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**LEWES  
TOWN  
COUNCIL**

## ***MINUTES***

Of the **Meeting of Lewes Town Council**,  
held on **Thursday 18th June 2015**, in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall**, Lewes at **7:30pm**.

**PRESENT** Councillors F Addecott; A Ashby; Dr A Bolt; R Burrows; S Catlin (Wischnusen); D Cooper; W Elliott; J Lamb; I Makepeace (*Deputy Mayor*); M Milner; R Murray; S Murray (*Mayor*); O’Keeffe; E Watts.

*In attendance:* S Brigden (*Town Clerk*); Mrs F Garth (*Civic Officer & Asst Town Clerk*)

*Observing:* B Courage (*Town Ranger*); Mrs J Dean (*Customer Services Officer*); M Larkin (*Town Hall Keeper*)  
Ms V McLachlan (*Finance Administration Officer*); Mr H Schoelch (*Head of Cultural Services, Council of Waldshut-Tiengen, Germany*)

**FC2015/17 QUESTION TIME:** A question had been received from Mrs Dee O’Connell, representing ‘Lewes for a Living Wage’. The question and the written answer given are appended to these Minutes.

**FC2015/18 MEMBERS’ DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS:** Cllr O’Keeffe declared an interest *iro* Agenda item 7a) – Recommendations of the Grants Panel – in that she was closely associated with applicant organizations: Lewes Twinning Association; Lewes Concert Orchestra, and Lewes Conservation Area Advisory Group.

**FC2015/19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Apologies had been received from Cllr A Barker, who was delayed in Guernsey due to adverse weather; Cllr Chartier, who was on holiday; Cllr Dr Mayhew, who had a lecturing commitment, and Cllr Rowell who was attending his daughter’s graduation ceremony in Glasgow.

It was **resolved that:**

**FC2015/19.1** Reasons submitted for absence from this meeting are accepted.

**FC2015/20 MAYOR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Council extended a warm welcome to Mr Hartmut Schoelch, the Director of Cultural Services for the Council of Waldshut-Tiengen; Lewes’s German twin town. Mr Schoelch was visiting for two weeks on a work-experience programme and taking the opportunity to arrange future events for local artists and musicians to exhibit and perform in Waldshut-Tiengen.

The Mayor announced that the Council’s team had come fourth in the recent Skittles Tournament and was therefore eligible to compete in the final round. The team had declined; leaving the field open to teams more closely involved with the charitable enterprise. It was noted that a number of Members who had indicated their intention to play had not, in fact, participated. Cllr Murray noted the importance of honouring such commitments, despite these not being official council duties, as such events were important to the community.

Members were reminded that they should all have received an invitation from the Lord Lieutenant of East Sussex to attend a ceremony at Lewes Library terrace on 30<sup>th</sup> July at 11:00am, for the unveiling of a memorial to a local awardee of the Victoria Cross during the first World War as part of a national initiative. Individuals should respond to the invitation as detailed on the card.

**FC2015/21 MINUTES:** the minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2015 were received and signed as an accurate record.

*Continues...*

**INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES of COUNCILLORS 2015/16:**

A report (FC005/15) was considered, which advised requested changes to allotted individual duties. Since the original appointments were made, some Members had requested seats on working groups, and one had identified a conflict with other responsibilities. The effects of these were shown on an appended table (*copy in the minute book*). Following a brief discussion **it was resolved that:**

**FC2015/22.1** The individual responsibilities of Members for the remainder of the 2015/16 municipal year shall be amended as:

Planning Committee – Cllr Ashby is appointed.

Personnel Panel – Cllrs Ashby and Bolt are appointed

Buildings repair Working party – Cllr Rowell is appointed

Appointment to Outside Body – Lewes Conservation Area Advisory Group:

Cllr Watts resignation from this appointment is noted.

Cllr Ashby is appointed.

