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**LEWES  
TOWN  
COUNCIL**

## **MINUTES**

Of the meeting of **Lewes Town Council**,  
held on **Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021**, online via Zoom Meetings at **7:30pm**.

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

*In attendance:* S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*); Mrs F Garth (*Assistant Town Clerk & Civic Officer*) and Mrs E Tingley (*C’tee. Admin.*)

*Observing:* Ms L Zeyfert (*All Saints Centre Manager*) and B Courage (*Town Ranger*)

Before the meeting, the Reverend Canon Judith Egar offered a few words of reflection, citing the concept of unity and the need to learn to disagree constructively; making differences ‘fruitful’ rather than divisive.

**FC2020/92 QUESTION TIME:** There were none.

**FC2020/93 MEMBERS DECLARATIONS of INTERESTS:** There were none.

**FC2020/94 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Were received from Cllr Dr J Baah who had suffered a family bereavement.

**FC2020/95 MAYOR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

a) The ‘Covid Hero Awards’ project had closed at the end of December. All recipients had received a certificate; and a medal would follow to be presented at a reception hosted by the Mayor later in the year. The Sussex Express would be featuring some recipients of the award in weekly editions of the paper.

b) Local company Mirador Television had organised a two-way interview between the Mayor and the Mayor from Lewes, Delaware, USA. The interview covered the COVID Pandemic and how businesses in their respective towns were coping with the current situation. The interview could be viewed on the Internet at [www.miradortelevision.com](http://www.miradortelevision.com) under ‘What’s New’.

c) The Mayor announced that the Art Exhibition of work by students on the East Sussex College Fine Art and Design Extended Diploma programme that was due to be held in the Town Hall Foyer and Baxter Corridor on 22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2021 had been cancelled. Cllr Makepeace, who had been liaising with the College, informed members that it was hoped the project may be able to move forward if the National Lockdown due to Covid-19 was eased for higher education students after the February half term.

**FC2020/96 MINUTES:**

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2020/96.1** Minutes of the Council meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2020 were received and agreed as an accurate record.

**FC2020/97 COUNCIL TAX PRECEPT 2021/22:**

Council had previously agreed the Finance Working Party’s recommended service budgets, which resulted in a Council Tax precept unchanged from the current year, although a final decision on Precept had been deferred until the latest possible time to allow for any emergent issues due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This decision now needed to be formalized and no change was proposed, but TC explained that: since the earlier consideration of the values Lewes District Council had announced its calculations for the ‘tax-base’ – a theoretical number of chargeable properties – and had introduced a negative factor in respect of an anticipated increase in uncollected tax. This was understood to be happening across the country and it was confirmed that it was lawful. Whilst the amount of tax received by the Town Council would not rise, the effect was to inflate the amount payable

per Band 'D' property by slightly less than 1%; equivalent to an increase of four pence per week in the amount collected by the District Council. To attempt to redress that perceived increase would impact upon the Council's operating budgets and was not recommended, particularly as the 'principal precepting authorities' (District and County Councils; Police & Crime Commissioner; Fire & Rescue Authority) would share any *actual* over-collection should the prediction prove pessimistic, the 'minor' precepting bodies (Parish Councils *etc*) would see no benefit.

Councillors were interested to know if this represented a trend, but it was believed to be a genuine and prudent measure to address present circumstances. It was confirmed that the agreed budgets included non-recurring increases in costs associated with the recruitment of a successor TC and a new Responsible Finance Officer, plus costs of direct management of the Malling Community Centre.

Consequently, **it was resolved that:**

**FC2020/97.1** The total sum to be raised by precept on Council Tax for 2021/22 be set at £1,213,829 – unchanged from the present year - and Lewes District Council be asked to collect this sum.

**FC2020/98**

### **WORKING PARTIES AND OUTSIDE BODIES:**

*Members are reminded that anyone who may have attended a meeting of any recognized outside body which has covered issues that deserve attention by the Council, should ensure that TC is aware of this before the Council's next meeting, and preferably before the agenda deadline. Reports on all activities of the organization are not expected.*

**a) Personnel Panel 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020 and 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021:** Council considered the Notes of these meetings (*copies in minute book*)

These meetings had been held with support from Jennifer McNeill and Sarah Cope of South East Employers (SEEmp), who were retained to advise Councillors on the recruitment of a successor Town Clerk and assist in managing the process.

The Panel had reviewed the proposals by SEEmp and begun to address early decisions.

*Training:* it was agreed that a training session would be beneficial for Members. This was subsequently held on 12<sup>th</sup> January, conducted by David Maycock, SEEmp's Employment Director. David had covered a general run-through of a recruitment process, pointing-out potential pitfalls to avoid and touching upon the possibilities of remote interviews.

