

**Minutes of an ordinary meeting of the Town Council held in The New Millennium Chamber, The Manor House, Church Street, Littlehampton BN17 5EW on Thursday 12 October 2023 at 6.30 pm**

**Present:**

Councillor Tandy – Chair  
Councillor Blanchard-Cooper  
Councillor Butcher  
Councillor Daws  
Councillor Lee  
Councillor Long  
Councillor May  
Councillor Northeast  
Councillor Richards  
Councillor Tilbrook  
Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ  
Councillor Wiltshire  
Councillor Woodman

**2023 to 2024**

**39. Evacuation Procedures**

The procedures were noted.

**40. Filming of Council Meetings, Use of Social Media and Mobile Phones**

The procedures were noted.

**41. Presentation of the Sports Excellence Grants Awards**

Before beginning the main business of the meeting, the Mayor was pleased to welcome the beneficiaries of this year's Sports Excellence Grants. Each year, together with Littlehampton Sports Forum, the Town Council gives a total of £2,000 to be shared amongst three local sportspeople to help them achieve sporting excellence. He invited Sienna Marodeen, Grace Bennett, and Hector Hall who shared this year's award to join him at the podium. Presenting the awards, he congratulated them on their achievements and thanked them for all they did representing the Town through their respective sports. Wishing them all well in the future he also looked forward to following their careers in sport.

## **42. Apologies**

There were apologies from Councillors O'Neill and Worne.

## **43. Declarations of interest**

Members and Officers were reminded to make any declarations of disclosable, pecuniary, or personal and or prejudicial interests that they might have in relation to items on the agenda. The standing declarations were noted, and Councillor Tilbrook also declared a personal interest as a volunteer at the Windmill Cinema.

## **44. Minutes**

The Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 22 June 2023 and the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council held on 21 August 2023, previously circulated, were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

## **45. Town Mayor Report and Urgent Items**

**45.1.** The Mayor's engagements report, copy attached to the Minutes, had been circulated to Members before the meeting for information. The Mayor reported that the summer had been incredibly busy with events and he thanked all the organisations that had been involved for their support. He added that these events would not be possible without the commitment of the Town Council's Events Team, and he thanked them for their hard work. The Mayor also thanked everyone who helped raise money for his chosen charities which focused on men's mental health. Commenting on his own recent experience, he shared that recently he had personally come to appreciate the value of the work of volunteers in this field and expressed his gratitude to those who had supported him through a difficult time. He also went on to confirm his recent decision to take a sabbatical at the end of the year and was very much looking forward to next year and excited to have the opportunity to throw himself into the second half of his Mayoral term.

### **45.2. Urgent Action: Removal of Town Council Logo from New Town Centre Parking Disc**

Council had before it an Urgent Action report regarding the decision to remove the Town Council's logo from the new Town Centre Parking Disc Scheme. The Town Clerk explained that the District Council had required a decision as to whether the Town Council would support the new proposed parking arrangements by 6 October to meet a printing deadline. As an interim measure and to provide Members with the opportunity to properly consider the District Council's proposals, the decision had been taken to temporarily remove the Town Council's logo from the new discs. It was noted that this matter was the subject of a separate report and would be discussed later in the meeting.

**It was therefore resolved that:**

The Urgent Action be noted.

**45.3. The Windmill Cinema**

Members were saddened by the events in August which had also left the Windmill Cinema unable to reopen until the new year at the earliest for safety reasons. The cinema was considered an immensely important community facility and one which it was hoped the Town Council could support through providing a venue for film showings. The Town Clerk reported that officers had been contacted by the representatives of the organising committee to discuss options.

**It was resolved that:**

The current position be noted and that updates would be shared with Members.

**46. Public Forum**

There were two members of the public present and three representations.


**46.1. Proposal for the New Town Centre Parking Disc Scheme**

A resident addressed Council on the proposed new parking disc scheme for Littlehampton. Observing that according to a survey undertaken by the Bognor Regis Business Improvement District, parking was considered the third most important factor in sustaining local businesses, he suggested that Littlehampton was different. He went on to say that in his view, the proposals represented a significant change for Littlehampton and needed to be implemented properly taking into consideration the prevalence of the current discs and how long it would take users to become accustomed to the new arrangements. With this in mind he suggested the Town Council no longer contribute to the scheme, but should look to use all its resources to support a concerted effort to raise awareness of the new arrangements and ensure the widest possible availability of the new discs.

The Mayor thanked the resident for their representation which was noted and would be considered by Members when they came to discuss this matter later in the meeting.

**46.2. Town Centre anti-social behaviour**

Council then heard from a resident who referenced the recent incident in the High Street which had seen an elderly man attacked. Stating that this was not an isolated incident, he commented that it had left people feeling unable to go out and caused local business to suffer. He therefore asked what could be done to tackle this issue.



The Mayor thanked the representative and empathised with this sentiment to improve the High Street. The Town Clerk reported that the Safer Arun Partnership were looking into instigating later Community Warden patrols and also working with the Police to improve coverage by PCSO patrols and CCTV coverage in the Town Centre. The Police and Community Wardens were also present at the Town Centre Action Group meetings and were aware of the impact on retailers in the Town. Whilst it was acknowledged that this was not helped by the difficulties experienced with the reporting system, the importance of reporting incidents was emphasised. Members shared the concerns of residents on this matter. Although it was understood that the neighbourhood policing team in the area would be increased by the end of the year, concern remained that Littlehampton may not be getting the support it needed. It was noted that the need for a visible Police presence and enforcement action was something that was being pursued by the Town Council through several channels including the newly formed Town Centre Action Group.

### **46.3. Written Representations**

46.3.1. "I am part of a small group of around 75 residents who have come together to try to promote Littlehampton in a positive light and support local plans and development. We have a Facebook page #Shoplocal Littlehampton where we share positive news, ideas and suggestions. We would like to know if the new Town Development Officer is in post and if we can link in with them to support their role in any way we can. In particular we are all keen to know what the plans are for improving the town centre, reducing anti-social behaviour, the re-opening of the much loved Windmill and information on when the new seafront development will begin."

In response:

It was noted that the new Town Centre Strategy (TCS) Project Officer, was now in post having started two weeks ago. The Group was thanked for their kind offer of support and have been put in touch with the TCS Project Officer. The Town Council is working in partnership with Arun District Council to support the town centre improvements and reduce anti-social behaviour within the town. Together we jointly fund the community wardens who are working very closely with the local neighbourhood policing team and the District Council's Community Safety team to address anti-social behaviour. Sussex Police have recruited further PCSO's for the area who they hope will be trained and on duty in early 2024. Regarding the Windmill, Arun District Council have been providing regular updates and these can be found on their website:

<https://www.arun.gov.uk/news-archive/windmill-entertainment-centre-update-6-october-2023-7799>

Regarding the Seafront Regeneration, information can be found on Arun District Council's website:

<https://www.arun.gov.uk/littlehampton-seafront-design-scheme/>

46.3.2. "Regarding dog poo and litter, I've asked for signs to go up with fine threats. In particular why when the verges are being cut aren't they cleared of litter at the same time? Both the litter and poo make it unpleasant walking with children. If that could get put forward too that would be massively appreciated."

In response:

Litter and dog fouling is a matter for Arun District Council and the appropriate contact details have been shared. These can also be reported on their website at:

<https://www1.arun.gov.uk/cleaning-request>

#### **47. Correspondence or Issues in Respect of the District or County Council**

There were none.

#### **48. Reports from Committees – Non-Exempt**

##### **48.1. Recommendations from Committees**

Council considered a report, previously circulated, which drew together the recommendations from the last cycle of Committee meetings that needed to be approved by Council. There was one.

##### **48.1.1. Governance and Audit Committee: 4 July 2023**

###### **Minute 8.3. Civility and Respect Pledge**

The Town Clerk presented a report, previously circulated, which outlined the Civility and Respect Project. She explained that Town and Parish Councils across the country were being encouraged by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) and Society of Local Council Clerks to support this project by signing a Pledge. The Pledge, backed up by each council's policies, aimed to promote public confidence, trust in local democracy, and inspire engagement in local government issues. Importantly, it was viewed as a valuable tool that would demonstrate the Council's commitment to the high standards of conduct required of Councillors and staff and Council was recommended to sign The Pledge. This was unanimously supported.

###### **Council resolved:**

To sign The Civility and Respect Pledge.

## **48.2. Committee Minutes – Non-Exempt**

### **48.2.1. Planning and Transportation**

Council received the minutes of the of the Planning and Transportation Committee meetings held on 19 June, 17 July, 14 August, and 11 September 2023.

Regarding Minute 38.1. Coastal Erosion, it was noted that the meeting with West Bank residents organised by the Environment Agency had yet to take place. Whilst the recent work to repair the groynes was welcomed, Members remained concerned about the ongoing management of the coast at this point and wished to see the meeting arranged. The Assistant Town Clerk confirmed that Members would be informed as soon as the meeting arrangements were known.

### **48.2.2. Community Resources**

Council received the Minutes from the Community Resources Committee meeting held on 7 September 2023 with no matters arising.

### **48.2.3. Governance and Audit**

Council received the Minutes from the Governance and Audit Committee meeting held on 4 July 2023.

Regarding minute 8.2. Debt Recovery, it was noted that debt recovery work continued, and progress would be reported to the Policy and Finance and Governance and Audit Committees.

### **48.2.4. Community Centres Sub Committee**

Council received the Minutes from the Community Centres Sub Committee held on 21 August 2023.


Regarding minute 10.2. North Littlehampton Community Centre, it was noted that publicity about the community engagement exercise had been picked up by Hampton Park residents on social media. The need for wide publicity of the engagement exercise was emphasised to ensure that members of the whole community had the opportunity to express their views.

### **48.2.8. Policy and Finance**

Council received the Minutes from the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held on 18 September 2023 with no matters raised.

### **48.2.9. Property and Personnel**

Council received the Minutes from the Property and Personnel Committee meeting held on 2 October 2023.



Regarding minute 8.2. Staffing Update, the Town Clerk reported that the informal meeting with Members to discuss the staff structure was being arranged.

## **49. Officer's Reports**

### **49.1. Rampion 2 Wind Farm**

49.1.1. Members had before them a report, previously circulated, alongside an extract of the unapproved minutes of the October Planning and Transportation Committee where this development had been discussed. Council was asked to agree further comments for inclusion in the Town Council's response to the public consultation on the proposals.

49.1.2. Council broadly welcomed the extension of the existing wind farm as a sustainable form of power generation. Pointing to recent research it was also observed that there was evidence that wind farms encouraged the growth and regeneration of the surrounding marine environment. In terms of the visual impact of the turbines, there were mixed views with the overriding concern being for the safety and minimisation of the impact on the environment of the onshore cabling system that would be needed to transmit the energy generated to the inland network. It was therefore considered important that this be highlighted within the Town Council's response.

49.1.3. Recent events had also highlighted the pressure on the Arun River and Climping coastal sea defences. Noting the comments of the Committee regarding securing benefits from the Scheme for the Town, Council emphasised its view that a development of this size and significance should make a meaningful contribution to the much-needed repair and ongoing maintenance of the river and coastal defence infrastructure. This would be in addition to the suggestion by the Committee of a visitor centre facility. Council also shared the view of the Committee regarding the potential impact on the harbour and local fishing industry which it was noted should become clearer when the District Council completed its Local Impact Assessment. Overall, the consensus was that this type of development should be embraced without delay to avoid any growth in onshore wind farms which were not considered appropriate for the area.

#### **It was therefore resolved that:**

1. Council's comments as set out in Minutes 49.1.1 to 49.1.3. above be included in the Town Council's response.
2. Authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Mayor, to finalise and submit the Town Councils' response to the public consultation.



## **49.2. Proposal for Town Centre Parking Disc Scheme**

49.2.1. Council received a report, previously circulated, which set out proposals for a carparking disc scheme in the Town Centre beginning on 1 January 2024. The Town Clerk explained that the new scheme would continue to deliver two hours free parking through a new cardboard disc which would operate alongside a virtual permit. This would be introduced over a two-year transition period at a reduced cost to the Town Council of £21,000.

49.2.2. Members proceeded to consider the District Council's proposals in more detail and discussion focussed on how it would operate and access to the new discs. Whilst it was considered important to support local retailers and maintain a scheme that provided two hours free parking, strong reservations were expressed about how the scheme would operate especially with the current discs remaining in circulation. Reviewing the parameters of the proposed agreement to deliver the new scheme in more detail Members also considered that the implications of the change had not been fully understood by the District Council. This was particularly regarding the introduction of a new disc which was considered wasteful and the short time frame for implementation. It was also noted that should the Town Council decide to opt out of the proposed new scheme its ability to influence future developments could be affected.

49.2.3. Recalling that the two hour free parking was originally introduced to encourage footfall in the Town Centre and make it as convenient as possible to visit the local shops, Members were concerned about the impact of this change. The ultimate objective was to have a new system that was not needlessly overcomplicated or would deter visitors. It was felt important that discs should be made available at other suitable locations at convenient times. It was reported that conversations regarding the shape of the scheme at the District Council continued and this being the case Members considered it important that these concerns be thoroughly reviewed before any decision was made by the Town Council. Members therefore felt unable to make a commitment to the new scheme as it stood and the Mayor proposed an amendment to the recommendation which aimed to reflect both the Council's commitment to supporting a simplified scheme that preserved the two hour free parking and also offered a convenient, sustainable and accessible means of accessing it. This was duly seconded.

### **Council therefore resolved :**

1. To reaffirm its belief in the principle of a simple and efficient system of providing for a period of free Town Centre parking in Littlehampton.
2. Reject the completely unnecessary inconvenience to users and environmental impact of production of single year discs for the next two years, particularly when there were thousands of perfectly usable discs



already in circulation therefore negating the need to charge for cardboard discs.

3. Authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Group leaders, including the Mayor as Chair of the Council, and the Chair of Policy and Finance Committee, to enter and implement any further agreement with Arun District Council and agree the level of financial contribution as part of the budget setting process.

\*Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ left the meeting at 7.57pm.

#### **49.3. External Auditor Certificate and Report 2022 to 2023**

Council received a report, previously circulated, which contained the External Auditor Certificate for 2022 to 2023 and the outcome of the External Audit of the Town Council's Accounts and Governance arrangements. It was noted that additional information regarding the accounting report of variances had been requested by the external auditor. This had been supplied and there were no findings to report.

##### **It was resolved that:**

The External Auditor Certificate and report for 2022 to 2023 be noted.

#### **49.4. North Littlehampton Community Centre**

49.4.1. Council had before it a report, previously circulated, setting out progress with the feasibility work looking at the plans for the new centre. The Town Clerk reported that consultants had been commissioned and an assessment of the current design had commenced. The initial feedback from the consultants was that the size of the current design was smaller than first thought and would deliver a centre which was not that much bigger than the Town Council's facilities at Southfields and Eldon Way (K2). In addition, a site visit had revealed the challenges of building in the area allocated for the community centre in the outline consent. This latter point would require significant further work to understand how they might be overcome. This would in all likelihood require further specialist surveys the cost of which could exceed the previously agreed £10,000 approved by Council to fund this work.

49.4.2. Advice from the West Sussex Association of Local Councils in relation to public borrowing options had also shown that should this be an option that Council wished to pursue, a robust and specific public consultation would be required, particularly as this could impact upon the Precept. Early engagement was therefore also recommended which would provide the opportunity to promote the new centre with local residents and gauge the level of need to help inform the future design. It was therefore recommended that a further £30,000 and the remaining £10,000 revenue budget for 2023 to 2024 be made available

from the accumulated revenue costs reserves for the project to fund a community engagement exercise and professional fees to support the feasibility work.

49.4.3. The request for additional funding was greater than originally envisaged when the papers had been published and Members proceeded to consider the current position. Reflecting on the update Members considered that this additional work provided an opportunity to progress more quickly with the assessment of the affordability of the current design especially as some of the existing surveys were now out of date. It was also considered prudent to start a community engagement exercise that would enable the council to get a better understanding of the community aspiration for a new centre.

**It was therefore resolved that:**

1. The Urgent Action to commission consultants to undertake the feasibility work for the North Littlehampton Community Centre Project at an estimated cost of £5,000 to £10,000 be noted.
2. The remaining £10,000 revenue budget for 2023 to 2024 and a further £30,000, in earmarked reserves allocated to support revenue costs for the new community centre be repurposed, making a total of £50,000 available to support and deliver the ongoing feasibility and community engagement exercise to inform design and cost options, including a request for public borrowing should that be an option Council wish to pursue. The Mayor as Chair of Council and the Community Centre Sub-Committee and the Chair of Policy and Finance to be kept informed.
3. The contents of the report be otherwise noted.

**50. Reports of Representatives on Outside Bodies**

50.1. On behalf of the Bonfire Society, Councillor Blanchard-Cooper reported that everything was on track for bonfire night and that the Society was looking forward to welcoming back steam engines and the pipe band as part of the procession. Arrangements for marshalling the event had been confirmed however, volunteers for the street collection were still needed. He called on everyone to help collect donations on the night and to support the Society through social media and the online giving page on the Society's website to help keep the celebration going.

**51. Exempt Business**

There was none.

The meeting closed at 8.06pm

\_\_\_\_\_ Chair