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**LEWES  
TOWN  
COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Meeting of Lewes Town Council held on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021 at 7.30pm in the Council Chamber, Lewes Town Hall**

**Present:**

Councillor Dr J Baah

Councillor M Bird

Councillor R Burrows

Councillor S Catlin (Mayor)

Councillor G Earl

Councillor J Herbert

Councillor J Lamb

Councillor I Makepeace

Councillor Dr W Maples

Councillor M Milner

Councillor R O'Keeffe

Councillor S Sains (Deputy Mayor)

Councillor J Vernon

Councillor R Waring

Councillor K Wood

**In attendance:**

Town Clerk

Committee Administrator

**66. Question time**

There were none.

**67. Members' declarations of interest**

There were none.

**68. Apologies for absence**

There were apologies from Councillor Handy due to a family matter and Councillor Mayhew for health reasons.

**69. Question time**

There were none.

**70. Minutes**

Minutes of the Council meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021 were received and agreed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

## **71. Mayoral Announcements**

- 71.1** The Mayor welcomed Victoria Gray, the new Communications Officer, who had started her role on 18<sup>th</sup> October.
- 71.2** The Mayor noted that Cllr Oli Henman had resigned from the Council. Councillors recorded their best wishes for his future.
- 71.3** The Town Council's first Black History Month event held on 23<sup>rd</sup> October had been well received. The Mayor gave thanks to Cllr Baah for co-ordinating the evening and to staff for ensuring the event had run smoothly
- 71.4** The Mayor announced that the thank you breakfast for the street cleaners following bonfire night had a higher attendance than before and the Council's offer had been very much appreciated by the cleaning team.
- 71.5** John Agard had been awarded the Book Trust Lifetime Achievement Award. The Mayor proposed to write to Mr Agard offering the Council's congratulations and would hold a reception for Mr Agard to mark this honour to which all Members would be invited.
- 71.6** Only three members had been present at the last planning meeting; the Mayor stressed that apologies must be sent in advance to the Town Clerk and Members must consider their commitment to attending meetings.
- 71.7** COVID 19 – It was agreed by Council that the temporary policy on Covid-19 mitigation remains to allow events at Council buildings with audiences/attendees numbering no more than 75% of the maximum capacity of a room. This will be reviewed at the next meeting of the Council.

## **72. Committees, Working Parties & Outside Bodies**

### **72.1 Finance Working Party 28<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

The Town Clerk gave a brief oral report. The Working Party had discussed the first draft of the service budgets for the financial year 2022 to 2023 which included staffing costs with increases for national insurance, pensions and the annual pay award which was yet to be confirmed. The Meeting had also discussed estimated increases for buildings *i.e.* utility bills, insurance, contracts etc. Other items such as the General Fund, earmarked reserves and projects were considered and it was agreed that a further meeting would be scheduled when the Buildings Working Party had revised the options for the Town Hall heating replacement. **It was resolved that:**

The Minutes of the Finance Working Party held on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2021 are received and noted.

### **73. Councillors Individual Duties**

Members considered report number FC013 advising Council of proposed changes to Member's appointed duties.

It was raised that it is common in many institutions for Finance and Audit to be chaired by members of different constituent groups, although this wasn't the case at the Town Council, and concern was raised that the Council have elected a Chair for Finance and Audit from the same group in terms of Governance. The Mayor confirmed that the recommendation was only to move Councillor Lamb from Audit to Finance, it will be for the Finance Working Party to elect the

next Chair. There was a general observation that as a Council, Members should work together.

- 73.1** The proposal was put to the vote and supported, 12 voting for and 2 voting against.

#### **74. Participatory Budget Pilot**

- 74.1** The Town Clerk summarised the report (previously circulated) including the Top Trump Cards at appendix 1, the Context document at appendix 2 and the proposed format of the Participatory Budget activity.

It was noted that a lot of work had gone into the development of the cards and that this was a good a project.

- 74.2** Clarification was sought on advertising the sessions and the Town Clerk confirmed this would include a variety of different communication channels, such as our website, social media and newsletters produced by others.

- 74.3** Members thought some more sense checking was needed on the cards and context document. It was confirmed that sense checking has been undertaken by some Members and members of the public leading to these drafts and that this was the opportunity for Council to complete sense checking.

- 74.4** There was confusion that the Landport Community Hub was included as a project on card 20 titled "Encourage vibrant community hubs away from the town centre". It was confirmed it was not, the image was simply used for this card to help participants visualise something for the project, which is stated as "Encourage development to ensure that not everything is located in the town centre, preventing unnecessary travel and ensuring that all areas retain a vibrant atmosphere where people can get to know their neighbours and feel at home in their own distinct locality within the town". Cllr Vernon was happy to receive suggestions for alternative images.

