



MINUTES of the POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE held in the NEW MILLENNIUM CHAMBER, MANOR HOUSE, CHURCH STREET, LITTLEHAMPTON on MONDAY 23 APRIL 2012 at 6.30PM

Present: Cllrs Neno (Chair),
Belchamber MBE, Caffyn,
Gammon, Long and Squires
Cllrs Ayres and Hulmes
attended as substitutes for
Cllrs Emberson and Britton
respectively.

2011/2012

59. EVACUATION PROCEDURES

The evacuation procedures were noted.

60. 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.

61. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Emberson.

62. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and Officers were reminded to make any declarations of personal and/or prejudicial interests that they might have in relation to items on the Agenda. Cllr Gammon declared a personal interest in the item regarding the Electoral Review as he was a Member of the District Council and also the Vice-Chairman of their Electoral Review Sub-committee. Cllrs Neno and Caffyn declared personal interests on the Electoral Review item as Members of Arun District Council. Cllr Belchamber indicated that he would declare a personal and prejudicial interest on the item related to the Town Twinning Association as a member of that group.

63. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2012 (previously circulated) were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

64. CHAIR'S REPORT AND URGENT ITEMS

The Clerk circulated copies of a consultation from Arun District Council regarding their Housing Allocations Policy review. The covering letter came with a questionnaire and it was **RESOLVED** that:

Members should either respond individually to the consultation or send their responses to the Town Clerk by 27 April so that either he could submit these or, if there was consensus, draw together a composite response.

65. PUBLIC FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

66. OFFICER'S REPORT

66.1 Electoral Review

- 66.1.1 The Committee considered a report (previously circulated) which set out the current position and future timetable for the Electoral Review process based on the initial submission by Arun District Council to the Local Government Boundary Commission and the Commission's preliminary observations. The Clerk explained that the report set out how these preliminary observations might impact on Littlehampton Town Council ward boundaries and sought guidance from Members on how they wished to respond in the first instance to the information gathering by the Boundary Commission.
- 66.1.2 The Clerk explained that he was still seeking some confirmation with regard to the figures that were being used by the District Council, but explained that, even without this, the key issues remained as set out in the paper. The report split the areas of discussion into two parts. The first related to whether the Town Council had any comments on the emerging proposals for the District Council and the second element related to the implications of this for the Town Council.
- 66.1.3 The review being undertaken by the Boundary Commission had aimed to make sure that everyone's vote counted equally. To achieve this, they intended to change the current pattern of council wards and were proposing that the District Council should have 53 Councillors, which was three fewer than at present. The public had been asked to comment about where they thought ward boundaries should be; which areas they identified as their local community and where people in the area accessed local facilities, such as shops and leisure.
- 66.1.4 The Committee considered these issues in depth, and the following points emerged.
- There was significant concern about the volume of work required for such a small change in the number of District Councillors. Whilst it was accepted that a degree of parity of electorates between wards was desirable, it was thought that, bearing in mind the significant new housing developments in the area over the next few years, the need to undertake this was significant but not urgent, bearing in mind that there would be a need for a further review imminently.
 - It was agreed that it would be inappropriate for District Council wards to cross parish boundaries.
 - It was thought that Littlehampton should retain its ten District Councillors, although it was acknowledged that some work would need to be undertaken with regard to the ward boundaries. This was particularly thought appropriate, bearing in mind the wards with significant areas of deprivation and therefore probable higher workloads for elected members

and also the significant potential increase in the population over the next few years.

- With regard to how the District Council wards might look following any redrawing, it was noted that the District Council's proposals had not yet been agreed in any form and therefore that the Town Council was not in a position to comment upon these. There was a need to align boundaries, but this had been undertaken by the Town Council and County Council only recently. It was the District Council wards that were at odds with the others, but it was noted that moving to the Town Council/District Council model would not achieve parity of numbers. It was thought that the Town Council would be well placed to assist with this work as the most local tier of local Government and with the in-depth knowledge that it had of its locality.

66.1.5 Members then considered the variation across Littlehampton wards. The variances were less significant for the Town Council wards, with only Wick with Toddington outside of the plus or minus 10% target. The following points emerged from the lengthy discussion:-

- Wick with Toddington Ward would almost certainly be the subject of major review in the next few years, as the developments at Courtwick and North Littlehampton emerged.
- It was therefore thought that the Town Council should argue that the existing wards should be retained pending any further reviews.
- It was thought that the existing Council size of 15 was appropriate, although this might be increased when the new housing developments were in place.
- Coterminosity was important in the longer term, but it was thought that pending the inclusion of the new development, there were other more important issues that needed to be addressed. However, if there was some degree of coterminosity, this was perhaps more important with the District Council than the County Council.
- It was highlighted that there were distinct communities in Littlehampton that the current arrangements did not fit with. For example, Wick was split between two wards. It was thought that if the ward boundaries needed to be reorganised, the Town Council was best placed to assist on this work. The Boundary Commission should be informed of this, but also that at this stage the Town Council was unable to offer proposals as it not been privy to the District Council's discussions.
- It was thought that the workloads expected of Members across the Town Council were currently acceptable.

66.1.6 Other comments that emerged from the discussions included the importance of recognising that these boundaries would almost certainly need to be revisited in 2017 or as a result of new development and also that the Town Council wards were probably an appropriate starting point for any review of the District Council wards. It was commented that it was disappointing that in the age of localism, the parishes had not been consulted by the District Council.

66.1.7 It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

The Town Clerk be instructed to pull together the comments raised at this meeting and respond to the Boundary Commission accordingly.

- 66.2 Open Public Services White Paper – Update (Executive Summary)**
The Committee considered a copy of the update (previously circulated), which explained the progress made to date by the Government in delivering the Government's programme in this area. It was **RESOLVED** that:

The current position be noted.

- 66.3 New Homes Bonus – report from Yapton PC to JDAC**
Members considered a report that had been prepared by Yapton Parish Council to the Joint Downs Area Committee (previously circulated) which sought a percentage share of the new homes bonus funding arising from the impact that new housing would have on the existing community infrastructure in Yapton. This proposal had received the support of the Joint Downs Area Committee and it was **RESOLVED** that:

The Town Council similarly endorse this approach and inform the District Council accordingly.

- 66.4 Predetermination – A NALC Legal Topic Note**
The Committee considered a Legal Topic Note (previously circulated) which sought to clarify the vexed subject of predetermination. It was **RESOLVED** that:

The Topic Note be noted.

- 66.5 NALC – People in Action Conferences**
The Committee noted the proposed dates for the NALC People in Action Conferences (previously circulated). The London conference would be held on the same day as Annual Council and it was **RESOLVED** that:

No attendance be agreed for 24 May Conference, but that the Mayor and/or Chair of Policy & Finance, together with the Town Clerk, should attend the Larger Councils conference later in the year.

- 66.6 Members' Conduct and the Registration and Disclosure of their Interests**
The Committee considered a Legal Topic Note from NALC which gave an update on the position with regard to Members' conduct and the registration and disclosure of their interests (previously circulated). The Town Clerk explained that a new Code of Conduct would need to be in place by the end of June and that a draft would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee. Several templates had been or would be circulated and the Town Clerk had approached the District Council to identify the progress that they were making on that front. Each parish council was in a position to agree its own Code of

Conduct and after some discussion, it was thought that the existing Code was largely robust and although it needed updating to include current legislation, unless a suitable alternative was put forward, the Town Clerk should bring the revised version for consideration to the next meeting of the Committee. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

Broadly, the existing Code of Conduct be supported for adaptation for use from 1 July 2012.

66.7 Liberalising the Regime for Flying Flags

The Committee received a copy of a CLG discussion paper (previously circulated) and **RESOLVED** that:

It be noted.

66.8 Licensing of 'A' Boards

The Town Clerk reported orally that he had met with traders at the last Town Traders' Forum and explained to them that in the absence of a strong view on their part with regard to the need to introduce a licensing regime for A Boards in the High Street, he was not proposing to take this forward in the immediate future. It was **RESOLVED** that:

This position be endorsed.

66.9 Littlehampton Hospital

The Committee noted with disappointment the emails from the Chief Executive, NHS Sussex and the Programme Manager, Strategic Estates, regarding the decision not to rebuild Littlehampton Hospital. Much had already been said on this matter, but it was agreed that it was vitally important for the Town Council to remain vigilant with regard to any proposals that might emerge for the land and also to ensure that promises that had been made with regard to services were delivered. It was **RESOLVED** that:

The current position be noted.

66.10 Portas Pilot

The Clerk reported orally on the exciting Portas Pilot bid that had been prepared by the Town Team, comprising a number of town centre retailers. The Clerk encouraged Members to view the bid on YouTube. It was **RESOLVED** that:

The position be noted.

67. ACCOUNTS

67.1 Finance Report 2011/12

The Committee considered the latest Periodic Finance Report for 2011/12 and **RESOLVED** that:

The report be noted.

68. **MASTERPLAN – NORTH LITTLEHAMPTON**

The Town Clerk had nothing to report.

69. **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.

70. **Littlehampton Twinning Association**

(Councillors Squires and Belchamber MBE declared personal and prejudicial interests as members of the Littlehampton Twinning Association and left the meeting.)

Members had before them a letter from the Twinning Association and had previously been circulated with relevant Council decisions. The Town Clerk explained that whilst the policy of the Town Council was clear in one sense, the Association had not been aware of this and the implementation had been inconsistent over a number of years. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that:

In this instance, the charge for the last Annual General Meeting be waived and that the Association should be so informed and that a Grant application form be forwarded to them to cover the arrangements for 2012/13.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.

CHAIR