

Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Town Council held in the Southfields Jubilee Centre, Southfields Road, Littlehampton, BN17 6AE on Thursday 20 June 2024 at 6.30pm

Present:

Councillor Lee - Chair
Councillor Butcher
Councillor Daws
Councillor Long
Councillor Northeast
Councillor O'Neill
Councillor Richards
Councillor Tandy
Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ
Councillor Wiltshire
Councillor Worne*

In attendance:

Laura Chrysostomou, Town Clerk
Juliet Harris, Assistant Town Clerk
Chris Luck, Quantity Surveyor, BAQUS

2024 to 2025

18. Evacuation Procedures

The procedures were noted.

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

The procedures were noted.

20. Apologies

There were apologies from Councillors Blanchard-Cooper and May, due to other meeting commitments, Councillor Tilbrook was away and Councillor Woodman who was unwell.

21. 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 no further declarations were made at this point.

22. Minutes

The Minutes of the ordinary meeting of the Council held on 16 May 2024, previously circulated, were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

23. Town Mayor Report and Urgent Items

The Mayor's engagements report, copy attached to the Minutes, had been circulated to Members before the meeting for information. The Mayor was pleased to report that one of his first visits since becoming Mayor was to the Chestnut Tree House children's hospice. This was also his chosen charity for the year, and he encouraged councillors to visit the hospice and see the fantastic facilities that they provided. He also reminded Members that the Town Council's Armed Forces Day event was coming up and he hoped that as many people as possible would be there on Saturday 29 June.

*Councillor Worne joined the meeting at 18.35pm.

24. Public Forum

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

24.1. Town Council Allotments

Council received a written representation from the Chair of the Littlehampton Allotment and Leisure Gardens Association (LALGA) which questioned the recent fencing work on the southern boundary at the Worthing Road site, sought confirmation of the cost of this work and timeframes for other repair work that had been highlighted at the Allotments Working Group meeting held on 30 May 2024.

A full response had been prepared, copy attached to the minutes, alongside the original question. The Chair of LALGA was also in the public gallery and read out her representation. Thanking the Town Council for the response she also noted that the Council would look to create a space on the Allotments section of the Town Council's website for publication of the Working Group minutes during the summer.

24.2. Council then heard from the site representative at the Worthing Road allotments who queried the cost of the recent fence works which in his view could have been done better and at a lower cost. In response the Assistant

Town Clerk reported that the work had been commissioned in accordance with the Town Council's financial regulations and provided good value for money. She thanked LALGA for supplying photos of the fencing which had been inspected and was installed as specified. Acknowledging that allotment tenants still had concerns regarding the potential vulnerability of the boundary at this point, she reported that there was spare wire fencing which could be used to fill any further gaps should the hedge not grow to fill the gap. She also confirmed that the Community Resources Officer was aware of this and the other maintenance issues at the Worthing Road site which were being prioritised for action. Allotment tenants would be informed as these were addressed, and the action reported to the Allotments Working Group at their next meeting.

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

There was none.

26. Reports from Committees – Non-Exempt

26.1. 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 of which there was one.

26.1.1. Property and Personnel Committee – 3 June 2024

Having received an update on the progress with the completion of the new K2 Youth and Community Centre, the Property and Personnel Committee was recommending that Council immediately delegate responsibility for the maintenance of the building to the Property and Personnel Committee. The Town Clerk explained that work was continuing to finish the remaining work required to complete the building which would be discussed in exempt business. It was noted that when the construction contract had been fulfilled and the building handed over to the Town Council, the Committee would assume responsibility for the maintenance in line with the Town Council's Scheme of Delegation to Committees.

Council therefore resolved to note that:

Responsibility for the K2 Youth and Community Centre in terms of building maintenance would be delegated to the Property and Personnel Committee when the building is handed over to the Town Council.

26.2. Committee Minutes – Non-Exempt

26.2.1. Planning and Transportation

Council received and noted the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2024, previously circulated, with no matters arising.

26.2.2. Property and Personnel

Council received and noted the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 June 2024, previously circulated, with no matters arising.

26.2.3. Community Resources

Council received and noted the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2024, previously circulated, with no matters arising.

26.2.4. Policy and Finance

Council received and noted the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2024, previously circulated, with no matters arising.

26.2.5. Community Centre Sub Committee

Council received and noted the Non-Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2024, with no matters arising.

27. Officer's Reports

27.1 Audit and Annual Return 2023 to 2024

27.1.1. Annual Governance Statement 2023 to 2024 - Section 1 of the Annual Return

Council received a report, previously circulated, seeking approval of the 2023 to 2024 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) which was the Statutory Statement of Accounts for the Council. The Town Clerk explained that in doing so, the Council was firstly required to formally confirm that it was satisfied its business had been conducted in accordance with the law, regulations, and proper practices. This was evidenced by the Council responding positively to the eight assertions that formed the Annual Governance Statement. These assertions were supported by evidence which was tested by the Internal Auditor whose end of year report would also be published with the Annual Return and scrutinised by the Governance and Audit Committee at their meeting on 9 July 2024.

Members wished to have a better understanding of the negative assurance audit regime that the Council was subject to. The Town Clerk explained the light touch approach which required an independent internal auditor to conduct a selective assessment of the Council's procedures and controls. The internal auditor would then test them by sampling transactions and sourcing evidence. This would enable them to sign the appropriate part of the

AGAR confirming that the Council was following its internal controls as set out in the Annual Governance Statement. Observing that the Council's internal auditor had signed the AGAR with no comments, and with transparency in mind, Members considered that this terminology could be misleading. It was therefore agreed that future reports would include an explanation of the audit terminology that could be more easily understood. This would also be shared with Members after the meeting. Members were satisfied with the effectiveness of the system of internal controls.

Council therefore unanimously resolved that:

- 1. To the best of its knowledge and belief, with respect to the Annual Governance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2024, it has complied with all eight statements.**
- 2. The Mayor, as Chairman of the Council, and the Clerk be authorised to sign Section 1 of the 2023 to 2024 Annual Return on behalf of the Council.**

27.1.2. Statement of Accounts 2023 to 2024 - Section 2 of the Annual Return

Council received a report, previously circulated, which sought approval of the 2023 to 2024 Accounting Statement. The Town Clerk explained that this contained a summary of the of the Council's financial transactions during the year to 31 March 2024. She also provided clarification regarding the receipts, costs, and balances carried forward. Members considered that the Annual Statement of Accounts was an accurate reflection of the Town Council's finances.

Council therefore resolved that:

- 1. The Annual Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024 be approved.**
- 2. The Mayor, as Chairman of the Council, be authorised to sign Section 2 of the 2023 to 2024 Annual Governance and Accountability Return on behalf of the Council.**

27.2. Business Plan Update

27.2.1. The Town Clerk presented a report, previously circulated, which included an update on progress of the Goals and Objectives set out in the Action Plan. The Town Clerk explained that although challenging, progress had been made in several areas and it was noted that from September 2024, each Committee would receive updates through their respective quarterly periodic reports. Council proceeded to review the Action Plan in more detail and the Town Clerk provided clarification regarding the Town Council's floral contract which would be reviewed in the Autumn to meet the deadline for the start of the new contract in spring 2025.

Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ declared a personal interest in the following discussion as member of the Littlehampton Harbour Board.

27.2.2. Regarding the Arun River West Bank Regeneration, it was acknowledged that the Town Council did not have any powers to intervene in the management of the Harbour. This rested with the Littlehampton Harbour Board who were also the body with statutory responsibility for the maintenance of the harbour infrastructure. The goal for the Town Council in this area was to support initiatives that promoted tourism and it was agreed that the objective in the Action Plan should be clarified to reflect this. In terms of the presentation of future updates, changes were agreed to enable members to track progress or identify where intervention might be required to timescales.

It was therefore resolved that:

1. The Action Plan be updated to reflect the discussion on the Arun River West Bank Regeneration as set out in Minte 27.2.2. above.
2. The updated Action Plan and goals for the year ahead be noted.

27.3. Rampion 2 Wind Farm

Council had before it a draft letter setting out the Town Council's priorities regarding a community benefits package which it was proposed be sent to His Majesty, King Charles III. This had come forward following discussions at the Planning and Transportation Committee about how best to present the Town Council's case for a more tangible community benefits package on behalf of the Town. This action was supported, and several suggestions were made to update the text. In this respect, it was noted that the Harbour Board was cooperating with the relevant agencies to inform the plans. It was therefore considered prudent to highlight that the Town Council's concerns about the potential impact of the wind farm related specifically to the local fishing economy and tourism.

It was therefore resolved that:

Subject to the revisions set out above, the letter be endorsed.

28. Reports of Representatives on Outside Bodies

28.1. Littlehampton Harbour Board Advisory Group

As the Town Council's representative on the Advisory Group, the Mayor reported that at their recent meeting he was appointed Chair of the Group. Whilst noting that the appointment was subject to the approval of the Harbour Board, Council welcomed this.

28.2. Arun Community Transport

As the Town Council's representative on the Arun Community Transport Committee, Councillor Wiltshire reported that she had recently attended their Annual General Meeting. The main message was that due to increased demand for their services, more volunteers were needed.

*Councillor Worne left the meeting at 7:13pm

29. 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. The following item was confidential 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.

*Councillor Worne re-joined the meeting at 7:15pm

30. K2 Youth and Community Centre Construction Update

- 30.1. Council had before it the Exempt Minutes of the Community Centres Sub-Committee meeting held on 13 June 2024 and a confidential briefing note, previously circulated to Members of the Council only. Presenting the minutes, the Chair of the Sub Committee explained that following a site visit with the Town Council's Agent, the Sub Committee had considered three options to finish the remaining work to the main hall that was required to complete the building. Taking into consideration factors including detailed technical information, the timescales and the Town Council's contractual position, the Sub Committee was recommending that option one as set out in the confidential briefing note be approved to finish the remaining work to the main hall.
- 30.2. Council proceeded to consider the recommendation and initial discussion focussed on understanding the protection that the construction contract provided to the Town Council in terms of construction warranties and recourse for the delay in practical completion. BAQUS explained that warranties would be provided by the building contractor and main subcontractors which alongside product guarantees would provide cover and a means of seeking redress should there be a dispute or product failure. In addition, under the construction contract the Town Council would be retaining a percentage of the construction costs for a further year after completion as cover against defects. Council discussed the merits of obtaining further insurance as protection

against the failure of the contractor. Although the contractor was not required to provide this it was agreed that this be explored as part of the final account at practical completion.

30.3. The discussion turned to the specifications relating to the options proposed to finish the remaining work to the main hall. It was noted that whilst all three options would see construction completed, one option was not viable as it would require the Town Council to step outside of the existing contract. The Agent confirmed that the remaining options were routine practice that could be delivered and guaranteed under the umbrella of the existing contract. Having considered the Sub-Committee's evaluation of the remaining options and the advice received, Members were satisfied that the recommendation was the best way forward to complete the building.

It was therefore resolved that:

1. Option one as set out in the confidential briefing note be approved and that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to progress this within the construction contract.
2. The Exempt Minutes of the Community Centres Sub-Committee meeting held on 13 June 2024 be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm.

Mayor