*Timetable:* a rough timescale had been previously agreed but was then reviewed in light of recent changes in the Covid-19 Regulations and was revised. Key milestone dates were still subject to a final decision. It was intended to aim for a provisional start for the new recruit in August, and although TC would officially retire on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021, it was acknowledged that he would have accrued substantial outstanding leave entitlement, suggesting a last date of working of 29<sup>th</sup> October.

It was considered appropriate to defer recruitment of a Responsible Finance Officer until this programme was underway.

It was agreed that interviews would be conducted by all members of the Personnel Panel and the Town Clerk, assisted by Ms McNeill. Mrs Garth would administer the meetings.

*Application pack:* The meetings discussed drafts of the 'Welcome pack' for potential applicants, which showed structure and some content, with placeholder pages for discussion of appropriate content. Council had already agreed Job Descriptions and Personal Specifications for the Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer posts.

The detail was considered, and several suggestions for modified or additional material were discussed. Members were reminded that they should submit any ideas for text or photographs *asap*. Further content was being compiled and a final draft would be prepared shortly.

*Process:* a number of detailed areas were considered

> It was agreed that applicants should be offered an informal preliminary discussion if they wished, and this could be with TC and/or the Mayor. It was agreed that the Mayor should be asked simply to confirm that a call had been made and he would not be asked to offer opinions for consideration during the selection process, as this had implications

*pro* equality of treatment.

- › The approach to shortlisting and interview programme was revisited. Ms McNeill offered advice on optional patterns, and it was agreed that the Panel would work with SEEmp to seek a shortlist of (notional) six candidates, all of whom would be subjected to the CREDO profiling assessment and invited to interview having prepared a presentation on a set topic. The interview programme would include, so far as possible in view of Covid-19, introduction to members of staff and other Councillors. This could be followed by further informal meetings with preferred candidates if appropriate.

Various matters ancillary to the process were discussed, such as the option to offer relocation support to the appointee. This was considered best left for discussion following any offer of appointment if the subject arose, as appropriate to circumstances. Salary scales for the separate roles of TC and Responsible Finance Officer had been evaluated by the independent consultant Richard Penn, and previously reported to Council. Following some discussion on the context and process of evaluation, it was agreed that the scales recommended should be adopted.

Councillors thanked the Panel for its work in this regard and **it was resolved that:**

**FC2020/98.1** The records of the Personnel Panel meetings on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020 and 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021 are received and noted, and the Panel's decisions are approved.

**b) Allotments Working Party 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021.** Council considered the Minutes of this meeting (*copy in minute book*).

The meeting had briefly viewed the current form of Tenancy Agreement and the associated conditions, together with the set of guidelines on eco-friendly allotment practices that had been introduced for the 2020/21 year.

There followed a detailed review of a discussion document which covered a broad range of aspects and features of the Allotments service and suggested various policy elements and detailed proposals for new conditions.

Areas covered included:

- › Tenancy regulation and options for action in breach.
- › Permitted activities and produce.
- › Restriction of tenancies to parish residents.
- › Restriction on permitted groundworkers.
- › Site security and tenant behaviour.
- › Structures (eg fencing/sheds/toolstores/ponds).
- › Permitted/prohibited materials.
- › Composting.
- › Wildlife and biodiversity.
- › Pesticides; herbicides and fertilizers.
- › Disposal of waste.
- › Water supply and charging.
- › Rental fees.
- › Encouragement for adoption of eco-friendly practices.

Members considered elements of this document in great detail, and reached provisional agreement on some proposals, but time constraints prevented completion of the task.

The work being incomplete, at the request of Members the Chairman adjourned the meeting, with the remainder of the business of the Working Party deferred pending resumption. A date would be fixed as soon as reasonably practicable.

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2020/98.2** The Minutes of the meeting of the Allotments Working Party held on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021 are received and noted.

**c) North Street development Sounding Board meeting 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021:**

It was explained that the purchase of the North Street Quarter (NSQ) from Lewes District

Council and Santon North Street Ltd had not yet been formally concluded. The prospective owners 'Human Nature' had moved into offices in the High Street and the company included a number of local residents. They anticipated that a new planning application would be submitted for the site in the next 18 months and then engineering for flood defences that must precede any development would commence almost immediately thereafter. Engagement exercises would be held with the community on the NSQ site hopefully in the summer dependent upon on COVID restrictions. It was their aim to retain many of the existing tenants on the site. A full range of specialist consultants would be working on the project, including eight architects. Whilst the company was undecided whether it would continue with the Sounding Board in the same form as their predecessors, it had been suggested that the Board meet again in the near future. A regular newsletter was being prepared.