**WORKING PARTIES AND OUTSIDE BODIES:**

*Members were reminded that anyone who may have attended a meeting of any recognized outside body which has covered issues that deserve attention by the Council, should ensure that TC is aware of this before the Council's next meeting, and preferably before the agenda deadline. Reports on all activities of the organization are not expected.*

a] Grants Panel 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015: Members considered Report FC001/2015 (*Copy in minute book*) containing the Panel's recommendations for payment of grants for the first (of four) cycle of the year. Members had been provided with a copy of a letter, on behalf of Lewes Conservation Area Advisory Group (CAAG), pleading for reconsideration of the Panel's recommendation that no grant be made. Various Councillors spoke on this matter; noting that support was already given in the form of rooms for CAAG meetings, and that the application had been for funds to pay honoraria and expenses. Members commented that other bodies who routinely contributed to the Planning process did so voluntarily and without payment of any kind. There was also an amendment proposed: that the amount awarded to the Lewes Twinning Association (application ref 4) be increased to £400, but this was not agreed. Following one or two questions on detail of other applications, **it was resolved that:**

**FC2015/23.1** Grant payments recommended in Column G of the appendix to Report FC001/2015 (*Copy in minute book*) are approved.

b] *Liaison meeting with Friends of Lewes 2nd June 2015:*

Council received notes of this meeting (*copy in minute book*), and TC corrected an erroneous statement he had recorded; noting that the Reserve established for commemorative plaques was actually adequate for all those proposed in this tranche, should Council wish to do so. A question arose as to the source and extent of the proposed wording. It was suggested that some plaques offered too much text and that this might deter readers. It was confirmed that the Friends of Lewes had, traditionally, proposed sites and prepared text for verification by various local historians in the town. Council was then asked to agree, and arranged manufacture and installation of plaques. A further question was raised regarding the availability of a local producer, and Cllr Addecott volunteered to research this. With regard to the production of the batch under discussion, it was proposed and agreed that this research should be allowed two weeks, following which the order would be placed with the usual foundry. Consequently, **it was resolved that:**

**FC2015/23.2** Commemorative plaques for local buildings be agreed, as described in the list provided by the Friends of Lewes and presented to Council on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015 (*copy in*

*minute book).*

*c] Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group 'Visioning Event' 4<sup>th</sup> June 2015:*

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group had held a visioning event recently, facilitated by the commissioned consultants, Feria Urbanism. The evening was described as well-attended and said to confirm a 'wise choice' in the selection of the consultants, who had presented a series of exercises that were interesting; stimulating, and enjoyable. This would be followed by a three-day programme of workshops and presentations, starting on 30<sup>th</sup> June and culminating in a public exhibition of findings. In answer to a question members were reminded that a Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with a 'superior' Local Plan, and the South Downs National Park Authority were preparing a Local Plan for the park which would incorporate, largely unchanged, the existing Joint Core Strategy developed over the past few years with Lewes District Council. This had been through the first formal stages of Inspection and was a reasonably well-understood platform. Feria Urbanism's task was to take the Lewes Neighbourhood Plan through formal inspection and on to the public referendum, and they would ensure compliance with all technical criteria. The original draft timetable for development of the plan was proving to be appropriate, and a draft plan was expected for publication by Spring 2016. The dedicated website: [www.lewes4all.uk](http://www.lewes4all.uk) was now live, and information and workshop results would gradually populate it. Following various general questions, **it was resolved that:**

**FC2015/23.3** The progress toward a Lewes Neighbourhood Plan is noted.

*d] Lewes & Seaford Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB):* Cllr Catlin, the Council's representative on the CAB, related salient points from the recent annual meeting. Statistics on the activity of the bureau showed 563 clients in Lewes town had sought advice during 2014/15, with 58 of these receiving assistance which led to significant financial benefits which would have otherwise been lost. Records showed that 17 residents of Bridge Ward; 20 residents of Castle, and 21 from Priory had, in aggregate, received £167,147 due to CAB intervention. Subsequently; **it was resolved that:**

**FC2015/23.4** The report on activity of the Lewes & Seaford Citizens' Advice Bureau for 2014/15 is noted.

#### **FC2015/24 INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT:**

Council received the final report from its retained Internal Auditor on the financial year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015. TC explained that this was one of the key mechanisms by which Councillors could assure themselves of continuing good practice, and validate statements required on the statutory annual return. Members were pleased to note that the auditor commented "*overall the systems and procedures you have in place are entirely fit for purpose and I would go so far as to say are a model of good practice; I therefore make no recommendation for change*".

