



MINUTES of the ORDINARY MEETING of the TOWN COUNCIL held in the NEW MILLENNIUM CHAMBER, MANOR HOUSE, CHURCH STREET, LITTLEHAMPTON on THURSDAY 31 JANUARY 2013 at 6.30pm

PRESENT: Cllrs Neno (Mayor), Ayres, Belchamber MBE, Bowyer, Britton, Buckland, Caffyn, Emberson, Gammon, Hulmes, Long and Squires

2012/2013

61. EVACUATION PROCEDURES

The Town Mayor outlined the evacuation procedures.

62. MOBILE PHONES

Members and the public were reminded that the use of mobile phones (other than on silent) was prohibited at Town Council and Committee meetings.

63. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Northeast and Weston.

64. 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. Councillors Bowyer, Britton, Caffyn, Gammon and Squires all declared personal interests with regard to the Draft Leisure Strategy as District Councillors. Councillors Emberson and Neno declared personal interests with regard to the Draft Leisure Strategy as District Councillors and members of the District Council's Leisure, Tourism and Infrastructure Working Group. Cllr Britton declared a personal interest with regard to the public consultation on the proposed expansion of White Meadows Primary School as a County Councillor.

65. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2012 (previously circulated) were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

66. TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT and URGENT ITEMS

66.1 The Mayor welcomed Cllr Buckland as the recently elected member for the River Ward. The Mayoral engagement list had previously been circulated to Members setting out the extensive range of functions that had been attended since the last Council meeting. The Mayor also expressed her thanks to Councillor Squires for his assistance in organising a successful charity race night event where the sum of £1000 was raised.

66.2 Arun District Council (Civil Enforcement and Consolidation) Order 2010

The Town Clerk reported that the Town Council had received a notice from the District Council setting out proposed changes to car parking charges in Littlehampton and Bognor Regis. The proposals had been referred to the Planning and Transportation Committee and would be considered by them at the meeting on 4th February.

67. PUBLIC FORUM

12 members of the public were present.

- Mr David Warne, East Beach Residents Association stated that a petition would be sent to the District Council shortly and asked that if ADC ignore the contents, would the Town Council consider running and contributing to a Public Subscription Scheme, possibly in conjunction with Rustington Parish Council, to raise money to buy digital equipment for the Windmill Theatre.
- Mrs Janet Crossley, New Road, asked if the Town Council thought it was an appropriate use of constituent's money to spend thousands on consultants to present information that was already widely known. Mrs Crossley also supported the suggestion put forward by the East Beach Residents Association for a Public Subscription scheme to raise money to buy digital equipment for the Windmill Theatre.
- Mrs Meg Culshaw asked if the Town Council and Inspire Leisure had investigated the availability of grants to raise the funds that were required to buy digital equipment for the Windmill Theatre.
- Mr Phil Laplin, East Beach Residents Association suggested that an independent Trust could be established to run the Windmill Theatre.
- Mr Derek Chester asked if the District Council had made a decision regarding the impacts on benefits of the new arrangements for Council Tax for those on the lowest incomes. The Town Clerk advised that the District Council had yet to set their budget and advised that the question was therefore best directed to them for a response.
- Mrs Angela Tester, Littlehampton Civic Society stated the overwhelming public support to keep the Windmill Theatre open was demonstrated by the attendance of 300 people at the recent public march and that the petition had been signed by almost 2500 signatories, more than was required by the District Council to force a debate on the issue. She thanked Littlehampton Town Council for its support in its efforts to have the leisure facilities declared Assets of Community Value.

The Mayor thanked the members of the public for their questions and stated they would be considered in more detail at agenda item 10, the Draft Leisure Strategy.

68. CORRESPONDENCE OR ISSUES IN RESPECT OF THE DISTRICT OR COUNTY COUNCIL

68.1 Public Consultation on the Proposed Expansion of White Meadows Primary School

Council considered a letter from West Sussex Council which outlined proposals to expand the school from a two to a three form entry primary school (previously circulated). Members acknowledged that this decision was a strategic issue for the County Council and whilst there was support for the proposals, concerns were expressed about the impact that an increase in

pupil numbers would have on traffic in Whitelea Road. Members highlighted current issues with traffic approaching the school and expressed support for the walking bus initiatives. They also suggested that provision was made for more parking, pavement improvements and better sign posting to assist pedestrian access. It was REOLVED that:

The Town Clerk write to WSCC with details of the Town Council's concerns and suggestions relating to access to the School as outlined in Minute 68.1 above.

69. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES – (NON-EXEMPT)

69.1 Recommendations from Committees

There were none.

69.2 Committee Minutes (Non-Exempt)

69.2.1 Policy and Finance

Council received the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2012 (previously circulated) with two matters arising. Reference was made to Minute 43.3 Wick Post Office, new premises and modernisation. Cllr Squires stated that having spoken to the new owners of the Post Office franchise he had been advised that ATM facilities would be available at the new premises and that it would take up to 14 weeks to install.

Regarding Minute 43.2, Localisation of Council Tax Support it was noted that the District Council had agreed to pay the grant to Parish and Town Councils.

69.3.2 Community Resources

Council received the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2012 (previously circulated) with one matter arising. Reference was made to Minute 47.2, the Tree Planting Scheme. Members emphasised the importance of replacing dead trees with mature saplings that were appropriate to the surroundings and would encourage the public to support the work of Town Council and water new trees if required.

69.3.3 Planning and Transportation

Council received the Minutes of the meetings held on 10 December 2012 and 7 January 2013 (previously circulated) with two matters arising. Regarding Minute 96.2, Neighbourhood Plan, the Chair of the Committee reported that the steering group had met and work was progressing on the next phase of consultation. Reference was made to Minute 107.1, Planning Application LU/311/12, River Beach Primary School. It was reported that the planning application had been withdrawn and submission of a revised application was awaited.

69.3.4 Property and Personnel

Council received the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2012 and 14 January 2013 (previously circulated) with one matter arising. Reference was made to Minute 33.1.4, street lighting. The Clerk reported that a letter had been sent to the County Council regarding the future ownership of the Town Council's streetlights and he was chasing them for a response.

69.3.5 Performance and Publicity Overview

There have been no meetings of this Committee since the last Council meeting.

70. OFFICER'S REPORTS

70.1 **Arun District Council (ADC) Draft Leisure Strategy**

Council considered a report (previously circulated) which contained an update on the Draft Leisure Strategy and the recommendations of the District Council's Leisure, Tourism and Infrastructure Working Group. Regarding earlier comments from those present in the public gallery suggesting that a Public Subscription Scheme was set up to raise money to buy digital equipment for the Windmill Theatre, Councillor Bowyer proposed that the matter be referred to the Town Council's Policy and Finance Committee for further investigation by Members at their next meeting. This was duly seconded by Councillor Gammon and it was **RESOLVED** that:

The Policy and Finance Committee undertake a review taking into account the contents of Minute 70.1 above.

70.1.2 Regarding the provision of leisure centre facilities in Littlehampton the revised strategy now proposed two options; build a new leisure centre on land north of Littlehampton Academy or substantial reconfiguration and modernisation of the existing centre. The Clerk reported that at a recent meeting of the Littlehampton Sports Forum, representatives had expressed serious reservations about the implications of these proposals for local sporting groups. The Forum was particularly concerned about the implications of the closure of the Leisure Centre on users and considered that there was a real risk that they would not return if the Centre were closed for a year or more.

70.1.3 Noting that the recommendations would be considered by ADC's Cabinet on the 11th February, Members considered the revised proposals and the following points were made during the ensuing discussion:-

Littlehampton Swimming Centre

- There was overwhelming support for the retention of leisure facilities at the current site.
- The need to close the existing leisure facilities while new facilities were built was questioned.
- The existing facilities should not be shut until the new facilities have been opened.
- If the Littlehampton Academy wanted swimming pool facilities it should pursue this objective in its own right.
- In the current climate of low interest rates, had ADC considered Public Sector Borrowing to finance the long term improvement of leisure facilities in the District.
- There was a real need for improved leisure facilities given that further new housing was to occur and the consequent growth in the Town's population.

The Windmill Theatre

- The public had been misled in its belief that out of date equipment was an issue.
- Significant long term investment was required to preserve the Theatre for community use.
- The original outsourcing of leisure facilities in Arun was based on a desire to reduce costs and the contractor must have known that funding from ADC would decline during the period of the contract.

- Community groups were unlikely to have the resources required to maintain the Theatre and more investigation was required regarding alternative sources of funding.

Other points

- The Town Council's Policy and Finance Committee could undertake a thorough examination of the real issues that related specifically to the long term provision of leisure facilities in the Town.
- The Town Council's Planning and Transportation Committee could incorporate leisure facilities as part of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Members commended the local community and the East Beach Residents Association for raising public awareness of the implications of the Draft Leisure Strategy.
- Members welcomed the reference to improving the infrastructure for off road cycling.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- 1. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group incorporate proposals for leisure facilities within the draft Plan.**
- 2. The Town Clerk, in consultation with the Mayor, draft a response to Arun District Council taking on board the comments raised.**

70.2 Full Council Budget 2013/14

The Committee considered a report (previously circulated) outlining the Budget for 2013/14. The Chair of the Policy and Finance Committee thanked all Members for their work in putting together the draft Budget. She stated that she did not propose to go through the detail of the Budget as all Members had been fully involved and had reviewed the detailed papers and reports. She outlined the key themes, as follows:-

- 70.2.1** The issues regarding the Localisation of Council Tax Support were well rehearsed and have caused some difficulties which were likely to be even more of an issue in future. The biggest problems henceforth would be the possibility of reduced Central Government funding; a new dependence on Government grant and the lateness of the decision by Government on the level of grant and capping levels.
- 70.2.2** The District Council had forwarded a pro-rata element of the grant but this still left a shortfall. This together with an effort to smooth potential Council Tax increases in future years had led to a recommendation for a new precept of £886,130: a rise of £2.53 pa for a Band D Council Tax payer.
- 70.2.3** It was however pleasing that savings were found on the Budget whilst protecting key services and starting to replenish revenues. This was key to the Town Council's continued commitment to improving Littlehampton.
- 70.2.4** It was disappointing to have to raise Council Tax, especially to meet costs that were out of the Town Council's control and could not be anticipated. However, the Town Council continued to deliver improved services whilst also affecting efficiencies wherever possible.

70.2.5 Members commended the Policy and Finance Committee for maintaining services with only a small increase in Council Tax, particularly given the difficult backdrop to this year's budget.

70.2.6 It was **RESOLVED** that:

1. The budget for 2013/2014, setting a Precept of £886,130, be approved and the changes to the Band D base be noted.

2. The projected budgets for 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 be noted.

70.3 Council and Committee Dates 2013/14

A draft calendar of dates had previously been circulated to the Council. It was agreed to move the Council meeting date originally planned for 26th September 2013 to 3rd October to avoid clashing with a meeting at ADC. The Planning and Transportation Committee meeting dates in March and April 2014 were questioned and it was agreed that the Clerk would check the meeting cycle and circulate a revised schedule to Members. It was **RESOLVED** that:

Subject to the comments set out in Minute 70.3 above, the Council and Committee dates for 2013/14 be approved and a revised schedule circulated to Members.

70.4 Committee Vacancies

Council was asked to consider changes to the Committee Memberships following the election of Councillor Buckland at the River Ward by-election. It was **RESOLVED** that:

1. Councillor Buckland be appointed to the Planning and Transportation Committee and the Allotments Working Group.

2. Councillor Dr Walsh KStJ be appointed to the Policy and Finance Committee.

71. REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Caffyn reported on Wick Information Centre, who had secured lottery funding to purchase a photocopier, were progressing plans for computers for the Centre and would be entering a team in the Town Council's forthcoming Pancake Olympics event.

72. MASTERPLAN – NORTH LITTLEHAMPTON

Council were pleased to note that the Section 106 Agreement and Land Transfer for North Littlehampton documents had now been signed by all parties.

73. EXEMPT BUSINESS

It was **RESOLVED** that:

Members of the public and accredited representatives of the press be excluded under Section 100 Local Government Act 1972 due to the confidential nature of the business to be conducted.

74. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES – (EXEMPT)

74.1 Committee Minutes (Exempt)

74.1.1 Property and Personnel

Council received the Minutes the Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2013 (previously circulated to Members of the Council only) and received updates on the following items;

74.1.2 Update on the Dairy

The Town Clerk updated Members on the progress of the sale of this land. In response to a question, he confirmed that unless otherwise agreed with the new owners, the tenants would need to vacate the premises by 31st March 2013.

74.1.3 Update on Southfields Jubilee Centre

The Town Clerk reported that the Administrator had been informed of the Town Council's intention to utilise the retention monies to carry out essential maintenance work at the Centre.

74.2.1 Recommendation from Committee

Council considered a report (previously circulated to Members of the Council only) with regard to the Amenity Team and Caretaking Responsibilities. It was **RESOLVED** that:

The recommendations 1-6 detailed within the circulated report covered by the Property and Personnel Committee on 3 December 2012 regarding the Amenity Team and Caretaking Responsibilities be approved.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm.

TOWN MAYOR