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2020/98.3** The oral report on the North Street development Sounding Board meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021 is noted.

**FC2020/99**

**MAYORALTY 2021/22:**

The matter of nomination of a Mayor-elect and Deputy Mayor-elect for the 2021/22 municipal year was tabled, and the Mayor invited nominations for the roles.

Consequently, **it was resolved that:**

**FC2020/99.1** Cllr Catlin is elected Mayor-Elect for the 2021/22 municipal year.

Two nominees were proposed for the role of Deputy Mayor, and some debate arose in which it was suggested that candidates be questioned which, TC advised, although lawful was unconventional and considered inappropriate. TC further advised that the formal elections were those held at the annual meeting in May, and early designation was a simple courtesy to individuals to allow them time to prepare for the effects on their personal lives of a year in office. Some members suggested that the process of election was not transparent, and candidates should be allowed to make public presentations of their merit. A number of others disagreed and spoke about the requirement for strict neutrality in service to the whole community, and suspension of personal opinions; preferences and principles during the year. Both candidates spoke briefly on their own behalf and the matter was put to a vote. A recorded vote was requested (*Standing Order 1(s) [following provisions of Local Government Act 1972 Sch12 p13 (2)]*) and the record of votes cast is appended to these Minutes.

Consequently, **it was resolved that:**

**FC2020/99.2** Cllr Sains is elected Deputy Mayor-Elect for the 2021/22 year.

**FC2020/100**

**UPDATE ON MATTERS IN PROGRESS:**

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

*Town Hall:* An acoustic survey must precede the start of the Town Hall heating replacement, to establish ambient noise levels near local homes before air-source heat pump plant could be specified. During the present Covid-19 situation the level would be untypical and therefore survey work would await a return to more normal levels.

*Pells area:* projects (items 2 & 3: lake ecology and pool kiosk development) which had been deferred pending the start of major flood defence works would be affected by the recently-announced change of ownership of the North Street development site and attendant change of direction in planning design, and these would be reviewed when that situation was clearer in case an earlier start was now appropriate. TC offered to brief any Member unfamiliar with these long-standing projects.

*Malling Community Centre* refurbishment work was progressing as fast as Covid-19 effects allowed, although the contractor could not offer a completion date at this point. Staff would move into their new roles with effect from February to facilitate planning for re-opening.

*Devolution* matters were on-hold, although it had been previously reported that Lewes District Council (LDC) had withdrawn their offers of sale of the Market tower and Fisher

Street. It was understood that LDC were still prepared to transfer the Trusts related to Stanley Turner and Mountfield Road recreation grounds, although they were considering a number of aspects which would offer the Town Council only liabilities with no compensating benefit. This would develop, and Council would be informed in due course.

**FC2020/101**

**NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT**

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

- > The next cycle of applications (Cycle 4 of 4) to the Council's grants programme has a deadline for applications (now online-only) of, 29<sup>th</sup> January with an online meeting of the Grant Panel on Weds 10<sup>th</sup> February and decisions by Council on 4<sup>th</sup> March.
- > The next Council meeting will take place on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021 at 7:30pm, with a deadline for agenda items to reach TC by noon on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February.
- > TBC – a further Personnel Panel workshop and the resumption of the Allotments Working Party were imminent; other meetings would be scheduled in due course.

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

*The meeting ended at 9.20pm*

Signed: ..... Date: .....

**VOTING RECORD SHEET**

**MEETING of: Council**

**date: Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2021**



**LEWES  
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Please note: this is a record of voting *where this has been requested* under Standing Order 1(s) [following provisions of Local Government Act 1972 Sch12 p13 (2)]

MOTION or AMENDMENT VOTED UPON	Lib Dem	Green	Lib Dem	Ind	Lib Dem	Green	Lib Dem	Green	Lib Dem	Green	Green	Ind	Lib Dem	Ind	Lib Dem	Green	Green	Lib Dem	No. FOR	No. AGAINST	No. Abstentions	Not Present or Not Voting	CARRIED ? Yes/No
	BAAH	BIRD	BURROWS	CATLIN	EARL	HANDY	HENMAN	HERBERT	LAMB	MAKEPEACE	MAPLES	MAYHEW	MILNER	O' KEEFFE	SAINS	VERNON	WARING	WOOD					
Deputy Mayor Elect for 2021/22 <i>(Record requested by Cllr Dr Maples)</i>																							
<i>Nominee:</i> Cllr Makepeace	NP	✓	A	✗	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	A	✗	✓	✓	✗	7	8	2	1	No
<i>Nominee:</i> Cllr Sains	NP	✗	A	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✓	✓	A	✓	✗	✗	✓	8	7	2	1	Yes