The audit had been conducted in accordance with current best practice and statutory guidelines. Areas covered included:

- Financial Regulations & Standing orders
- Risk Assessments
- Budgeting process
- Proper Bookkeeping – review of the use of the Sage package.
- Income
- Salaries
- Fixed Assets
- Annual Accounts
- Trust information

There were no salient points or areas of concern. Members identified some minor drafting errors in the report which caused some confusion. These were largely

typographical, and TC provided detail as appropriate.

**FC2015/24.1** Lewes Town Council notes the report of Mulberry & Co (*a copy is included in the Minute book*) on their Internal Audit work for the Council for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015.

**FC2015/25 ANNUAL RETURN & ACCOUNTS Year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015:**

Members considered report FC002/2015 (*a copy of which is included in the Minute book*); the draft annual accounting statements, and the statutory annual return including certification for the year by the internal auditor. Various questions arose and were answered by TC, who also explained the annual cycle of which these documents form a part. A particular question arose related to Value Added Tax, and the position regarding elements shown in the accounts as 'VAT unclaimable'. TC drew attention to the explanatory note to the accounts, and outlined the special treatment of councils in VAT legislation. A week earlier a tax specialist had been consulted regarding the effect of imminent high-value building works, and had advised no change to the current status. Consequently, **it was resolved that:**

**FC2015/25.1** Lewes Town Council approves the statutory annual return and supporting documentation as required for the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015, for submission to the Audit Commission's appointed external auditor (*a copy is included in the Minute book*).

**FC2015/25.2** Lewes Town Council approves the financial accounts statements for the year 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015, as provided with report FC002/2015 and subject to audit (*a copy is included in the Minute book*).

**FC2015/26 CORPORATE RISK ASSESSMENT 2015/16:**

Members considered report FC003/2015, on the assessment of risks associated with the operations and functions of the Council for the forthcoming municipal year (*a copy is included in the Minute book*). The report explained the principles of the annual assessment and the concepts of tangible risk (*eg* physical risks associated with a swimming pool) and intangible risk (*eg* risks associated with publications) and summarized the annual evaluation. Full details were available if required. There were no questions or salient points to consider, and consequently **it was resolved that:**

**FC2015/26.1** Lewes Town Council notes the Corporate Risk Assessment report, reference FC003/2015 (*a copy is included in the Minute book*) and the summary table of assessed risks for 2015/16 appended to it.

**FC2015/27 RETENTION of INTERNAL AUDITOR:**

Members considered report FC004/2015 (*copy in minute book*) that Mr Mark Mulberry, the present Internal Auditor, be retained for the 2015/16 financial year. A question arose as to any recommended limit on the number of years an individual auditor should be retained. It was noted that the accounting/auditing standards bodies published best-practice guidelines on this aspect and ten years was considered to be the point at which this may be significant. The auditor's reporting framework was based upon these guidelines and the length of association was an item of record in that report. The 2015/16 year would be only the fifth year of association with Mr Mulberry, and even after ten years there was no compulsion to cease; the guidelines only recommending consideration of a quality review or possible rotation.

Following this **it was resolved that:**

**FC2015/27.1** Mr Mark Mulberry, of Mulberry & Co, 62 Hurst Lane, East Molesey, Surrey, KT8 9DZ be retained as Internal Auditor to Lewes Town Council for the 2015/16 financial year.

**FC2015/28 UK LIVING WAGE:**

A motion was proposed (*NOM008/15 – copy in minute book*) that extended the remit of

the Personnel Panel in this particular matter, who were asked to consider application of the UK Living Wage to Council pay scales, and also to assess potential to encourage contractors, and organizations applying to the Council for financial grants. It was suggested that the Council should support the Lewes Living Wage campaign and this would require discussion with their representatives to clarify. Councillors expressed views and raised questions. Most expressed support for the aspiration although there were some concerns over detail. Following some debate **it was resolved that:**

**FC2015/28.1** The Personnel Panel is asked to consider the most effective way to:

- a) enable payment of at least the Living Wage (as set annually by the Living Wage Foundation) to all Town Council staff,
- b) ensure that Contractors engaged by the Town Council who are paid over a set amount (to be recommended) confirm that they pay all their employees at least the Living Wage
- c) ensure that all organisations receiving grants from the Town Council pay their employees at least the Living Wage

