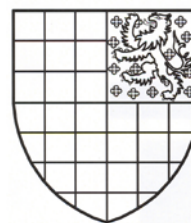


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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

Of the **meeting of Lewes Town Council**,

held on **Thursday 10th November 2016**, in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall**, Lewes at **7:30pm**.

PRESENT Councillors A Ashby; J Baah; A Bolt; R Burrows; S Catlin (Wischhusen); M Chartier (*Deputy Mayor*); W Elliott; H Jones; J Lamb; I Makepeace; Dr G Mayhew (*Mayor*); R Murray; S Murray; R O'Keeffe; T Rowell and E Watts.

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk*); Mrs E Tingley (*Committee Admin.*) and Canon R Moatt (*Chaplain*)

Observing: Ms J Dean (*Customer Services Officer*) and Mr B Courage (*Town Ranger*)

Before the meeting opened, Canon Moatt offered some thoughts on the ease with which even large organizations can 'get things wrong'; the sacrifice of those who have died in wars and other conflicts which, he said, should never be forgotten; and the effect on society of those who may feel powerless and 'forgotten' by governments and institutions.

FC2016/63 **QUESTIONS:** 5 Members of the public were present.

A written question had been received regarding items placed in remembrance on the War Memorial. The question and the answer given are appended to these minutes.

FC2016/64 **DECLARATIONS of INTEREST:** Cllr R O'Keeffe declared an interest *iro* item 6h (Citizens Advice Bureau).

FC2016/65 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Apologies had been received from Cllr Barker, who was working in the Channel Isles and Cllr Milner who was recovering from medical treatment. **It was resolved that:**

FC2016/65.1 The reasons submitted for absence from this meeting are accepted.

FC2016/66 **MAYOR's ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

a) Cllr Milner had sent an update on his health, together with thanks for all good wishes received. He had been suffering from severe ulcerative colitis and had been hospitalised twice. He was now on a new medication which seemed to be working. Members wished Cllr Milner a speedy return to health.

b) Regrettably, despite a collaborative effort between Cllrs Barker and R Murray with Wave Leisure Trust, The Youth Sports Awards nominations had been scarce and not enough to make a full competition. To prevent young people from being discouraged, the Mayor would hold a reception in the Council Chamber for all those nominated, and those who submitted a nomination, on 7th December at 5.30pm.

c) The Mayor reminded Councillors and guests to assemble in the foyer of the Town Hall at 10.45am on 11th November for the Armistice Day service of remembrance.

d) Remembrance Sunday would be on 13th November. Councillors and guests were asked to assemble in the Town Hall foyer at 2.00pm and allow time to find their robes and hats.

e) The exhibition of WW1 pictures from the Reeves photographic archive, currently on display in the Town Hall's Baxter Gallery, was augmented by various contemporary documents and local artefacts which had been retrieved from archive storage at The Keep (County Archive).

FC2016/67 **MINUTES:**

It was resolved that:

FC2016/67.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 29th September 2016 are received and signed as an accurate record.

Continues...

‘MISSING FROM THE MEMORIAL’ PROJECT:

This item was brought forward on the evening’s agenda as most of the public attendees were present in connection with it.

Council considered information provided by Cllr O’Keeffe on a project called “Missing from the Memorial”: Cllr O’Keeffe promoted the project through the organisation “When Skies Were Always Blue”, following a petition which had gained over 1000 signatures. Members of the local British Legion were interested in setting up the project and making funding applications to support it. The project was intended to reach out across the present community in Lewes and involve them to find out some basic facts about the people who died during WWI and who did not have their name inscribed on the War Memorial. The aim was to add an extra plaque to the memorial or to place a plaque in the Town Hall, as most appropriate. Research would also be carried out by school children with the help of experts and older people’s memories. Permission would need to be given by the Council, as owners of the War Memorial, in order for third-party funding to be sought.

