

**Minutes of the Policy and Finance committee held in the New Millennium Chamber, The Manor House, Church Street, Littlehampton BN17 5EW on Monday 10 March 2025 at 6.30pm.**

**Present:**

Councillor Butcher – Chair  
Councillor Lee  
Councillor May  
Councillor Northeast  
Councillor Tandy  
Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ  
Councillor Woodman

**In attendance:**

Laura Chrysostomou – Town Clerk  
Juliet Harris – Assistant Town Clerk

**Agenda 2024 to 2025**

**59. Evacuation Procedures**

The evacuation procedures were noted.

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

The procedures were noted.

**61. Apologies**

There were none.

**62. Declarations of interest**

Members and officers were reminded to make any declarations of disclosable, pecuniary, or personal and prejudicial interest that they might have in relation to items on the agenda. The standing declarations were noted, and no further declarations were made.

### **63. Minutes**

Regarding minute 57.1.2. and the reference to mixed case lettering, it was considered more accurate that the letter be referred to as title case.

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

Subject to the wording in Minute 57.1.2. being amended as set out above, the Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 5 February 2025 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the chair.

### **64. Chair's Report and Urgent Items**

There were none.

### **65. Public Forum**

There were no members of the public present and no written representations.

### **66. Officers Reports**

#### **66.1. Standing Orders / Urgent Actions**

The Committee received details, previously circulated, of a recently approved decision relating to the approval of a discretionary rate for the long-term hire of the Fleming Room in the Manor House for the provision of a temporary banking hub for Littlehampton. It was noted that officers were working with Cash Access UK to bring the service into use as soon as possible.

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

The urgent action be noted.

#### **67.2. Quarterly Business Plan Progress Report**

Members had before them a report, previously circulated, which provided an update on progress with delivering the goals as they related to the work of the committee. Regarding communications, it was noted that following the decision by the Committee in October 2024, the printed Progress newsletter would cease production, the budget would be used to support electronic communication channels and that work reviewing the Communication Strategy had been deferred due to limited staff availability. It was confirmed that the timeline for the Mayors for Peace initiative was 2025 to 2026. It was envisaged that work on these goals would be picked up in 2025 to 2026.

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

The report and updates be noted.



### **67.3. Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan Update**

67.3.1. The Town Clerk presented a report, previously circulated, which contained an update on work being undertaken as part of the Town Centre Strategy and Action Plan including progress with the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Wayfinding projects. The Town Centre Action Group (TCAG) had met on 11 February and had a detailed report of activities and work that was being carried out through Arun District Council's Communities and Wellbeing Team to tackle anti-social behaviour and street drinking which was welcomed. The local business community had met several times since the September meeting and the Business Forum was now established. These meetings had been increasingly positive, and representatives of the business community had come forward to take on roles championing key areas of work and facilitating direct links with the police and other key stakeholders in the TCAG.

#### **67.3.2. Wayfinding Project**

67.3.2.1. Progressing this project had highlighted issues with obtaining permissions to install the signage and that the District Council's Economic Development team were also about to embark on a signage project as part of their Tourism Strategy with UKSPF grant support. There were clear synergies with both projects and following consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of this Committee, a way forward has been agreed that maintains the integrity of both projects and will deliver on the main aim of the project to 'improve connectivity across the town centre and waterfront'.

67.3.2.2. Proposals to merge the projects were presented to a meeting of the Signage Task and Finish Group on 3 March 2025. This would see the existing monoliths and finger posts refreshed with improved directions and the addition of the Artwork graphics designed by young people. It was noted that the two beach boxes would still be included in the overall project. This was welcomed as it would deliver a more coherent concept for the signage strategy, retained the design concept created by young people and enabled both authorities to move forward utilising UKSPF funding opportunities.

67.3.3. Returning to the matter of the progress to date in delivering the Strategy, the Committee considered that overall, the progress that had been achieved in recent months and the collaboration with Arun District Council were positive steps. It was also reported that the chief executive at Arun had set up a Taskforce to deliver support for Littlehampton Town Centre. Whilst these activities signalled a renewed commitment by the District Council to the Town Centre Strategy, members were unclear on how these initiatives were organised. This had been highlighted by the change in focus of some strands of work at short notice which had not been shared and difficulties in meeting reporting deadlines for the various groups charged with delivering initiatives.

67.3.4. The Committee proceeded to consider the action that was felt necessary to coordinate this work. There was a strong view that clarity was required in terms of lines of communication and areas of responsibility across all the forums. Regarding the TCAG, it was felt that the police needed to commit to attending meetings. Reporting structures also needed to be put in place to ensure that all councillors and forums were informed of progress and that there was a coherent mechanism to raise issues. At the same time members considered the time was right to approach the District Council and seek a firmer commitment to the Town Centre Strategy.

**It was therefore resolved that:**

1. The Chair of the committee write to the Chair of the District Council's Economy Committee asking that they formally adopt the Littlehampton Town Centre Strategy as a policy document.
2. Police attendance at the Town Centre Action Group be raised at the forthcoming Sussex Police All Parishes Meeting.
3. The Town Clerk would discuss reporting structures with Arun District Council to ensure that all councillors and forums were informed of progress.
4. The contents of the report be otherwise noted.

**67.4. Sussex and Brighton Devolution**

67.4.1. The Assistant Town Clerk presented a report, previously circulated, which set out the background to the proposals to form a Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) in Sussex. This followed the successful submission of an expression of interest by East and West Sussex County Council's and Brighton and Hove City Council and was now the subject of a public consultation.

67.4.2. The consultation set out how the MCCA would work and posed seven questions, inviting comments which would inform the final decision on whether the Sussex and Brighton Strategic Authority (MCCA) would go ahead. The Committee was therefore asked to consider and comment on these plans with a view to providing feedback that will be used to draft a response to the government consultation for Full Council to consider at its meeting on 20 March 2025.

67.4.3. A lengthy discussion ensued during which members discussed in detail the implications of these proposals for the Town and what the new strategic authority should look like. In terms of the current three tier local government structure, this would cease to exist leaving the newly formed unitary authorities and local parish and town councils. It was noted that it was legally

possible for communities in unparished areas to form new parish councils if they wished. The following points were noted:

- This was an opportunity for the local council sector to have a say in the reorganisation and play a bigger role in their communities as well as grow through the creation of new parish and town councils in areas where they don't currently exist.
- Members welcomed the recognition of the importance of the role local parish and town councils play as advocates for their communities. However, by becoming part of a much larger strategic authority, it was not immediately obvious how the new authority would address the needs of its individual parishes, which could be quite diverse in their nature.
- At this stage, whilst the proposals lacked some of the detail that would have enabled members to judge the effectiveness of the proposed new authority, it was considered that the structure and governance would need to be robust and relevant to the communities that it would serve.
- Observing that the existing local government structure had evolved over many years, it was considered essential that residents had confidence in the effectiveness of the new arrangements and could relate to them.
- There was a strong view that an effective new strategic authority would therefore need to have logical and locally identifiable boundaries, clearly articulated methods of communication to ensure that residents could be heard and a working structure that would deliver economies of scale that would benefit taxpayers.
- It was also considered that it would be beneficial if the Mayor had two deputies and that the substitute members be drawn from the local parish and town council network. This would ensure the sector was represented and also help facilitate closer links to the new authority.

67.4.4. Mindful of the importance of these proposals, the Committee went on to consider how to ensure that all members had the opportunity to shape the Town Council's response. It was therefore agreed that the consultation be recirculated together with a note of the main points highlighted by the Committee to all Town Councillors ahead of the publication of the Council agenda. These would be collated and a delegation to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee would enable a response to be drafted for the Council to consider on 20 March 2025.

**It was therefore resolved that:**



Authority be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chair and Vice of the Committee to prepare a response to the government consultation for Full Council to consider on 20 March 2025.

## **68. Finance**

### **68.1. Debtors Review Update**

The Committee had before it a report, previously circulated, which contained an update on the progress with debt recovery. It was noted that action to recover the long outstanding individual payment referenced in the report was hampered by complexities that officers were working to overcome.

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


The report be noted.

### **68.2. Committee Budget Monitor**

68.2.1. The Town Clerk presented a report previously circulated, which highlighted any significant variances from budget in Income and Expenditure relating to the Policy and Finance Committee's budget for 2024 to 2025. This included a list of budgets to be considered for earmarking at the year-end should underspends be sufficient.

68.2.2. The Committee proceeded to review the underspends and potential earmarked balances in more detail. It was noted that the spend to date on the Mayor's Discretionary Fund included provision for a grant of £200 to the Littlehampton Community Growers Orchard should the project progress.

68.2.3. Turning to the potential earmarked balances, the following points were noted:

- Manor House Maintenance – the projected underspend in the 2024 to 2025 budget would be used to support the delivery of the work identified in the Manor House Planned Preventative Maintenance Programme.
  - Rosemead Maintenance – the Section 106 developer funding received in 2022 must be spent on the purposes specified within 10 years of receipt. Acknowledging that the playground equipment had only recently been installed, research into how best to utilise the S106 funding would be undertaken in the near future.
  - Allotment Infrastructure Reserve – this reserve had been created to support the delivery of infrastructure improvements at the Town Council's allotments which were currently being assessed and would be prioritised in line with the priorities identified in the Allotment Strategy Action Plan.
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- Election expenses – these were budgeted and earmarked each year to meet the local government election costs of the Town Council and of any byelections.

**It was therefore resolved that:**

1. The Responsible Financial Officer be delegated authority to make the final transfers of earmarked reserves when all current year expenditure is known.
2. The contents of the report be otherwise noted.

**68.3. Annual Investment Strategy**

The Town Clerk presented a report, previously circulated, which proposed the investment strategy for 2025 to 2026. The Committee received clarification regarding the breakdown of the investments in respect of deposit terms and how the funds were managed to ensure the Town Council would meet its liabilities. It was also noted that deposits were held with Moody A Rated banks in accordance with local government investment guidelines.

**It was resolved that:**

1. Council be Recommended to approve the Annual Investment Strategy for 2025 to 2026.
2. The contents of the report be otherwise noted.

**69. Exempt Business**

**It was resolved that:**

The public and accredited representatives of the press be excluded from the Meeting under Section 100 Local Government Act 1972 due to the confidential nature of the business to be conducted. This item is a confidential report for Members of the Council only in accordance with Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, being information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person.

70. The Committee received and noted the confidential business details of the terms agreed with Cash Access UK for the hire of the Fleming Room in the Manor House for the provision of a temporary banking hub for Littlehampton.

The meeting closed at 8.10 pm.

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**Chair**