**FC2015/28.2** Lewes Town Council resolves to support the Lewes Living Wage campaign in its work to raise awareness of the issues through the wider business community

**FC2015/29 ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE OF COUNCIL PROPERTIES:**

It was suggested (*NOM009/15 – copy in minute book*) that whilst Town Council buildings may be comparatively energy-efficient, it was likely that improvements could still be made. It was also possible that some properties may be suitable for energy-generating systems such as solar PV or solar thermal. Consequently **it was resolved that:**

**FC2015/29.1** An Environment Working Party be established to:

1. Assess the energy efficiency of Town Council properties and make recommendations for improvements, if any, and;
2. Establish the feasibility of installing energy-generating systems on/in any Council properties.

**FC2015/29.2** The Environment Working Party shall comprise Cllrs Milner; Murray (R); Murray (S); O’Keeffe; Rowell and Watts.

**FC2015/30 TOWN HALL FIRE ALARM SYSTEM:**

Report FC006/2015 was presented (*copy in minute book*), which advised of problems arising from the extreme age of the fire alarm system at the Town Hall, and estimated costs of urgently-needed rectification. During April and May 2015 the Town Hall had been evacuated three times due to ‘false’ activations, on each occasion the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service (ESFRS) attended the emergency call and inspected the building before allowing re-entry. Subsequent emergency checks by the Council’s contracted service provider established that the master control panel was failing due to aged components. The failure affected one zone of the building. The control was believed to date from the 1960’s and utilized completely outdated electro-mechanical technology for which no components were available. The system had been temporarily modified to mitigate further false alarms, but no permanent repair was possible.

An initial informal estimate, by the service provider, of the cost to install a new system indicated a sum between £60,000 and 70,000. A practical alternative could be a phased introduction of a modern system, with a new master control unit fitted close to the existing panel and capable of utilizing the existing cable conduits as any zone failed or was updated. The first phase – to install a part-system to cover the failed zone – would include a new master control panel and telephone linking equipment. Subsequent phases would link to these components and primarily require only cabling and sensor units.

A new system could be installed in phases *ad hoc* in response to future failures, but it was

noted that a complete replacement in the foreseeable future was considered inevitable and a planned approach recommended due to the daily levels of public use of the Town Hall.

There was a wide-ranging discussion on this matter, and members were keen to establish the implications for both safety and cost-efficiency. In answer to a question TC explained that he was recommending that the first phase option be agreed in-principle, in case further engineering inspection decided it was urgently needed. Competitive quotations would be obtained for complete replacement of the system; both as single and phased installations, and no work would be put in hand unless necessary, although concerns over sustainability of the present position were noted. Consequently **it was resolved that:**

**FC2015/30.1** The first phase of a new fire alarm system at Lewes Town Hall, as described in report FC006/2015 (*copy in minute book*), be agreed in principle at an estimated cost of £5,814; to be funded from the approved budget for routine/responsive repairs (shown as A/c 40/6100).

**FC2015/31**

#### **UPDATE ON MATTERS IN PROGRESS:**

- a) *“Our Pictures” project* – The Heritage Lottery Fund had referred the Council’s application to a second-stage review panel and indicated that this would be considered on the 25<sup>th</sup> June.
- b). *Town Hall repairs* – Four tenders had been received and assessed by the Council’s managing surveyors, and costs were significantly lower than anticipated in the original Order of Costs schedule. This had been investigated, and the companies interviewed independently. Each had independently assessed the building and it was considered that they had correctly and competitively allowed-for all elements; proposed suitable sub-contractors, and made no significant errors or omissions. The original cost indications were acknowledged to be based upon “worst-case” assumptions in several areas where close inspection had not been possible, and alternative working methods were proposed by all the bidders which shortened the duration of the programme and avoided the need for traffic control in the High Street. All the bids were considered valid, and contained appropriate contingency allowances. Works were expected to take twelve weeks. The Council’s agents would be asked to commence the programme.
- c) *Devolution of land from Lewes District Council* – The District Council had accepted moderation of proposed ‘overage’ clauses, and revised documents were in the process of agreement. It was anticipated that the agreed transfers of Malling Recreation Ground, and Landport Bottom would be technically completed within a few weeks thereafter. In answer to a question TC outlined the history of devolution discussions over recent years, and noted that these transfers were originally agreed as a first tranche. There were further transfers offered, to be considered by Council in due course.
- d) *Lewes Priory* – Council had received a statutory notification of an application to Historic England (formerly English Heritage) by the Lewes Priory Trust (LPT), for consent to works to the Scheduled Ancient Monument. This was relatively routine, being mortar repairs and stabilization treatment to several areas. The LPT had offered a guided tour for Councillors, and Cllr Watts would coordinate this for anyone interested.

**FC2015/32**

#### **NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT:**

- a) The next Planning Committee meetings were scheduled for: Tues 7th & 28th July 7:00pm
- b) A training seminar: ‘An Introduction to Planning’, to be delivered by Lindsay Frost Consulting Ltd, had been arranged for Thursday 9th July 7:00pm.
- c) The Personnel Panel would meet on Weds 15th July 7:00pm.
- d) The Audit Panel would meet on Thurs 16th July 7:00pm.
- e) The Traffic W/pty would meet on 7:00pm Tuesday 21st July 7:00pm – to be confirmed pending availability of representatives from bus operating companies.
- f) The next meeting of Council would be on Thursday 30th July – 7:30pm – giving a

deadline for agenda items to be submitted to TC of noon on Monday 20th July.

g) The next deadline for grant applications was Fri 18<sup>th</sup> September – with the assessment Panel meeting on Wed 30th Sept and its recommendations being considered by Council on 1st October.

h) A date would be advised in due course for a meeting with the Pells Pool Community Association, and a working party re-formed to pick up paused discussions over public realm improvements at the Pells, when there was more clarity over proposed works associated with the North Street development. Commemorations Working Party would be convened in late July/early August to confirm the details of the previously-agreed WW1 event at the All Saints Centre on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> September.

i) The next Councillors' Surgery was scheduled for Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> July between 10:00 and 12:00 in the Corn Exchange (during the weekly Market). Cllrs Elliott and Makepeace volunteered to attend this session.

There being no further business the Mayor closed the meeting and invited all present to join her for refreshments in the Mayor's Parlour

*The meeting ended at 9:40pm*

Signed: .....

Date: .....



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**QUESTION RECEIVED:**

On behalf of Lewes for a Living Wage we would like to submit the following question for the meeting of the Town Council Thursday 18 June:

*What is Lewes Town Council doing to support and achieve the Living Wage both in the Council and in Lewes?*

Dee O'Connell

**ANSWER:**

An abridged extract from the minutes of the Council meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> April 2015 explains:

[The Council meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> April 2015]... considered a proposal (*NOM012/2014 copy in minute book*) that the Council undertakes to pay all its employees at least the Living Wage from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2015 by topping up scale- rates where necessary. It was noted that a similar initiative had been considered in 2011, and a detailed review by the Personnel Panel had recommended continued adherence to national conditions. There followed a lengthy debate, during which the overall context of the national staff pay & conditions 'package' was analysed, and subsequently **it was resolved that:**

**FC2014/121.1** This Council wishes to pay all its employees at least the Living Wage and recommends that the new administration formed after 7<sup>th</sup> May 2015 sets up a Working Party to assess practicalities.

The Council's Personnel panel has responsibility for assessing any change which impacts upon staff pay and conditions, and will meet to review this shortly.

On the agenda for this evening's meeting of Council is a motion that proposes:

“Further to the resolution (FC2014/121.1) of Council on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2015

1 The Personnel Panel is asked to consider:

- a) the most effective way to enable payment of at least the Living Wage (as set annually by the Living Wage Foundation) to all Town Council staff,
- b) to ensure that Contractors engaged by the Town Council who are paid over a set amount (to be recommended) confirm that they pay all their employees at least the Living Wage
- c) to ensure that all organisations receiving grants from the Town Council pay their employees at least the Living Wage

2 Lewes Town Council resolves to support the Lewes Living Wage campaign in its work to raise awareness of the issues through the wider business community”

Council's decision on these proposals will be made later this evening, and the recommendations of the Personnel Panel will be brought to Council at its meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> July.