Cllr Dr Mayhew reminded Members that he was carrying out research to establish the position regarding WW1 omissions from the War Memorial with a view to any additions being made in 2018. This had been requested by Council at their meeting in August 2014 following a recommendation of the Commemoration Working Party and he referred to those minutes, which described the origins of the project – inspired by discussions in 2013 with the Chairman of Lewes Branch, Royal British Legion. It was known that in 1920-21, when the community was asked to provide names to be commemorated on the memorial; many families did not respond. Further; it had been noted that three brothers from one family, who had all been killed in action, were commemorated elsewhere. It had been generally accepted that any additions to a memorial should be properly researched, and reasonable attempts made to contact surviving family to ascertain their wishes. Cllr Dr Mayhew, an academic historian by profession, had conducted such research over forty years ago which resulted in the addition of the names of those fallen in the Second World War, and he had offered to extend that work to establish the position regarding the WW1 omissions. This was being conducted at a measured pace with a view to any additions being made in 2018, to mark the end of WW1, on a suitably high-quality plaque. This had been warmly welcomed, and the Chairman of the RBL had been kept advised. It was hoped that this would be completed by early summer 2017.

Since inception of the project, the War Memorial had been elevated to a 2* Heritage Listing which meant it was unlikely that any changes could be made to the Memorial.

Cllr O’Keeffe explained to Council that the project she espoused was educational and for children to engage with their local War Memorial. It was recognized that any research conducted in schools would be considered as advisory only, as access to the full resources of archives and expert historians would be limited. Nonetheless; Council could support the principle of such a project as a parallel to the commission of Dr Mayhew.

Following questions and a short debate **it was resolved that:**

FC2016/68.1 Lewes Town Council supports in-principle the educational project proposed by the organization “When Skies Were Always Blue” – which may parallel Cllr Dr Mayhew’s current research on behalf of the Council regarding names omitted from the Lewes war memorial immediately following WW1 – and will confirm this if requested for funding applications.

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) *Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group:* Members considered the Minutes of the Meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (*copy in minute book*) held on 3rd October 2016.

The Group had been informed of Council's agreement regarding appointments and chairmanship, as decided on 29th September. The Chairman had commented that the primary requirement was for representatives of organisations, but not ruling out individuals who may be able to provide specialist input. Ordinary members of the public would be welcome to contribute via workshops; as observers at the Group meetings; and be encouraged to participate during the public consultation.

Revised Terms of Reference for the Group were distributed. Several organisations had been approached regarding additional representation.

Of the original list of 97 organisations originally invited to join the Steering Group, 14 had been regularly involved in the process of developing the Plan. Significant background work had been done looking at housing sites that appeared viable and there remained a need to identify sites for 132 homes after eligible existing schemes were deducted from the 220 'target'.

Topic groups had met and a useful tourism report had been obtained that would complement work already completed that was held by the consultants pending integration within the final draft Plan. There had been discussion regarding the possible designation of Bonfire sites as greenfield sites with special cultural significance to the community.

The Design & Built Environment team had reviewed the Draft Plan and previous documents. A workshop had been held which 12 people had attended from different associations, and made further contributions. There was a recognized need to create more affordable business space. The group had tried to structure inclusive policies that would be relevant to the people of Lewes.

Housing – much of the draft policy would be re-worded.

Sustainability – This group had completed a substantial amount of work around 18 months ago and now extended that. The Steering Group needed to think about how to prioritise these emerging policies.

Transport – work continued and revised drafts were imminent.

The latest pre-submission Draft Plan had been received from the consultants a few days earlier. The briefing note accompanying this was extremely helpful and gave clear advice on what was lawful or irrelevant etc. The forward plan was to hold combined/split workshops on Wednesday 5th October in the Council Chamber to review the latest draft and concentrate on text revisions, not further discussion. Topic Leaders were to meet again on 7th October to complete all comments to the consultant by 10th October. The emphasis was on providing FERIA with completed text – not additional comments.

The Group considered two schedule choices, either of which would see a completed pre-submission "Regulation 14" draft Plan completed by 31st March 2017. The Group elected to follow the schedule which would see final text/draft revisions between 3 – 13th January 2017; public consultation commence on 16th January and run for six weeks plus one day, to 28th February. A two-day public 'drop-in' consultation event was scheduled for 19th & 20th January.

Publicity for the following public consultation would aim to:

- raise awareness of the plan with all those who live and/or work in Lewes and,
- encourage good turnout for the referendum.