- 74.5** The Town Clerk clarified the recommendation which was to review the cards and the context document and for the Town Clerk to work with the Open Council Working Party to finalise them but was more than happy for Members to contact her directly to discuss any element of the pilot.

- 74.6** It was confirmed that all of the Top Trumps cards had been driven by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) projects in section 11 of the Neighbourhood Plan, which had been developed following substantial engagement from the public.

- 74.7** Explanation was sought regarding CIL, how it is paid, whether there was a way to ascertain how much CIL might be given in the future, and whether we had agreed to spend £45,000.

- 74.8** The Town Clerk confirmed that when this project started there was £45,000 in Lewes Town Council's CIL budget. Each year, the South Downs National Park Authority will pay 25% to LTC from the developments as they happen.

In relation to how much is spent as a result of this exercise, that will depend on what projects Council decides to undertake. For example, if the Council chose to undertake a feasibility study into the Lewes to Uckfield line that may only cost £10,000. If Council chose to invest in a pedestrian crossing it may use all of the £74,000 that it currently has in CIL funds and some of the further CIL funds to come. The Town Clerk pointed to the table of funds in the Context document, highlighting when funds were received over the last few years, and the need to spend those funds within five years of receipt.

With regards to projecting further contributions, this is hard to do as it is dependent on completed developments.

It was confirmed that CIL funds have set requirements as to how it is spent, hence the projects in Section 11 of the Neighbourhood Plan have been agreed. The 'Joker' card may tease out different options to existing projects or alternatives, but it must be noted these may not qualify for CIL funding. CIL is a levy that local authorities can choose to charge on new developments in their area.

With regards to the Participatory pilot, this is one element of how the Town Council will decide how to spend its CIL funds. The consultation exercise will create discussion points, helping facilitators (which will be Members) to understand people's feelings on those different projects and that will feed into a wider discussion for the Town Council on what it wishes to spend its CIL fund on.

**74.9** There was a discussion about how Council will choose who to engage with through the Participatory Budget pilot, and a desire to reach a diverse range of people and people that haven't been reached before. Council would like to inspire people who are not engaged in politics to get involved, which is what came up in the Finance Working Party, to get people engaged in how the Council spends public money.

**74.10** Assurance was sought that public money and resources were not wasted on something that would give you the same result anyway. It is important to look at the Key Performance Indicators, what are we trying to measure, what are we trying to do better or worse. It is a way of engaging people which is great.

**74.11** Cllr Bird gave the example of 'Planning for Real' which uses a big aerial photo to help people visualize what improvements they would like where and wondered whether it would help to have a large map. The Town Clerk confirmed that a Google map is being worked on and that a large scale physical map will be provided at appropriate locations, with the projects identified on the map.

**74.12 Members resolved to:**

1. Approve the Top Trumps cards and proposed activity as outlined in the report.
2. Approve the context table, with final amendments to be made by the Town Clerk with Members of the Open Council Working Party.
3. Members to email suggestions of outreach locations to deliver the Participatory Budget pilot to the Chair of the Open Council Working Party and the Town Clerk. Nearly all Members present volunteered to be facilitators.
4. Agree expenditure up to £500 to deliver the Participatory Budget pilot.

**75. Update on staffing and recruitment**

**75.1** The Town Clerk provided an oral update. The recruitment for the Responsible Finance Officer was unsuccessful. Re-advertisement will be looked at in the new year, recognising that the run up to Christmas is not an ideal time for recruitment.

Two members of staff are currently absent from work and were wished a speedy recovery. Staff covering those absences were thanked.

Two members of staff on maternity leave have both had their babies and Members gave congratulations.

**76. Dates to note for forthcoming meetings:**

- 76.1** The next Planning Committee will be Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November at 7:00pm in the Council Chamber.
- 76.2** The next Council meeting will take place on **Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021** at 7:30pm, with a deadline for agenda items to reach TC by noon on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> December.
- 76.3** Open Council Working Party would be convened following resolutions from this meeting.
- 76.4** Buildings Working Party would be convened when a revised options report is received from consultants.
- 76.5** Finance Working Party would also be convened once the options report is received.
- 76.6** The next cycle of applications (Cycle 3 of 4) to the Council's grants programme has a deadline for applications (now online-only) of 19<sup>th</sup> November 2021 with an online meeting of the Grant Panel on Weds 1<sup>st</sup> December to formulate recommendations to Council on 16<sup>th</sup> December.
- 76.7** TBC - Landport Bottom Management Cttee, Malling Community Centre Steering Group, Commemorations and Events Committee and others in due course.

**77. Items for press release**

- 77.1** It was discussed whether the Tops Trumps Participatory Budget pilot should be a press release. It was agreed that as further amendments were required the promotion of this would follow. It was agreed the arrival of the new Communications Officer and the changes being made to the website and Facebook as a result should be a press release.

The meeting closed at 8:35pm.

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**TOWN MAYOR**