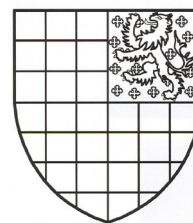


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**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

MINUTES

of the meeting of the **Open Council Working Party**, held on **Monday 23rd August 2021**, online via Zoom Meetings at 7:00pm.

PRESENT Cllrs Catlin; Herbert; Makepeace; Dr Maples (*Chair*); Sains; Vernon; Waring; Wood and (*not appointed to the Working Party*) Cllr Lamb.

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*) Mrs F Garth (*Assistant Town Clerk & Civic Officer*).

OCWP2021/01 **ELECTION of CHAIR:** Cllr Dr Maples was elected as Chair of the Working Party for the 2021/22 year.

OCWP2021/02 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Apologies had been received from Cllr Bird (no reason offered) and Cllr O’Keeffe, who was working. No message had been received from Cllr Henman.

OCWP2021/03 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** There were none.

OCWP2021/04 **QUESTIONS:** There were no questions.

OCWP2021/05 **MINUTES:**

It was resolved that:

OCWP2021/05.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 29th March 2021 are received and agreed as an accurate record.

OCWP2021/06 **REMIT of the WORKING PARTY**

Members noted the remit of the Working Party, which is:

To identify methods for improved public engagement and greater provision of information to residents of Lewes, to include:-

- › A review of information sharing and the methods used to share key events and policy developments.
- › Consideration of good practice on methods of online deliberation and social media, such as on key town-wide issues
- › Identifying ways to provide more joined-up support for community engagement in and around Council-owned buildings.

A discussion arose regarding the remit and the nature of the Working Party, and it was suggested that it should have a continuing remit beyond the tasks set by Council originally. Some Members wished to promote the recommendation to Council that the Working Party should become a standing Committee

TC advised that it was open to Members to take that forward and present a case to Council, but that as that proposal had not been made for inclusion on the Agenda for this meeting, all Working Party members had not had an opportunity to prepare for discussion on the topic and this would need to be raised at a future meeting. The Chair undertook to propose this at the next meeting.

OCWP2021/07 **BUSINESS of the MEETING**

1 Public Participatory Budget pilot: Council had asked the Working party to consider ways to engage the public with the agreed Public Participatory Budget (PPB) pilot scheme, asking the community to help prioritize the list of projects (37 in total) contained in section 11 of the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan; all being eligible for funding from accrued Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts.

A sub-group consisting of Cllrs Catlin, Vernon, and Dr Maples had met to develop outline proposals along the lines of these discussions, and notes of their meeting were presented:

As a pilot scheme, it was recognized that the breadth of communications and outreach should not be disproportionate to the amount of CIL money available. Nevertheless, it was desirable to engage across the spectrum of online, face-to-face, focussed and more 'casual' communication. Using a range of communications and discussion activity would give a better idea of what is scalable for future exercises (should the pilot be successful). Meetings/communications were proposed as:

First set of resident participation:

The first set of resident participation would involve using "Top Trump" cards/A5s (*see below*), as discussion facilitation, as well as additional information provided by interested members of the community before and during the event. The aim of these sessions would be to explore as many of the 37 potential projects/activities as possible and to come up with a resident-determined short-list of around 10 items.

1. Face to face 'World Café' event, at the Town Hall, with anticipated participation by 30 - 50 people, as soon as possible.
2. A Zoom 'World Café' event, within 24/48 hours of the face-to-face session.
3. Participants would be invited in the following ways: using Town Councillor networks, What's On notices in *eg* Lewes News, Council Website, FaceBook, a shared (f-2-f and online) small advertisement in the Sussex Express.
4. Eventbrite could be used to register participants. Communications would also provide the Town Hall phone number and reception email address to enable less-digitally-connected residents to attend.

Second set of resident participation:

The second set of resident participation would focus on a short list of CIL items and be more dependent on easy-to-grasp information in the form of Top Trump cards/A5s. During an approximately 21 day period immediately following the World Café events, residents would be able to 'vote' in the following ways:

1. Using drop-boxes (like the supermarket buttons for good causes) at the Town Hall Reception, Town Hall Tuesday Market and Stall at Farmers' Market.
2. Using online voting using *eg* Survey Monkey
3. Residents will be encouraged to participate using similar channels to above.

Using 'Top Trumps' -style cards:

1. *Content* proposed is:
 - a. That each card includes: Name of project; Estimated cost of project; 'Considerations' (*eg* other organisations interested/constraining); 'Advocacy' statement, including short description; Ease of implementation ('traffic lights' format); Relevant image (where possible)
 - b. Asking a small number of volunteers from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering group to add short descriptive 'advocacy' content to the CIL list of possible projects.
 - c. That reasonable costings are estimated for each, in order to guide determination of Red/Amber/Green traffic lights
 - d. A sub-group of Open Council to work with TC to manage production and completion within a time-scale that ensures both physical and online versions of cards and other facilitations are ready in good time.

2. *Design* suggestions are:

Ideally, we would ask the local college D&T students to design a simple, branded template; however, we think the timescale for this would be challenging. We welcome other suggestions.

3. *Production* proposals:

- a. It was possible to obtain 50 packs for £250.
- b. Members noted the need to follow Council's 'visioning' priorities and to use local, ethical producers where possible. Suggestions are welcome.

These ideas were warmly received and it was agreed that Cllrs Vernon and Waring would prepare initial designs for "Top Trump" cards accordingly, which would be assessed at a further meeting in time to allow a firm proposal with detailed costs to

be submitted to the scheduled October meeting of Council. It was agreed that this would be during week commencing 20th September. TC would provide details of the CIL projects, although he reminded Members that costing was not possible in many cases – suggesting an ‘order/scale-of-costs’ would be the most practical classification. He advised that the CIL fund currently stood at £74,000. Councillors and staff, with their partners, would be asked to act a ‘guinea-pigs’ to test the scheme at an appropriate point.

2 Allotment representatives: The meeting considered suggestions put forward by an allotment tenant for having more Tenant engagement across and between sites, through a system of representation at Council Allotment Group meetings – and a request for regular Allotment meetings. It was suggested that volunteers be representatives for each of the Council sites, initially by invitation and subsequently following an election process. These would have regular meetings established between the Representatives and the staff responsible for the allotments service and if there were an Allotments Working Party established at any time – that group. Meetings could take place at appropriately seasonal times, to address *eg*:

- > Allotment Show, *eg* making it more accessible/interesting to new growers, encouraging Tenant participation.
- > Supporting new Tenants.
- > Sharing good practice.
- > Revising Policy in line with good practice.

(*Cllrs Wood, Makepeace and Maples declared that they are allotment tenants*) The Working Party considered such questions as the democratic dilemma posed by individuals as representatives, and the ideal model of an Allotments Society (either pan-Lewes or site-for-site), which could have a number of inherent advantages for the Council and for tenants. Past attempts to promote formation of a Society had, unfortunately, proved unsuccessful. The Council’s tenants tended to be independent, and the proposals for individual representatives being suggested may be unpopular. Regular engagement with a range of tenants was desirable, but the method needed further consideration. A Symposium might be held – possibly ‘off-season’ when tenants were less active on their allotments.

Members were asked to crystallize their ideas on these issues for firm proposals to be drafted at the next meeting, which would be held during the week commencing 20th September.

3 “Connecting Lewes” digital inclusion initiative: The Council had expressed support for this initiative and Cllr Lamb presented an update on its progress. A steering committee meeting in July had addressed three themes: Age; Gender; and Health. Their recommendations in these areas were aimed at improving confidence in non-users of technology; de-mystifying and highlighting practicality, helping formation of peer groups; trusted helpers; training in a social setting (*eg* “cakes & computers” events); improving understanding of what is available by such as health-service providers *etc*

Cllr Lamb was thanked for his presentation and invited to return if/when the Working Party might assist.

4 East Sussex Loneliness and Resilience initiative: This was an initiative by East Sussex County Council, and it was suggested that Town Councillors might engage with a research group when approached. TC should expect an approach from ESCC officers shortly.

5 Public consultations: It was suggested that LTC might assist the public with the many consultations arising these days. A recent example was the East Sussex Bus Service Improvement Plan, and Cllr Makepeace suggested that rather than reply to the questionnaire people should instead send individual emails detailing their local concerns; she also asked how the Town Council might ensure that it reflects the views of constituents. It was accepted that elected Councillors should engage with

their constituents in their own preferred manner, and attempt to represent them in a balanced way. Each consultation would be unique and address its particular audience in a deliberately-selected way. If there were criticisms of a particular format at any time, they could be passed to the body responsible. Libraries were often a focal point for engagement in such areas. The Council was often consulted for a ‘corporate’ response when it always sought to collate the views of representative Members. The soon-to-be-recruited Communications Officer (CO) could be asked to highlight important consultations on social media platforms *etc.* Members asked that the CO attend the Working Party meetings, but TC explained that the deployment of a part-time officer’s efforts was an operational management matter and this would not be guaranteed.

6 Town Council website: The Council’s website had been operational since mid-2019 and a review was proposed. TC advised that this would be a matter for the new Communications Officer and was embodied in the agreed job description. The meeting then became rather distracted by a debate over a particular photograph which was unpopular with some Members. Some complaints had been raised in the past two years over the photograph heading the ‘Committees’ page on the site, commenting that it did not suitably reflect the diversity of the Council’s membership. TC explained that a suitable replacement photograph had been attempted on several occasions since the original item was produced, but none had retained the desired attributes once formatted for the website. Members were free to attempt their own photography in this regard but TC stated that he would not give the matter any attention in his last few weeks before retirement, having many other priorities. Some Members became insistent, and suggested photographs such as the traditional civic group picture taken following elections could be modified, although it was subsequently acknowledged that it was significantly out-of-date and showed an incomplete group. The Civic Officer would be asked to invite all Members to a photocall to update that.

7 Video recording of Town Council meetings: It was suggested that video recordings of Town Council meetings could be made and streamed, and TC was asked if this was possible. TC explained that equipment and training would be needed and although he had no sense of likely cost it was relatively straightforward to arrange. He reminded members that if they wished to propose such an initiative, they must put a case to Council. Council could be asked for ‘in-principle’ agreement and to approve research of costs and practicalities, arising from the Minutes of this meeting.

OCWP2021/08

CONCLUSIONS: The next meeting of the Working Party will take place during week commencing 20th September to allow proposals to be agreed for the Public Participatory Budget pilot scheme, and allotment tenant engagement. The Chair will include an item to agree recommendations that the Working Party should be established as a standing Committee.

The Civic Officer will be asked to convene a photocall for an updated Council group picture for use on the website ‘Committees’ page.

Council will be asked for ‘in-principle’ agreement and to approve research of costs and practicalities of video recording/online streaming of Council meetings.

OCWP2021/09

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed, and thanked everyone for their attendance. *The meeting closed at 9:00pm.*

Signed date