Steering Group members were tasked with:

- Reactivation of www.lewes4all.uk as a news portal – this was being done
- Reactivate Facebook page for social media users
- Refer to www.lewes4all in all material
- Advertise fresh call for new housing sites – 4 week limit
- Ideas for advertising of public consultation
- Prepare an attractive leaflet for door to door delivery
- Place articles in local newspapers i.e. Sussex Express and Argus.

Advertising could be placed in schools and Doctors Surgeries. A newsletter could be produced and delivered by residents associations. Rocket FM would be talking about Planning Matters on their breakfast show (7 - 9am) on 26 & 27th October.

It was resolved that:

FC2016/69.1 The Minutes of the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (*copy in minute book*) held on 3rd October 2016 are noted.

b) *North Street Quarter 's106' Play & Recreation group 11th October 2016:* Cllr S Murray gave an oral report. The group had discussed the various issues that came within its remit including progress on a replacement Skate Park. Detailed proposals were being drafted for the upgrade with help from the young people who use the skate park. One of the issues with such early works was the timing of funding, as 'Section 106' contributions arising from the North Street development would not be triggered until late stages of the programme. Lewes District Council would look at the possibility of funding the project which could be repaid when the Section 106 money was available. There had also been discussion on flood defences in the Pells area and the first stage in public consultation, aiming to identify preferences for landscape, play and recreation improvements at The Pells and Malling Recreation Ground, was scheduled for 25th November at St John Sub Castro & 26th November at Malling Community Centre.

It was resolved that:

FC2016/69.2 The oral report on North Street Quarter s106 Play & Recreation Group held on 11th October 2016 is noted.

c) *Commemorations Working Party 21st October 2016:* Cllr Chartier presented the Minutes of this meeting (*copy in minute book*) which had considered:

The Royal Sussex Regimental Association had requested for assistance in maintaining and upholding the memory, heritage and traditions of the Regiment.

The Royal Sussex Regiment endured from 1881 - 1966, and was awarded the Freedom of the Borough of Lewes in 1953. The forebears of the Regiment were founded in 1701 and had proceeded, through amalgamation, to the Queen's Regiment and, today, the Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment.

The Royal Sussex Regiment had taken part in virtually every major campaign of the British Army and this year the Battle of Boar's Head, known as 'the day Sussex died' (telling the story of 11th, 12th and 13th Battalions, "Lowther's Lambs") had been a prominent commemoration of action on the Somme in WW1.

The RSRA requested that some recognisable feature, possibly a badge or plaque, as a mark of respect and gratitude, be displayed in the entrance hall of Lewes Town Hall, a focal point, to all Royal Sussex veterans and those who appreciate their services.

Lewes Light Festival: The Working Party had authority from Council to reimburse appropriate costs of up to a maximum of £5000. Items were individually scrutinized and approved, which amounted to £3,099.26 in total. There were one or two items outstanding that were expected to cost a few hundred pounds and TC was asked to deal with these in due course, within the balance remaining. The organizers had reported that attendance to the event was 50% higher than 2015.

Lightbox 2016 project "1916 – Lewes Remembers: stories seen through a glass plate" – Brigitte Lardinois, of the University of the Arts, London, had presented an update on the project to exhibit 80 light-boxes in 65 windows throughout Lewes, depicting individuals and scenes from 1916. The Council had agreed to host an accompanying exhibition in the Baxter Gallery at the Town Hall and this had enormous local support. Plans were described for a torchlight vigil at the War Memorial to remember those fallen in WW1 who were named thereon. This was supported by Bonfire Societies and plans were well-developed, but there was a possibility that it could not be mounted this year but would be presented in 2017. Members had been impressed by the concept and endorsed this project. (*Post-meeting note: it was subsequently advised that this project must be deferred to 2017*).

It was resolved that:

FC2016/69.3.1 The Minutes of the Commemoration Working Party held on 21st October 2016 (*copy in minute book*) are noted;

FC2016/69.3.2 Lewes Town Council agrees in principle to some form of permanent memorial for the Royal Sussex Regimental Association, subject to firm proposals coming forward for detailed consideration at a later date.

d) *Building Repairs Working Party 21st October 2016*: Cllr Chartier presented the minutes of this meeting (*copy in minute book*)

Cllr Rowell had registered concerns which he summarized as:

1. Financial control procedure 11.1g had not been complied with.
2. No explanation in the minutes as to why it had not been complied with
3. No explanation in the minutes as to how this contract complies with the procedures had been given.
4. Does the working party have authority to contract?
5. “Specialist services” is not a clear enough term and 11.1a allows for a substantial weakness in control.
6. Council had not been given the opportunity to satisfy itself that it has obtained value for money on this contract.

These points were contended, and the opinion expressed that in essence they represented dissatisfaction with the particular wording of minutes. The original remit of the Working Party was to commission repairs and refurbishment at the Town Hall. This had been, logically, extended in 2014 by Council to include ‘*administration of the project to refurbish the Malling Community Centre*’, and it was generally held that the wording of the relevant minute represented the wishes of the Council that the Working Party should manage the project in that the word “administer” was understood to include the contexts of “manage” and “control”. Cllr Rowell submitted that he had no opportunity to raise concerns when the minutes of the last meeting were presented to Council, although this was strongly refuted by colleagues, who noted how straightforward it was to indicate a wish to speak at any meeting. Other members could not accept the interpretation of incomplete or misleading minutes, and considered that the record of this project to-date, and the Working Party’s decisions, was clear. The Chairman had asked TC to obtain an opinion from the Council’s internal auditor, and they had discussed the matter in detail. TC reported that the auditor was entirely comfortable with the way the Working Party had behaved; the structure of minutes and the detail that had been recorded, and the clarity of current SO’s and Financial Regulations. He could see no objection to the process to date and would certainly not find grounds for censure. TC had described the manner in which the Working Party had assured itself regarding value-for-money aspects and the fact that minutes did not make specific reference to itemised regulations was not seen as important. TC suggested that if this aspect caused any concern the minutes of the present meeting would now regularize that situation. For the avoidance of doubt: it was confirmed that BLB had been commissioned for specialist services to be provided [FCP 11.1 a) (ii)], and their value-for-money *bona fides* had been satisfied prior to other contracts in previous years and principal councils had validated their cost structure.

Works to the Town Hall roof were proceeding well, and surprisingly few “extras” had been found as the true condition of the structures was exposed by the removal of old material. To date this had discovered only a small amount of rotten timber, and several courses of brickwork to a gable-end which needed to be taken down and rebuilt. These costs were likely to be only a few hundred pounds.

Members had considered a rough-draft Project Execution Plan submitted by BLB Surveyors for the Malling Community Centre refurbishment, and the results of the tender process recently conducted regarding preliminary “due diligence” surveys.

Project Execution Plan: This was obviously based upon a standard template, and some sections had not been “tailored” with detail of the actual MCC refurbishment project.

This document had been analysed in detail and a series of amendments noted.

On the broader aspects of the proposed refurbishment it was proposed that: when Architects design ideas were available, a meeting of the Working party could be held at the Malling Community Centre and the public invited to comment. During works, when inevitably the facilities would be unavailable for a time, efforts would be made to suggest alternative venues for the regular users. It was thought that some might utilize Landport Youth Centre but Cllr O’Keeffe had indicated this was unlikely to be available. In response to a question TC had explained the implications regarding Value Added Tax. A question was raised regarding funding: the Council held £263,000 in an earmarked Reserve, and other Reserves could be appropriated if required to add more. This would not cover the whole cost of the project (estimated at >£400,000), but it was anticipated that grants would be available for several elements once the design was established *eg* sports-oriented funds which may contribute toward changing facilities and environmental funds and others which offer support for community buildings. Cllr O’Keeffe had suggested that she would be happy to investigate potential applications. Should there remain a shortfall in the funds, it was always open to Council to borrow from the Public Works Loans Board. This had been understood from the outset, when a refurbishment project was first contemplated by Council.

Architects to be invited to tender: BLB had proposed a short list of RIBA Chartered Architects practices who were considered to have relevant expertise and should be invited to express interest in the project. Members agreed these and proposed an addition in respect of a practice who had been engaged with the initial feasibility assessment in 2013.

At this point the meeting had resolved to exclude the press and public, as during the remainder of the meeting the business was to consider tender values and submissions for prospective contracts.

“Due diligence” surveys: BLB had conducted a tender exercise on the Council’s behalf; inviting bids for surveys required before the project could be practically commenced: an Asbestos survey; a Measured Building survey, and a survey of Mechanical and Electrical Plant installations. All firms bidding were local and of the nine invited (three in each discipline) only two had declined to tender. In each case the recommended contractor was also the lowest bid.

In conclusion, the Working Party had accepted the Project Execution Plan, with amendments as noted during the meeting; a list of architects to be invited to tender, and agreed the results of the tender process for preliminary “due diligence” surveys. The bids accepted were:

Asbestos risk: DAF Consulting (£760)

Mechanical & electrical plant survey: Delta Green Environment Design (£2,010)

Measured buildings survey: Zara Associates (£1,435)

The group would meet again when an appropriate milestone stage was reached.

It was resolved that:

FC2016/69.4 The Minutes of the Building Repairs Working part 21st October 2016 (*copy in minute book*) are noted.

e) *Liaison meeting with Friends of Lewes 25th October 2016:* Cllr Chartier, who had been asked to Chair this meeting, presented the minutes (*copy in minute book*)

Pipe Passage lighting - At the previous meeting it had been proposed that the FoL; LTC, and Lewes Association for Restoration & Conservation (LARC) might jointly-fund the replacement of three street luminaires in Pipe Passage, the original elegant historic fittings having recently been replaced by East Sussex County Council (ESCC) with utilitarian modern designs. The recently-installed units could be replaced with an appropriate design at a cost of approximately £2,000. It had subsequently been confirmed that LARC would contribute £1,000 to this end, and FoL would contribute £500. The Council had agreed the proposal and would pay the balance of approximately £500. For reasons of practicality the Council would act as principal, and an order for works had been placed.

Tourist Maps - At the previous meeting it had been noted that 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. There had been no further development of this and it was suggested that a full 'audit' of major changes to the town, both since last publication and anticipated in the near future, would be beneficial. There was suggestion that Lewes District Council might be prepared to contribute to this. It was agreed that this item would be routinely monitored at subsequent liaison meetings.

Riverside path (South of Bear Yard) - The riverside route from Timberyard Lane was occluded by the electricity sub-station but there was space for a path to be created alongside. Possible inclusion of the principle within the Neighbourhood Plan had been proposed, and it was expected that this would feature in the appropriate section. UK Power Networks (UKPN) had indicated they had no objection but would seek relief from responsibilities and inclusion of appropriate safety screening. These concerns, and any liability arising for the retaining wall on the riverbank, would be discussed with UKPN.

Land adjoining Castle Ditch Lane ("the Magic Circle") - Design drawings for this project had been circulated. Footpath dedication had now been addressed, although there were outstanding issues related to ownership of the land. Responses were awaited from Lewes District Council and ESCC. The FoL recommended that the public seating and peace-garden should constitute a single project for practical reasons, and the design proposal was on that basis. This, and a target of 2018, was agreed. Mr Beasley, the architect of the plans, would consult the District and National Park Authority Conservation Officers and Historic England. At an appropriate stage it was intended to involve schools and the wider public. FoL were seeking LTC's general agreement, as funding could not be addressed until all agencies had indicated their position.

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 with 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 continued to seek alternative suggestions. It was suggested that the project could feature in the Council's Newsletter to invite site suggestions.

War memorials - A project to research a directory of all war memorials in Lewes had been suggested. A question had arisen at the previous meeting 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. The present location of the plaque was discussed (believed to remain undisturbed at time of writing) and it was thought that the Post Office management had a location in mind, although this was not clear. They would be reminded of offers to house the plaque if required. The directory project was considered to represent a significant amount of work and there were currently no resources available. Cllr O'Keeffe described her "Missing from the Memorial" project and sought feedback. As it was anticipated that additions to the war memorial would be problematic (as it was now listed as a Grade 2* heritage structure) she wondered if the Town Hall foyer might accommodate some form of commemorative list. This could be proposed to the Council in due course.

Mount Place wall - There had been brief discussion on the continuing deterioration of the rendered surface to this prominent local feature, which was becoming more unsightly. Ownership was not known, and there was some discussion as to who would be the most-likely "candidate". It was suggested that Cllr O'Keeffe, in whose ESCC Ward it fell, might investigate this with residents in the hope that one might hold some documents

that would shed light on the question.

Interpretive plaques for local buildings – The meeting had received an update on the latest agreed batch of plaques, and it was noted that the Premier Inn had reinstated the plaque removed from the previous Magistrates Court building; which was welcomed. For the future, it was agreed that only “strong candidates” should be brought-forward as suggestions for new plaques to avoid potential saturation; given the town’s wealth of historic connections.

FoL Trees project - A proposed planting schedule had been distributed for this project, and other suggestions were contributed. Detail was awaited as to the replacements proposed for trees lost from St Anne’s Hill.

White Lion - The figurine had been consigned for cleaning and refinishing by its maker, as he had been unhappy at the rapid weathering noted since installation. In the event he had decided to remanufacture the figure using a different compound material and the new figure had been installed in Westgate recently.

Paving adjacent Crown Court - A recent meeting with ESCC officers was reported; at which strengthening works to remedy problems at this site had been discussed. An original estimate of around £25,000 in March 2016 had increased to £45,000 in August and a figure of >£55,000 was now suggested although details were awaited. This matter would be kept under review

It was resolved that:

FC2016/69.5 The Minutes of the Liaison meeting with Friends of Lewes 25th October 2016 (*copy in minute book*) are noted.

f) *Communications Working Party 27th October 2016*: Cllr O’Keeffe presented the minutes of the meeting (*copy in minute book*) which had considered:

Social Media i.e. the use of Facebook and Twitter. TC had advised that whilst the Council had an adopted policy this was modelled upon an early example and a review would be appropriate. It was agreed that some examples of modern policies from other Councils should be obtained for consideration at the next meeting.

Website: TC had met with colleagues from Hailsham Town Council, whose recent new website had been viewed favourable with Members at an earlier meeting. The company who had produced the sites were local to Lewes as were other providers who had been asked to submit proposals.

Integration of a new website with Facebook and Twitter: Live examples of how this worked had been projected and various opinions expressed. At the next meeting Members planned to look at examples of modern social media policies as a specific item for the agenda and would endeavour to draft a policy for recommendation to Council.

Council’s Newsletter: Members had been encouraged to send items of relevance to TC and to take photographs if they attended an event which could be used as a contribution to the newsletter; which the Communications Working Party were reviving.

It was resolved that:

FC2016/69.6 The Minutes of the Communications Working Party 27th October 2016 (*copy in minute book*) are noted.

g) *Personnel Panel 2nd November 2016*: The Mayor presented the Minutes of the Personnel Panel (*copy in minute book*)

The panel had considered the Council’s prevailing training policy, and held a lengthy discussion on appropriate options to deliver Councillor training and the availability of suitable “trainers”. TC had presented summary returns from Councillors’ self-assessment questionnaires, which indicated that general training continued to be appropriate in all areas. There were one or two fields where a different approach may be effective but overall it was agreed that the most effective way to deliver training was by inviting providers to present sessions in-house, tailored to the Council’s scale of operation, as it was classified as one of the few hundred ‘larger’ parish councils in the country.

Regarding the self-assessment exercise: appropriate seminars or similar were sought that would address the needs of respondents who indicated positive need for training (levels 4/5), and allowed the inclusion of those who indicated only passive requirements (level 3) wherever possible. Direct provision allowed for everyone to be included, and for places to be offered to other parish councils in the District.

There had been questions as to how Continuing Professional Development (CPD) was supported, although acknowledged that with the profile of the council's very small staff team this was largely of an informal nature. TC described various elements that effectively addressed this context. Some specific proposals were discussed, such as Diversity training (already noted as a future prospect) and training for Councillors in the use of social media.

Some Members considered that opportunities to meet and 'cross-fertilize' ideas with fellows from other areas was important, and there was some discussion on how this had been achieved in the past. Of particular note was the friendly link with Chichester City Council (parish council) whereby reciprocal day visits had been arranged from time to time on common topics such as Planning. This could be re-invigorated and TC would approach his colleague at Chichester to discuss this. Locally, it was suggested that there could be merit in similar meetings with Newhaven Town Council and this would also be pursued.

It was commented that the Council had within its own ranks one of the best sources of training in areas such as "The Council as an Employer" in Cllr Barker – a highly-experienced professional adviser working nationally across local government for over 30 years. Members were also reminded that their most immediate source of advice should always be the Town Clerk, and particularly when their enquiry related to Lewes-specific detail; financial structure, or budgets. There were frequent opportunities for Members to meet and interact with staff, and all were encouraged to take advantage of these.

Scheduling for training was discussed and it was explained that 2015/16 had unfortunately been an untypical election year as so many councils had seen unprecedented numbers of seats change and huge influx of novice Members, which had taxed the systems which provided training and other services in the sector.

TC and Cllr Barker had updated the Panel on the implementation of the LLF Living Wage for Council staff, and TC presented some information related to staff absence through sickness which had been collated in answer to a recent question. This related days of sickness absence to the theoretical maximum available "productive days" of employees (allowing for weekends; bank holidays; holidays *etc*) and showed that the Council had an enviably low ratio of lost days. Adjusted for two specific long-term illnesses the factor was less than $\frac{3}{4}$ of one percent, with just a few days lost to minor ailments. There were no factors that would require any review of the establishment in the foreseeable future. TC had noted some of the occasional training and development events staff had attended in the past year.

A question had been raised as to how Council was able to assess staff performance in the execution of its decisions. TC had reminded Members that there was a published Annual Plan denoting major areas of work in the year that the Council proposed to initiate and complete or continue, in addition to the projects and initiatives itemised in the Council's budgets and 'everyday' activities. At every Council meeting TC reported under the standard Agenda heading of "Update on Matters in Progress" which represented a continuous review process. Added to that were the reports from Working Parties *etc* in the form of Minutes of their meetings reported to Council. Members could question progress at any time.

Some members considered that a structured system of staff appraisal should be introduced, and there followed a lengthy discussion on the relative merits of such systems. There was considerable research available on the applicability and the positive & negative effects of formal appraisal in organizations and groups of all sizes, and TC was

familiar with both viewpoints, having been trained in the area and having long experience in the application to organizations large and small; public and commercial. He did not consider that appraisal of his staff was appropriate but, if Members desired additional reassurance, he suggested that a periodic (once/twice each year) meeting could be held between the Panel and Town Clerk, facilitated by an independent professional. Immediately to mind was Mr Richard Penn, who had conducted the job evaluation exercise recently. Members were referred to the minutes of the previous meeting, appended to their agenda, where they could read an itemized summary of Mr Penn's illustrious career in local government: with over 30 years in senior positions including Chief Executive roles at Bradford City Council and Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council. Members had considered this was a very practical proposal and asked TC to research costs and practicalities with a view to a decision at their next meeting.

In conclusion:

The Personnel Panel had recommended no change to the current training policy.

Reciprocal meetings with other Parish Councils would be pursued; to facilitate informal networking and idea-sharing.

The Council's generally very low ratio of staff sickness absence was noted and welcomed. Council would be asked to the introduction of a regular meeting with the Town Clerk to discuss progress on corporate objectives; to be facilitated by an independent professional adviser.

There was a brief discussion, and one member insisted that the Panel's proposed regular progress meetings with TC should be labelled as 'performance management reviews'.

It was resolved that:

FC2016/69.7 The Minutes of the Personnel Panel 2nd November 2016 (*copy in minute book*) are noted.

h) *Citizen's Advice Bureau:* Cllr R Murray reported that the grant of £5,000 that Lewes Town Council gives to the CAB helps them provide a vital service to people in Lewes. Consultations and questions from the public mainly concerning benefits and tax credits. The Housing and Planning Act was now in place, and the number of rented private sector homes in the District had doubled over the last 15 years to 6000 households. There were 29 letting agents in Lewes alone. It was reported that CAB would be moving their office premises from Lewes to Newhaven in 2017.

It was resolved that:

FC2016/69.8 The oral report on the Citizens Advice Bureau is noted.

i) *Sussex Community Rail Partnership:* Cllr Catlin reported on a stakeholders' meeting held on 14th October at The Gatwick Hilton. It had been reported to the meeting that Rail journeys had doubled since privatisation in 1996. The re-opening of the Lewes Uckfield line should be covered in the Chancellor's autumn statement due on 23rd November. The experimental trial of ticket office closure would now take place in inner London only and 90% of conductors had signed a new contract for the role of On Board Supervisor.

No response had been received from Members to a timetable questionnaire which included a new 23.17 departure from London Victoria serving East Coastway. There would be a reduction to one train every two hours to Plumpton, but an additional service on alternate hours stopping at Cooksbridge through the day, instead of peak hours only. Due to overcrowding on the 2-car diesel service to Ashford it was proposed to replace this with a 4 car electric service to Hastings, and to run a 2 car Ashford service from Hastings. Since the introduction of the through-service Brighton-Ashford, Eurostar services to and from Ashford had been cut back. There were proposals to cut the through Seaford-London services and allow more time for interchange at Lewes. This would remove the possibility of service disruption when problems occur on the single line from Newhaven-Seaford.

It was resolved that:

FC2016/69.9 The oral report on the Sussex Community Rail Partnership is noted.

UPDATE ON MATTERS IN PROGRESS

- a) *Assembly Room/Corn Exchange roof repairs:* The works were still ongoing.
- b) *Town Hall Fire Alarm:* The system was now fully commissioned, and smoke alarms had been tested in a real event, due to unauthorized smoking near to an entrance door at a recent concert.
- c) *Public Access Defibrillators:* These had been installed and were operational. Dates were awaited from the Ambulance Service regarding training on their use.
- d) *Public WiFi in Town Hall:* This system had gone 'live' on the 10th October and was working well.
- e) *Audit (external):* The Town Brooks Trust Audit for the year-ended March 2016 had been completed, and there were no items to report.
- f) *Government consultation on 2017/18 Local Government Finance Settlement:* Cllrs had been provided with a copy of the response sent by TC to this consultation. He described the general response from parishes across the country, and recounted a meeting to which he had been invited by the National Association of Local Councils, at which the matter was discussed between several of the parishes 'targeted' for potential limitation on their precept, and officers from the Department of Communities & Local Government. Almost without exception, the proposals to 'cap' the precept increases of parishes had been met with the strongest objections, and dire warnings that such a restriction was directly counter to the spirit of localism and would lead to an unwillingness in most parishes to accept any devolution of assets or services from principal authorities.
- i) *Late Night Shopping – 1st December:* As has become the annual tradition, Council's staff would don fancy dress and serve mulled wine and hot chocolate to the public in the Town Hall Foyer, with proceeds divided between the Mayor's good causes.

NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT

- a) The next Member's Surgery was scheduled for Tuesday 6th December 2016 – 10:00am – 12:00pm in the Town Hall Foyer – Cllrs Catlin and Rowell volunteered to attend.
- b) The next Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Meeting would be held on Monday 17th November at 7.00pm.
- c) A 'dementia-friendly Lewes' lunchtime drop-in session was scheduled for 25th November, in the Yarrow Room
- d) A Liaison meeting with the Pells Pool Community Association would be held on Tuesday 29th November at 2.30pm in the Yarrow Room.
- e) The next Planning Committee would take place on Tues 29th November at 7:00pm.
- f) The next Council meeting would take place on Thursday 15th December 2016, with a deadline for agenda items to reach TC by noon on Monday 5th December.
- g) Communications Working Party would meet on Monday 19th December at 7.00pm.
- h) The next deadline for grant applications: (cycle 3 of 4 2016/17) was Fri 25th November. The Assessment Panel would meet on Wed 7th December with recommendations being considered by Council at its meeting on 15th December 2016.
- i) Meetings to be arranged were: Buildings Working Party (follow-on), Homes & Workspaces Working Party, Energy efficiency Working Party, Personnel Panel and Finance Working Party.
- j) The deferred Audit Panel meeting would be rescheduled.

There being no further business the Mayor closed the meeting and invited all present to join him in the Parlour for refreshments

The meeting ended at 8:55pm

Signed:

Date: