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Town Clerk – Laura Chrysostomou

Minutes of a meeting of the Community Resources Committee held in The New Millennium Chamber, The Manor House, Church Street, Littlehampton, BN17 5EW on Thursday 13 February 2025 at 6.30pm.

Present:

Councillor Tandy – Chair
Councillor Blanchard–Cooper
Councillor Daws
Councillor Lee
Councillor Long
Councillor O'Neill*
Councillor Tilbrook
Councillor Wiltshire

In attendance:

Laura Chrysostomou – Town Clerk
Juliet Harris – Assistant Town Clerk
Sofia Chittenden – Communications and Marketing Manager
Felix Gillett – Community Resources Officer
Julia Edge – Museum Curator
Nathan Ireland – Project Time Machine Officer

2024 to 2025

63. Evacuation Procedures

The evacuation procedures were noted.

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

The procedures were noted.

65. Apologies

There were none.

66. 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. In addition, the following declarations were also made in respect of the matters relating to the Worthing Road allotment site:

Councillor Tilbrook declared a personal interest as his daughter was an allotment holder at the site.

Councillor Wiltshire declared a personal interest as a member of the Brighton Permaculture Trust.

67. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 4 December 2024 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

68. Chair’s Report and Urgent Items

There were none.

69. Public Forum

There were four members of the public present, and one written representation.

69.1. Worthing Road Allotments Community Orchard Project

The Assistant Town Clerk read out a summary of a representation, copy attached to the minutes, on behalf of the Littlehampton Community Group (LCG). The representation aimed to respond to the matters raised at the January Allotments Working Group meeting regarding the Orchard Project. This included further information regarding consultation on the project, anticipated water usage, and how the proposed orchard would be developed and managed. Following the Town Council’s in principle agreement to supporting the project, the group were finalising their plans and hoped that this representation alongside the project proposal, had addressed the concerns raised and confirmed that they would be happy to provide any further clarifications.

The Chair thanked the Group for their representation which was noted and would be considered by the Committee later in the meeting.

69.2. The Committee also heard from a member of the public who stated that they objected to the proposed addition of a further container at the Worthing Road allotment site. The Chair thanked them for their representation which was noted.

70. Officers Reports

70.1 Project Time Machine Progress Report

70.1.1. The Chair welcomed the Project Time Machine Officer (PTMO) to the meeting and the Committee received a report, previously circulated, and presentation on progress with Phase Two of Project Time Machine. He began with a recap of the work completed in Phase One which focussed on community engagement, the results of which were presented to the Committee in October 2024.

70.1.2. The PTMO went on to explain that a new group of volunteers had been recruited for Phase Two which focussed on cataloguing and re-housing the museum's Social History Collection. This would provide a much better understanding of artefacts and ultimately how they could be collated and displayed as collections to the public. The volunteers had two specific roles, "researcher" and "cataloguer" and they had each chosen their roles to match and utilise their individual skills and interests. This had given them a sense of ownership, which was demonstrated by the project's target volunteer hours per week being consistently exceeded.

70.1.3. When classifying items, a traffic light system had been adopted which followed the Museum's Collections Development Policy and was replicated in the museum's computerised cataloguing system, "MODES". Pieces were sorted based on their relevance to Littlehampton and the immediate surrounding areas. Amber items meant it had no relevance to the town; green being linked to the town's history and gold being considered 'star items', due to being extraordinarily eye catching or having a special link to Littlehampton's past. Star items were actively shared on the Museum's social media along with monthly cases displaying research and collections. These had received positive engagement from the public and provided a continuous view into the diversity of the collections being unlocked. The recent enhancement of 'Social History Store 1' included the installation of mobile racking and a dehumidifier, improving efficiency and creating more space for the preservation and conservation of the items. Once catalogued, items were moved to the safety of these stores until they were ready to be displayed.

70.1.4. At this halfway point in the project, work was set to continue cataloguing artefacts, and an exhibition was planned to display star objects and stories from this phase of work. The PTMO and Museum Curator had also been invited to give talks in London and to local groups featuring the work of and findings from the Project. The next steps would include creating an Audience Development Plan and updating the Collections Development Policy to reflect the town's diverse history. Following this, work could begin rationalising and dispersing items that had no relevance to Littlehampton, freeing up valuable storage space for new items to be collected. Further external funding was being explored by officers to continue the Project and if possible, expand the Collection enabling the museum to continue to collate pieces representing the diverse and remarkable history of the town.

70.1.5. Members thanked the PTMO for the detailed report and engaging presentation. A question and answer session followed during which it was noted that at the end of the project, the Museum will have a detailed view of this collection including identifying items which may no longer be relevant. It was noted that where artefacts did not meet the collection criteria efforts would be made to re-home them in another museum where they were relevant. The value of more space, not only to store items but also to display them, was identified and noted by members. It was also hoped that digitising more of the collection would follow, demonstrating the strides the Project had made towards making the Collection more accessible. This would also include oral histories being moved into a digital format. It was confirmed that the revised Audience Development Plan would reflect this alongside other aspirations to cover living history and continuing to provide activities for families.

It was therefore resolved that:

The Project progress to date and contents of the report be noted.

70.2 Museum Periodic Report

70.2.1. The Museum Curator presented a report, previously circulated, which contained updates on recent activities and engagements with the museum, including proposals for the acquisition of a small number of artefacts. Observing that the anticipated date for re accreditation was likely to be delayed to 2028, Members noted the progress with the policy review work and noted that the Audience Development Plan would be presented at the next meeting. The popularity of the recent Lights, Camera, Action event was welcomed and prompted a question about the slight reduction in the Museum Events Budget for 2025 to 2026. The Curator confirmed that better use of resources and a reduced events programme to accommodate Project Time Machine had provided the scope to make this reduction.

70.2.2. Looking to the future, following completion of the current phase of Project Time Machine, it was noted that work would focus on contemporary collecting and rationalising the collection. The latter would inevitably lead to the deaccessioning of some artefacts. The Curator explained that the cataloguing work in the current phase of Project Time Machine had demonstrated the huge variance in the collection in terms of origin and provenance. It was noted that this information would provide vital evidence to back up future decisions on whether to retain artefacts. Finally, the acquisition of additional items as recommended in the report was supported.

It was therefore resolved that:

1. The recommended acquisition of items as set out in Appendix B be approved.

2. The updated accreditation timeframe be noted.

3. The audience engagement figures be noted.

4. The contents of the report be otherwise noted.

70.3 Community Resource Officer Periodic Report

70.3.1. The Community Resources Officer presented a report, previously circulated, which contained updates on the allotments, the recent launch of the 2025 Main Grant Scheme, Arun Youth Project (AYP), and progress in securing a defibrillator for the Southfields Jubilee Centre (SJC). In addition, the committee was invited to review further information regarding the Littlehampton Community Group (LCG) Orchard Project and a request by the Littlehampton Allotments and Leisure Gardens Association (LALGA) to introduce an additional container at the Worthing Road allotment site.

70.3.2. Members were pleased to note that the registration process for the Council's 2025 Grant Aid Scheme was underway and that the AYP Connect Hub event in the High Street had gone well. On this latter point, Members had observed the traffic congestion caused by vehicles servicing the various outlets close to the hub prompting concerns for the safety of pedestrians. The Town Clerk reported that this was a complex issue that would require input from both the licensing and highways authorities. It had also been raised by both staff at the hub and other businesses, and it was noted that solutions were being explored by the Town Centre Action Group.

70.3.3. Discussion turned to the disappointing news that the Town Council's bid for a defibrillator for the Southfields Jubilee Centre was unsuccessful. This had highlighted that information held by the funder about the sites and availability of defibrillators across the parish was inconsistent. This was being investigated, and it was hoped it would increase the chances of future applications for grants succeeding.

70.3.4. The Committee proceeded to consider allotment matters beginning with the award of the pest control contract. It was noted that this expenditure was separate from the allotment infrastructure reserve fund which underpinned the Allotment Strategy Action Plan. The CRO confirmed that this was a three-year arrangement and that action to control rabbits was outside of the contract. Controlling the rabbit population, particularly at the Trinidad site, was a complex issue. Discussions at the Working Group highlighted that improvements to the northern boundary at Trinidad could help and could be considered for prioritising within the Allotment Strategy Action Plan.

70.3.5. Littlehampton Community Group (LCG) Orchard Project

70.3.5.1. Following the in-principle agreement to the scheme given at the December meeting, and considering the discussion at the Working Group in January, the Committee was asked to confirm its commitment to the scheme and consider whether the LCG should pay a fee for the land. To assist the Committee, officers had undertaken a further assessment of the project and provided further information regarding the costs to the Town Council and the work required to bring the land in question back into use as allotments.

70.3.5.2. The Committee proceeded to consider the update and acknowledged that the project would enable the land to come back into use through a community led initiative. This was as much an aspiration of the Council as the Allotment Strategy aim to reduce the gap between income and expenditure on its services. The Committee remained supportive of the scheme, as it was of the other similar but smaller community led projects at the site. It was also noted that the land had been redundant for some years and that should the orchard progress, it would not become allotments and generate income, and as an orchard would have different costs associated with it as outlined in the report With this in mind the committee proceeded to consider whether a fee should be charged and an appropriate rate.

70.3.5.3. A lengthy discussion ensued during which members considered a number of charging options. Accepting the financial implications for the Council to bring the area back into use as allotments and recognising the potential long-term benefits of the scheme, it was judged reasonable that the land be made available to the LCG at a concessionary rate. Noting that the land could potentially accommodate five medium (i.e., five-rod) plots, the equivalent of the fee for two medium-sized allotment plots (i.e., one large ten rod plot) was considered a fair compromise.

It was therefore resolved that:

An annual fee the equivalent of two medium-sized allotment plots be charged to the Littlehampton Community Growers for the land at the Worthing Road allotment site provisionally allocated to the Community Orchard Project.

70.3.6. Worthing Road Allotments Trading Shed Extension

Councillor Blanchard-Cooper declared a personal interest in the following matter as a member of the Arun District Council Planning Committee. Councillors Long and O’Neill also declared personal interests in the following matter as substitute members of the Arun District Council Planning Committee.

Councillors Blanchard-Cooper, Long and O’Neill also confirmed that when considering the planning applications for Littlehampton, they would do so without predetermination, taking into account the papers that were before them at that meeting.

70.3.6.1. The Committee was asked to consider supporting a request to use more land at the site and allow LALGA to introduce a further container to the existing Trading Shed. A proposal had been provided by LALGA, which explained the rationale for the expansion of this facility and how in their view it would benefit allotment tenants. Members proceeded to consider the proposal in terms of the representation made during the public forum session, the impact on the neighbouring plot and the level of benefit. It was also noted that informal advice from Arun District Council as the Local Planning Authority had now been received indicating that the addition of a further container and hard standing at the site would require planning permission, which LALGA would need to obtain.

70.3.6.2. The existing facility had been present at the site for several years during which LALGA had taken sole responsibility for managing activities. It was thought that at least half of allotment holders were members of LALGA, and it was also noted that public consultation was a requirement of the planning application process. The Committee proceeded to vote on the proposal from which Councillor Lee abstained.

It was resolved that:

1. Subject to planning approval being obtained by LALGA, they be allowed to introduce a further container to the existing Trading Shed as set out in their proposal, at the Worthing Road allotment site.

2. The minutes of the Allotment Working Group held on Thursday 16 January 2025 be noted.

3. The contents of the report be otherwise noted.

*Councillor O’Neill left the meeting at 7.59 pm.

70.4 Service Funding Agreements Annual Review 2024 to 2025

70.4.1. The Community Resources Officer presented a report, previously circulated, which summarised the Town Council’s current Service Funding Agreements and provided updates on the services that were being delivered. It was noted that the current agreements were in their final year and that the review process would start in the Autum. The review would include analysis of the tier three Grant Aid applicants who may also be considered for future agreements.

It was resolved that:

The contents of the report be noted.

70.5 Events Periodic Report

Councillor Blanchard-Cooper declared a prejudicial interest in the following matter as a member of the Friends of Mewsbrook Park and confirmed that he would not participate in the discussion of and vote on the proposal to give event support funding for an Easter activity at Mewsbrook Park.

70.5.1. The Communications and Marketing Manager presented a report, previously circulated, which set out a comprehensive update regarding plans for the 2025 events programme. In addition, the Committee was also asked to set the date for the annual Sandcastle competition and Screen on the Green, approve a recommendation relating to the provision of public toilet facilities for the Screen on the Green event, approve event support funding to extend the Easter activity at Mewsbrook Park in lieu of the Town Council delivering its own similar event on the same site, and approve changes to the terms of reference of the Events Review Task and Finish Group.

70.5.2. The Committee proceeded to consider the recommendations in the order in which they were presented. The proposed dates for the Sandcastle Competition and Screen on the Green Event were approved alongside the proposed contribution of £200 towards the Friends of Mewsbrook Park easter egg hunt event. The provision of additional toilet facilities for the Screen on the Green had previously been agreed as essential by the committee and two quotes had been sourced. Based on experience of the service provided, feedback and the average size of the audience, the committee favoured the toilet trailers. Members also wished to have a better understanding of the disabled toilet provision, and it was therefore also agreed that the trailer specification be circulated to members outside of the meeting for information.

70.5.3. Finally, the committee supported the proposal to increase the size of the Events Review Task and Finish Group to five members and add Councillor Blanchard-Cooper.

It was therefore resolved that:

1. The Sandcastle Competition be held on 31 July 2025.

2. Screen on the Green be held on 16 August 2025 and that the quote for toilet trailers be approved for the event.

3. The progress regarding plans for the Easter High Street & Summer Events be noted.

4. £200 from the Community and Events budget be awarded to the Friends of Mewsbrook to expand their 2025 easter egg hunt event.

5. The membership of the Events Review Task and Finish Group be increased to five members and that Councillor Blanchard-Cooper be appointed to that Group.

6. The contents of the report including the financial implication be otherwise noted.

71. Exempt Business

There was none.

The meeting was closed at 8.10pm.

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Chair