysed the profile of Lewes clients and the problems with which CAB had assisted. Subsequently; **it was resolved that:**

FC2016/19.10 The report on activity of the Lewes & Seaford Citizens' Advice Bureau for 2015/16 is noted.

FC2016/20 INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT:

Council received the final report from its retained Internal Auditor on the financial year ended 31st March 2016. TC explained that this was one of the key mechanisms by which Councillors could assure themselves of continuing good practice, and validate statements required on the statutory annual return. Members were pleased to note that, once again, the auditor had commented "*..overall the systems and procedures you have in place are entirely fit for purpose and I would go so far as to say are a model of good practice;...*".

The audit had been conducted in accordance with current best practice and statutory guidelines. Areas covered included:

- Financial Regulations & Standing orders
- Risk Assessments
- Budgeting process
- Proper Bookkeeping – review of the use of the Sage package.
- Income
- Salaries
- Fixed Assets
- Annual Accounts
- Trust information

There were no areas of concern. The Auditor had noted in his interim report (November 2015) that careful planning of Council Tax precept and Reserves would be needed and in this final report noted only one salient point, which was on this area:

"Continued erosion of the general reserve to the detriment of earmarked reserves and future council spending ability will result in a negative response on the annual return and a report to the external auditor on future returns. Council needs to consider the RFOs proposals seriously, and discuss and minute reserves provisioning in this regard".

TC elaborated on this point, which would arise at budget-time, and **it was resolved that:**

FC2016/20.1 Lewes Town Council notes the report of Mulberry & Co (*a copy is included in the Minute book*) on their Internal Audit work for the Council for the year ended 31st March 2016.

FC2016/21 ANNUAL RETURN & ACCOUNTS Year ended 31st March 2016:

Members received report FC002/2016 (*copy in minute Book*) which presented the requisite accounting information and draft Annual Return for approval as required by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI2015/234)

The relevant pages of the Annual Return were appended to the report. It was required

that a Council must resolve approval of its Annual Governance Statement (section 1, p2) prior to approval of Accounting Statements (section 2, p3).

The Accounting Statements had been certified by the Responsible Finance Officer, and the certificate by the Council's independent Internal Auditor (p5) had been signed. He indicated that he had no concerns, and his final report was also presented to the meeting. The Internal Auditor's work; regular reports of the Audit Panel, and occasional reports from other sources, were the instruments by which the Council assures itself that all responsibilities are satisfied.

Consequently, **it was resolved that:**

FC2016/21.1 Lewes Town Council approves the Annual Governance Statement shown at section 1 of the statutory annual return for the year ended 31st March 2016

FC2016/21.2 Lewes Town Council approves the statutory annual return and supporting documents as required for the year 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016, for submission to Messrs PKF-Littlejohn LLP, the Audit Commission's appointed External auditors.

FC2016/22 CORPORATE RISK ASSESSMENT 2016/17

Members considered report FC003/2016, which dealt with the assessment of risks associated with the operations and functions of the Council for the forthcoming municipal year (*a copy is included in the Minute book*). The report explained the principles of the annual assessment and the concepts of tangible risk (*eg* physical risks associated with a swimming pool) and intangible risk (*eg* risks associated with publications) and summarized the annual evaluation. This year's review had taken account of **276** risk elements within **36** functions or areas of operation. Not all were relevant to LTC, but scores had been awarded to **237** risk elements, and there were **5** salient points, all related to the third-party management arrangements for Mallings Community Centre. Mitigation was effected by close contact with the managing agents, Mallings Community Association, and appropriate insurance.

A summary report extract was appended; the full report being available on request to TC. Full details were available if required. There were no questions or salient points to consider, and consequently **it was resolved that:**

FC2016/22.1 Lewes Town Council notes the Corporate Risk Assessment report, reference FC003/2016 (*a copy is included in the Minute book*) and the summary table of assessed risks for 2016/17 appended to it.

FC2016/23 RETENTION of INTERNAL AUDITOR

Members considered report FC004/2016 (*copy in minute book*) recommending that Mr Mark Mulberry, the present Internal Auditor (IA), be retained for the 2016/17 financial year. The IA had a role in reviewing the effectiveness of control measures that the council put in place and Lewes Town Council had been consistently fortunate to retain the services of IAs who were extremely experienced in high-level local government financial management. The first was the (then) recently-retired Director of Finance at Wealden District Council. Following his untimely death in 2005, the Council had retained another professional, recently retired from an extended career with the District Audit Service (a division of the Audit Commission), who subsequently fully retired at the close of the 2010/11 account year.

Both the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) and The Sussex & Surrey Associations of Local Councils (SSALC) maintained lists of "jobbing" internal auditors, but Mr Mulberry was the only prospect within a practical distance who offered experience and qualifications appropriate to the work of a larger Parish: Mr Mulberry was a Chartered Certified Accountant, Registered Tax Advisor; and Registered Auditor with a private practice based in Surrey - a professional who, coincidentally, managed SSALC's own finances and who also provided audit services to other larger councils in Surrey and Sussex. Mr Mulberry had acted as IA for Lewes Town Council since the 2011/12 financial year, and had developed a thorough understanding of the particular operating

environment.

Following this **it was resolved that:**

FC2016/23.1 That Mr Mark Mulberry, of Mulberry & Co., Lichfield House, 60 Abbots Ride, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 8HZ be retained as Internal Auditor to Lewes Town Council for the 2016/17 financial year

FC2016/24 COUNCILLORS INDIVIDUAL DUTIES

A report (FC005/2016) was received, which advised changes requested by Members to their allotted individual duties. The effects of these were shown on an appended table (*copy in the minute book*). Following a brief discussion **it was resolved that:**

FC2016/24.1 The individual responsibilities of Members for the remainder of the 2016/17 municipal year shall be amended as:

Appointment to Outside Body:

Landport Bottom Joint Management Committee (administered by Lewes District Council)

Cllr Elliott's resignation from this duty is noted.

Cllr R Murray is appointed to the Committee.

Members Individual Duties:

Planning Committee

Cllr Baah is appointed to the Committee.

Lead Member for Finance & Policy

This duty is allocated to Cllr Chartier.

FC2016/25 UPDATE ON MATTERS IN PROGRESS

a) *Devolution of Malling Recreation Ground and Landport Bottom:* TC advised that the barrister's opinion regarding the District Council Cabinet decision to withhold Local Council Tax Support Grant was reported to be that the decision was unlawful and there was a good chance of success if challenged through judicial review; despite the innate antipathy of the Courts towards inter-authority disputes. Coincidentally, this was understood to be the view taken by the District Solicitor following her own internal review, although the Town Council had not formally been advised. It was anticipated that the grant would now be released.

TC and Cllr Dr Mayhew recounted a meeting which they had recently attended; convened by Sussex & Surrey Associations of Local councils (SSALC) to attempt resolution of the impasse between Lewes District Council (LDC) and several parishes. Hosted by the Chairman of ESALC the meeting had been attended by Clerks and Members representing Lewes; Newhaven; Peacehaven; Telscombe Cliffs; Ringmer and Hamsey local councils and, for LDC: Leader of the Council, Cllr Andy Smith; Cabinet member for Customers & Partners, Cllr Tony Nicholson; and LDC's Head of Properties & Facilities, Bee Lewis. It had been apparent that LDC still harboured the opinion that the parishes lacked understanding of the legal framework that was being applied to devolution and had attempted to disparage the legal advice being received by some parishes. This was quickly challenged, and each parish recounted its full appreciation of the matters at issue, with the solicitor representing Lewes and Newhaven's interests being described as particularly knowledgeable and experienced. It was bluntly put that whilst individual parish councils had offered suggestions and amendments to proposed contracts, supported by legal reasoning, these had been dismissed without consideration – often without the courtesy of a response. Each parish present explained its particular position, and none were prepared to continue pursuit of devolution under the current circumstances. The LDC representatives undertook to review the detail of proposed transfer contracts with their legal department.

b) *S106 agreement re North Street Quarter redevelopment:* Members were informed that all parties to this agreement had now signed, and copies distributed. The joint working

group which would draft plans for the application of these funds had not yet convened, but a first meeting was expected shortly.

c) *Town Hall refurbishment: Roof repairs:* It was announced that the Listed Building consent allowing works recover the roofs of the assembly Room and Corn Exchange had been granted, although there would be further short delay before works could commence; while the condition to submit example tiles and slates for approval was discharged.

d) *Town Hall fire alarm replacement commences 18th July 2016:* TC advised that the work to replace the fire alarm system was scheduled to commence on 18th July.

e) *Public WiFi in Town Hall:* TC updated Members on the present status of the approved project to provide publicly-accessible Wi-fi in the Town Hall. A comprehensive technical assessment had been carried out by the Council's current IT services provider and a robust scheme designed and costed that fell within the budget provision agreed by Council and could be installed within a few days. This would provide uncomplicated log-in and allow significant numbers to access internet services concurrently – as anticipated when large public meetings were in progress or several rooms in use at the same time. In attempting to satisfy requirements to obtain competitive quotations, it had become apparent that most commercial providers were poorly-equipped to deal with the complexities of the Town Hall; which was not only constrained by Grade 2 heritage listing but several aspects of its scale and construction presented technical problems outside their practical capability. One major national provider had ignored invitations to carry out a technical survey, and technicians representing another had inspected the building at length and determined that the system envisaged was beyond their remit. Given the situation, TC proposed to Council that the existing quotation be accepted and the requirement for competing quotes be waived under the circumstances.

It was consequently **resolved that:**

FC2016/25.1 The Council considers that Financial Regulation 11.1c) is satisfied in respect of quotations for work to install publicly-accessible WiFi at the Town Hall, and accepts the quotation of Trident Computers Ltd for works in accordance with council resolution FC2015/97.1 of 21st January 2016.

f) *Public Access Defibrillators:* The public access defibrillators had been delivered, and TC reported that it had not been necessary to purchase cabinets as the Ambulance Service had offered two suitable used cabinets free-of-charge. Once these were installed a training session would be set up and members would receive an invitation in due course.

FC2016/26 NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT

a) The next Planning Committees would take place on Tues 5th & 26th July 7:00pm.

b) The next Member's Surgery was scheduled for Tuesday 5th July 2016 – 10:00am – 12:00pm in the Corn Exchange

c) The next Council meeting would take place on Thursday 28th July 2016, with a deadline for agenda items to reach TC by noon on Monday 18th July.

d) Meetings to be arranged were: Homes & Workspaces W/pty; Buildings repairs W/pty; Energy efficiency W/pty; Audit Panel; Personnel Panel (re training); Dementia Awareness group; Commemorations W/pty; All Saints Steering Group.

e) The next deadline for grant applications: (cycle 2 of 4 2016/17) was Fri 2nd September. The Assessment Panel would meet on Wed 14th September with recommendations being considered by Council at its meeting on 29th September 2016.

There being no further business the Mayor closed the meeting and invited all present to join him in attending the Civic Reception in the Assembly Room. *The meeting ended at 9:15pm*

Signed:

Date: