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Town Clerk – Laura Chrysostomou

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Town Council held in The New Millennium Chamber, The Manor House, Church Street, Littlehampton BN17 5EW on Thursday 20 March 2025 at 6.30pm

Present:

Councillor Lee
Councillor Blanchard-Cooper
Councillor Daws
Councillor O'Neill
Councillor Northeast
Councillor Tandy
Councillor Tilbrook
Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ
Councillor Wiltshire
Councillor Woodman
Councillor Worne

In attendance:

Laura Chrysostomou – Town Clerk

2024 to 2025

67. Evacuation Procedures

The procedures were noted.

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

The procedures were noted.

69. Apologies

There were apologies from Councillors Butcher, Long, and May.

70. 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 Dr Walsh KStJ redeclared his interest as West Sussex County Councillor in agenda item 10.2. Sussex and Brighton Devolution.

71. Minutes

The Minutes of the ordinary meeting of the Council held on 23 January 2025, previously circulated, were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

72. Town Mayor's Report and Urgent Items

- 72.1. The Mayor's engagements report, copy attached to the Minutes, had been emailed for members prior to the meeting and was noted. The Mayor recalled with sadness the tragic events in Kocani, North Macedonia the previous weekend. On behalf of the Town Council, he had passed on sincere condolences to the North Macedonian Ambassador.
- 72.2. On a lighter note, the Mayor was pleased to report the launch of the Business Crime Reduction Partnership (BCRP) initiative in Littlehampton. The launch coincided with the first National BCRP Awareness Week and will bring with it more support for local businesses. Alongside this the Town Centre Action Group's Spring newsletter had just been distributed with updates on the Banking Hub, the installation of Shop Front Wraps and details of the Easter High Street Events. The Town council's website was being updated to include the newsletter and the Mayor invited Town Councillors to share the newsletter.

73. Public Forum

There were four members of the public present, and the following representations were made.

- 73.1. A resident addressed the Council on biodiversity seeking more detailed information about how the Town Council implemented its Biodiversity Policy in terms of projects and initiatives, protection and enhancing habitats, promoting public awareness and audit.

In response the Town Clerk gave a brief outline of the Town Council's work in this respect which was around the management and maintenance of the public spaces under its control, reviewing biodiversity provisions in planning applications in its role as statutory consultee and sharing information using social media. The Town Council's Annual Grant Aid scheme could also be used to support community led initiatives and a carbon audit of the Town Council's assets had been commissioned to enable future monitoring and

recording of progress in this respect. It was agreed that the resident would put their request in writing so that a more detailed response could be provided outside of the meeting.

- 73.2. Regarding proposed expansion of the Trading Hut provision at the Town Council's Worthing Road allotment site, an allotment holder expressed frustration at the length of time it had taken for the Town Council to obtain a response from the planning authority to an enquiry about planning requirements.

In response, the Town Clerk explained that she did not have the information to hand but would investigate the matter and provide a response outside of the meeting.

74. Correspondence or Issues in Respect of the District or County Council

There were none.

75. Reports from Committees – Non-Exempt

75.1. Recommendations from Committees

Council had before them a report, previously circulated, which drew together the recommendations from the last cycle of Committee meetings of which there were three.

75.1.1 Policy and Finance Committee: 10 March 2025

Minute 68.3 Annual Investment Strategy

It was resolved that:

The Annual Investment Strategy 2025 to 2026 be approved.

75.1.2 Governance and Audit Committee: 4 February 2025

Minute 26.4. Annual Review of Internal Controls

Council resolved that:

Statements 2, 5, 6 and 7 of the Annual Governance Statement be approved.

75.1.3 Governance and Audit Committee: 4 February 2025

Minute 26.5. Annual Review of Corporate Risk Registers

It was resolved that:

The Corporate and Business Plan Risk Registers be approved.



75.2. Committee Minutes – Non-Exempt

75.2.1. Planning and Transportation

Council received and noted the Minutes of the meetings held on 27 January and 24 February 2025, previously circulated, with no matters arising.

75.2.2. Governance and Audit

Council received and noted the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2025, previously circulated, with no matters arising.

75.2.3. Policy and Finance

Council received and noted the Minutes of the meetings held on 5 February and 10 March 2025, previously circulated, with no matters arising.

75.2.4. Community Resources

Council received and noted the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2025, previously circulated, with no matters arising.

75.2.5. Property and Personnel

Council received and noted the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2025, previously circulated, with no matters arising.

76. Officer's Reports

76.1. Proposal to establish a partnership between Littlehampton Town Council and the Municipality of Resen, Republic of North Macedonia

76.1.1. Council had before it a report, previously circulated, which set out options for developing a partnership between the Town Council, the Municipality of Resen and the Macedonian Community in Littlehampton. This followed a series of meetings and discussions with both the Ambassador of the Republic of North Macedonia and representatives of the Littlehampton Macedonian community to explore ways in which ties between the two communities could be strengthened.

76.1.2. Originally, the Ambassador of the Republic of North Macedonia had proposed a formal twinning partnership between Littlehampton and Resen. However, further discussions with the representatives of the Littlehampton Macedonian community had highlighted that whilst they were not yet ready to make a formal commitment, there was a strong desire to strengthen the relationship through sharing their culture. Subsequent research by Officers had also identified a less formal way of developing closer cultural and social

ties between the Towns that could also provide the foundation for a formal twinning arrangement through a friendship charter.

76.1.3. Members proceeded to consider the options and opening the debate

Councillor Tandy spoke in favour of forming closer ties with this section of the community. Speaking with pride about how the North Macedonians had made Littlehampton their home, he welcomed the spirit in which the conversations between all parties had taken place. These had demonstrated the desire for a community led proposal to move forward as a first step towards a formal twinning partnership. He also acknowledged the value of the work that had been undertaken by the Town Clerk and other officers to prepare for and meet with the North Macedonian community. He thanked them for the research they had undertaken which had revealed how another town council had taken forward a similar request with a friendship charter, an example of which had been circulated, appendix B. This he felt was a sensible way forward that would enable the North Macedonian community in Littlehampton to achieve their aims without providing any additional onerous work or undertakings for the Town Council or its officers.

76.1.4. He therefore proposed that the Town Mayor be authorised to sign a Charter of Friendship as an initial step of recognition of the Towns' relationship with the North Macedonian Community, in a way that they could support, and that would provide the foundations for a formal twinning arrangement in the future once the community had established the structures needed to support twinning activities. In recommending this to Council he added that the future development of the relationship or move to a formal twinning arrangement would be subject to Council debate and agreement.

76.1.5. Council then heard from Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ. Redeclaring his interest as the Chairman of the Littlehampton Twinning Association, he spoke of the voluntary commitment required from those engaged in the current twinning activities and highlighted the constant need to independently raise funds in the face of raising costs particularly those related to travel. He therefore supported the proposed friendship charter as a measured way of establishing the firm foundations needed to sustain any formal twinning arrangement in the future. These comments were echoed by Councillor Northeast who also formally seconded Councillor Tandy's proposal.

76.1.6. In conclusion and expressing his support, the Mayor added that it would be seen as a positive endorsement of the way in which the communities of both towns would like to see their relationship develop in the future.

Council proceeded to a vote and unanimously resolved to:

1. Commit to supporting a community-led twinning arrangement between Littlehampton and Resen, North Macedonia in recognition of the cultural, economic and social interactions between the two towns.
2. Authorise the Town Mayor to sign the Charter of Friendship (Appendix B) as an initial step of recognition with the North Macedonian Community, and to provide the foundations for a formal twinning arrangement in the future once the community has established structures to support twinning activities.

77.2. Sussex and Brighton Devolution

77.2.1. Council had before it a report, previously circulated, which set out the background to the proposals to form a Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) in Sussex and the consultation which had been launched by the government on how this might work. This included an outline of the structure and responsibilities for the MCCA which Council was asked to consider and agree its response to the consultation. To assist the discussion, a draft response (copy attached to the minutes) to the consultation based on the discussion of the proposals by the Policy and Finance Committee at its meeting earlier in March was also tabled for consideration.

77.2.2. Council proceeded to consider the proposals in more detail. Whilst it was appreciated that this was the first step in the devolution process some concern was expressed regarding how meaningful the consultation was, particularly to residents, because it lacked details of the costs involved and how these would be met. There was also a view that the proposals had been rushed and that based on the individual population size of the constituent authorities alone, membership of the proposed MCCA needed to be reassessed. Members also wanted to see the composition of the MCCA governing body amended to ensure it reflected that West Sussex had twice the population of Brighton and East Sussex.

77.2.3. It was also considered that the role of town and parish councils had been overlooked. Council held the strong view that they formed both a vital link with local communities and could communicate the views of residents more effectively. It was noted that in their responses to the consultation, the national associations had also sought to emphasise the effectiveness of the parish and town council sector as a comprehensive partner in the new arrangements. It was also considered that the consultation provided the opportunity to highlight that the sector would need increased powers including the ability to access funding similar to that which was available to higher tier authorities. These points needed to be added to and strengthened in the Town Council's response to the consultation.

It was therefore resolved that:

The draft response be amended to take into consideration the points noted above, and that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Mayor and Chair of the Policy and Finance Committee to finalise the Town Council's response to the consultation on the Sussex and Brighton Devolution proposals.

It was noted that Councillor Blanchard-Cooper abstained from the vote on this matter.

78. Reports of Representatives on Outside Bodies

There were none.

79. Exempt Business

There was none.

The meeting closed at 7.30 pm.

Mayor

Mayoral Engagement attended between 24 January 2025 – 20 March 2025						
#	Attendee	Date	Organisation	Event	Activities at event	Venue
1	M	28/01/2025	ADALC	Online meeting	Attend	Zoom call
2	M	01/02/2025	Pier Road Art Gallery	Mayors pick	Picked top three artworks for February	Pier Road Art Gallery, East Street, Littlehampton
3	M	22/02/2025	The Vardar Restaurant	Official retirement party	Attend	The Vardar Restaurant , Littlehampton
4	M	27/02/2025	Ayton House Care Home	Grand Opening	Ribbon cutting	Ayton House Care Home. Angmering

By email to: SussexandBrightonDevolutionConsultation@communities.gov.uk

By Post to:

Devolution Priority Programme Consultation English Devolution and Institutions

Team Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

4th Floor

2 Marsham Street

London SW1P 4DF

Littlehampton Town Council response to the Sussex and Brighton Devolution Proposal

Littlehampton Town Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to this important consultation regarding these devolution proposals. As a large town council, we also recognise that these proposals present an opportunity for our sector to expand, giving unparished areas the chance to form new parish councils and act as advocates for their communities.

The existing local government structure has also evolved over many years and the timeframe for implementing the new authority is very ambitious. It is therefore essential that residents have confidence in the effectiveness of the new arrangements and can relate to them. Whilst we appreciate this is the initial consultation, for it to be meaningful to residents it is important to understand the cost implications and how these will be met.

We do however believe that the Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) has the potential to deliver benefits to the area. To maximise the opportunities, particularly in terms of economic development and improvements to local government services, the parish sector would need increased powers including financial, and the ability to access funding similar to that which is currently available to higher tier authorities only.

The new Authority will need to demonstrate that it both recognises and can address the needs of its individual parishes, which can be quite diverse in their nature.

In terms of supporting the interests and needs of local communities and reflecting local identities, the structure and governance arrangements of the new Authority will need to be robust and importantly relevant to the communities that it would serve. It is our view that an effective new strategic authority must have logical and locally identifiable boundaries, clearly articulated methods of communication and can deliver economies of scale that will benefit residents.

We therefore suggest that the governance arrangements are strengthened to allow the incoming Mayor the power to appoint at least two deputies, and that these could not only fulfill the role of deputy but possibly strengthen the strategic approach by championing an area of responsibility that is of priority to the Authority.

The Parish sector wants the local council tier of English Government to be an effective and comprehensive partner to the new framework established through devolution. We therefore strongly advocate that some of the non-constituent/associate members are drawn from the local parish and town council network. We believe this would ensure that the sector was represented and importantly help facilitate closer links between residents and the new Authority. Parish councils are the viable solution to engaging communities at grass roots, enabling stronger community engagement and empowerment, particularly given the changes that will come with the Local Government Reorganisation.

Representation is important and needs to be balanced, fair and proportionate to the community being served. Recognising that West Sussex has twice the population of Brighton and East Sussex, we suggest consideration is given to increasing the number of constituent members representing the county on the Authority from two to four.

We hope these points will be taken into consideration when deciding whether to move forward with the Mayoral Combined County Authority in Sussex and Brighton.