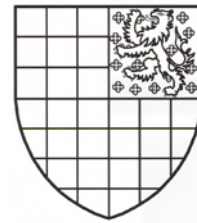


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**LEWES  
TOWN  
COUNCIL**

## *MINUTES*

Of the meeting of **Lewes Town Council** held on  
**Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2014**, in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall**, Lewes at **7:30pm**.

*NB if a record of voting was requested, this is shown in a table appended to these Minutes.*

### **PRESENT:**

Councillors E Allsobrook; S Catlin (Wischhusen); M Chartier; J Daly; A Dean; I Eiloart; J Lamb; D Lamport; L F Li; J MacCleary; M Milner; R Murray; S Murray; R O’Keeffe (*Mayor*); A Price; J Stockdale and M Turner (*Deputy Mayor*)

*In attendance:* S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*); L Symons (*Mace Bearer*); Ms E Martin (*C’tee Administration*)

*Observing:* Ms J Dean (*Customer Services Officer*).

The Mayor welcomed Canon Richard Moat, Rector of St Michael’s, St Anne’s and St Thomas with All Saints, who spoke for a few moments, relating the history and tradition of New Year Resolutions to the work of democratic institutions such as the Council in the modern age.

### **FC2013/82**

**QUESTION TIME:** There were five members of the public present. Ms Belinda Chapman reported to Council that a floodgate in South Street was damaged (inoperable) and there was concern for potential flooding due to the recent and forecast heavy rain fall. Ms Chapman asked if the damaged gate could be reported to the Environment Agency. Cllr Milner was aware of the matter and had contacted the Environment Agency, who would investigate and had suggested they may apply a revised maintenance schedule.

Cllr Stockdale asked a question, which he had submitted earlier, regarding a recent request made by a third party under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. This was put and an answer given (*A copy of the question and the answer thereto are appended to these minutes.*). Councillors’ attention was drawn to the publicity given to the information by the applicant, who had attempted to denigrate the Council’s international town twinning activities in recent years. There arose a supplementary question as to items of detail in the information, and TC undertook to research these and provide an answer.

### **FC2013/83**

**MEMBERS’ DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:** There were none.

### **FC2013/84**

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** There were none.

### **FC2013/85**

**PRESENTATION:** The Mayor welcomed Garry Collins, Lewes Borough Commander of East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (ESFRS). Mr Collins reported on a recent fatal house fire in Barcombe Mills and explained the Service’s objectives in promoting the avoidance of fires, and the impact fires have on the local community and individual families. There were many vulnerability factors to consider; absence of fire alarm, high fire loading (storage of flammable materials) and causes of fires *eg* candles, cookers, smoking, open fires, heaters and faulty or overloaded electrical circuits. Elderly people living alone could have reduced mobility, be on medication or suffer various impairments. Physical limitations to a property could also increase the risk of loss of life. The ESFRS was working to share information with the most vulnerable to increase awareness of the dangers of fires in

*Continues...*

the home and to increase awareness of action to take in the event of a fire. The Service offer home safety visits which include the installation of smoke alarms and access to a range of other services (mobility, welfare, security etc.) and fire safety guidance

A question and answer session followed, which ranged widely. The Mayor thanked Mr Collins for his interesting and helpful presentation, and it was agreed that members could help promote the ESFRS home visit initiative. Promotional literature would be carried on the public information table in the Town Hall foyer.

FC2013/86

#### **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

a) The Mayor advised Council that Cllr Rudkin had resigned his seat from the Council. She recited his notice, which read:

*"I have now relocated to Australia and I am unable to perform my council duties."*

Members were reminded that this initiated a statutory process: as there were more than six months left of the natural term of office of the administration, and a bye-election must be held if ten Priory Ward electors demand it. Should there be no such demand; Council must co-opt to fill the seat.

The Town Clerk had posted the required public notice of the vacancy, which explained the principle, and invited electors to write to the District Returning Officer to demand a poll. There was no restriction that would prevent Councillors who are Priory electors from making the demand.

The statutory timetable had been discussed with the District Council and gave a deadline for electors to call for a poll of 6<sup>th</sup> February, and an election date of 27<sup>th</sup> March. This would coincide with prospective elections (if called) for vacancies in Seaford and Newhaven, and the count for all this would take place the following day (Friday 28<sup>th</sup> March.)

b) The deadline for nominations for the 2014 Lewes Civic Award was 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014. There were currently four nominations over three categories.

c) The next Councillors' surgery would be on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> February in the Yarrow Room from 10am – 12pm. It was agreed that Cllrs J Lamb and S Murray would attend.

d) The Mayor asked Council to agree an additional free use of Town Hall facilities for a fundraising event in support of her charities. There was some misunderstanding as to the existing mandate for such events and it transpired that there were adequate unspent funds within previously agreed budgets in any event.

FC2013/87

#### **MINUTES:**

Draft minutes of the Council meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> December were considered. Cllr Stockdale raised a question regarding minute FC2013/77 g] – which described an oral report on a meeting of the Finance Working Party which had taken place only two days earlier; on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2013. He stated that he did not recall the level of detail described in the minutes, and asserted that the item was therefore inaccurate. He suggested that the signing of the minutes be held-over to the next meeting whilst accuracy was verified. Several Members dissented from this view, and considered that the minutes represented a correct record. After some debate, it was moved that the minutes be accepted and signed as a correct record. A recorded vote was requested (*results shown in a table appended to these minutes*), and **it was resolved that:**

**FC2013/87.1** The minutes of the Council meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2013 be received and signed as an accurate record.

FC2013/88

#### **WORKING PARTIES AND OUTSIDE BODIES:**

*Members are reminded that anyone who may have attended a meeting of any recognized outside body which had covered issues that deserved attention by the Council, should ensure that TC was aware of this before the meeting, and preferably before the agenda deadline. Reports on all activities of the*

organization are not expected.

a] *Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group 13<sup>th</sup> January 2014*: Cllr S Murray elaborated upon the notes (*copy in minute book*) of this meeting and gave a short oral report, welcoming any questions. It was noted that Cllr Murray had been elected as interim Chairman of the Steering Group, and that members of the Group had begun work on prospective topical strands for the Plan.

**It was resolved that:**

The notes of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group 13<sup>th</sup> January 2014 (*copy in minute book*) are noted.

b] *Finance Working Party*: Cllr M Turner reported that no Government announcement had yet been made in relation to capping parish Council Tax increases in 2014/15, therefore a provisionally-scheduled meeting of the Finance Working Party had been cancelled. This would be convened as soon as an announcement was made, and an additional Council meeting may be called before that scheduled for 27<sup>th</sup> February. TC reported that there appeared to be a lack of consistency of approach to the matter, as Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP had mentioned a prospective *de minimis* threshold of £70pa Council Tax Band 'D' equivalent, whereas Brandon Lewis MP had referred to "£160 to £200" as a likely level. A Parliamentary Committee was scheduled for the following Monday (27<sup>th</sup> Jan), and it was anticipated that an announcement would follow soon afterward.

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2013/88.2.** The report regarding the current situation in respect of Council Tax "capping", and the implications for the Council's 2014/15 precept level, be noted.

c] *Landport Bottom Joint Management Committee 15<sup>th</sup> January 2014* – Cllr S Murray reported that planned tree and shrub clearance had started at Landport Bottom recently, in the woodland area adjoining the A275 road, causing several members of the public to come forward with deep concerns over the effects on the area. There had been significant coverage in the local press, and the District Council's Assistant Parks Manager had suspended the operation. Several people had attended the Joint Management Committee meeting to present a petition, and had been encouraged to ask questions and to express their views. The Committee felt that the importance of this woodland may have been underestimated and had resolved that no further clearance or fencing work would be carried-out in that part of the land, pending a further programme of public consultation. A new Community Ranger had very recently joined the District Council, and he would be asked to develop new proposals for the woodland footpath, arising from that consultation. A "Friends of Landport Bottom" organization had been suggested; an idea which, it was hoped, might find favour with the wider public.

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2013/88.3** The report on the meeting of the Landport Bottom Joint Management Committee 15<sup>th</sup> January 2014 be noted.

d] *Battle of Lewes Action Group Meeting* – Members had been provided a draft copy of The Battle of Lewes Festival programme for May 2014 which detailed events planned during the commemoration. Cllr Chartier reported that a meeting held the previous day had been extremely productive and that the Action Group would now meet monthly until the celebrations in May. The programme was wide and still evolving, but noteworthy events were the performance, in the Town Hall, of the Council's commissioned choral work on 13<sup>th</sup> May, and the medieval mystery play - *The Day of the Battle* - being written and directed by Cllr Turner for performance at three venues across the town on 17<sup>th</sup> May. A question was posed as to whether requests for further funding were anticipated; Cllr Chartier responded that this was always possible, but not in immediate prospect. It was considered that the link between the battle and the principles of democracy now enshrined in bodies such as the Council

were important and should be highlighted, and there were several interesting historical contexts that remained as-yet unexplored – one example being the role played in the events of 1264 by the Bishop of Chichester.

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2013/88.4** The progress of the Battle of Lewes Action Group in coordinating a programme of commemorative events be noted.

**FC2013/89**

#### **CPRE SUSSEX COUNTRYSIDE TRUST “Mayfields” CAMPAIGN:**

Members considered a letter from CPRE Sussex Countryside Trust, regarding a proposed campaign against a proposed new town - the building of up to 10,000 new houses in the countryside between Henfield and Sayers Common in West Sussex – with the provisional name of “Mayfields”.

CPRE had written to ask for support to build up a fighting fund to “defend against Mayfields and other inappropriate development in Sussex and to support local democracy against predatory speculators”. Members expressed various views, and the general feeling was that funds should not be provided, but that a supportive letter might be sent. Members were invited to email any contributions to TC, who would prepare and circulate a draft in due course.

After a short debate **it was resolved that:**

**FC2013/89.1** Lewes Town Council will not make a financial donation to the CPRE Sussex Countryside Trust campaign fund.

**FC2013/90**

#### **PHOENIX CENTRE:**

This item had been deferred from the last Council meeting where a question had been raised on proposals regarding the future of the Centre.

It was reported that East Sussex County Council had announced that, following consultation, it planned to operate services at the Centre without change for the foreseeable future, although it continued to seek a third-party provider to manage it. This was welcomed and noted. Cllrs O’Keeffe and Catlin undertook to keep Members informed of any developments. The Council’s original response to the consultation was rehearsed, and there was no change of opinion: in that change was not vetoed, provided that it was in response to service demands and services remained at the Phoenix Centre.

**FC2013/91**

#### **MAYORALTY 2014/15:**

A proposal was made for a member to serve in the role of Mayor for the 2014/2015 municipal year.

**It was resolved that:**

**FC2012/91.1** Cllr Dr Turner be nominated as Mayor-Elect for the year 2014/2015 municipal year.

**FC2012/91.2** The proposal for Deputy-Mayor Elect for the year 2014/2015 be deferred until the next Full Council Meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2014.

**FC2013/92**

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

a) A new Town Ranger had been appointed. Brian Courage was due to start work on Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014. Seventy applications had been received; seven candidates were shortlisted and six had attended for interview.

b) A meeting had been held with professional Surveyors/project coordinators to discuss the Mallong Community Centre and Town Hall refurbishment programmes. These were recommended by the District Engineer, and would be able to offer a complete service including “mini-tendering” for specialist contractors as required. A

professional assessment of the Malling Community Centre project, by a Quantity Surveyor, had been offered without charge and this had been gratefully accepted as it would facilitate a more refined approach to sources of potential funds.

c) Devolution of assets – development of a Memorandum of Understanding with Lewes District Council was still on hold until the precept capping issue referred-to earlier could be resolved.

d) With regard to the proposed development of the North Street Quarter, the group of residents and organizations discussing matters of flood-defence and improvements to the “urban realm” was due to meet again shortly. This might be linked to the Council’s own working party nominated to discuss the improvements to play equipment and recreation facilities at the Pells, if it was practical to do so.

e) In the ongoing Employment Tribunal claim, a revised statement of the particulars of claim had been received and registered with the Tribunal. A preliminary hearing was scheduled for 24<sup>th</sup> February 2014.

f) The Sussex Archaeological Society (SAS) had provided cost reconciliation for the Christmas ice rink project. Total income from ticket sales was £2,325. 465 tickets were sold (nett of 30 refunds given) and the SAS had staff costs of £386. Anticipated income from a catering concession had not materialized as the operator had found too little custom.

g) Attention was drawn to a Sussex Police initiative regarding email and other fraud.

**FC2013/93**

**NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT:**

a) The next Planning Meeting would be on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> February at 7pm in the Yarrow Room.

b) A Commemorations Working Party would be held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February at 11am in the Yarrow Room.

c) A liaison meeting with the Friends of Lewes would be held on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> February at 11am in the Yarrow Room.

d) The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group would meet on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February at 7pm in the Council Chamber.

e) The next deadline for Grants applications was Friday 24<sup>th</sup> January with the Panel meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> February and making recommendations to Council on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2014.

f) The next Council Meeting was scheduled for Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> February at 7.30pm with the deadline for submissions to the Town Clerk of proposed items for the agenda being 12 noon on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> February.

h) The next Councillors’ drop-in surgery would be held on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> February in the Yarrow Room from 10am – 12pm.

i) Dates were to be confirmed for meetings of the Town Hall Repairs Working Party, Finance (budget) and Pells play equipment Working Parties, Civic Awards Panel, and the All Saints Steering Group. The Lead Member for Communications was asked to consider a meeting of the Communications Working Party to discuss the Council’s newsletter and website.

**FC2013/94**

There being no further business the Mayor declared the meeting closed, and invited those present to join her in the Parlour for refreshments.

*The meeting ended at 9:20pm*

Signed: .....

Date: .....



## Questions received for Council meeting

Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2014



LEWES  
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### **QUESTION RECEIVED:**

Received from Cllr J Stockdale on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2014

*Would it not have been appropriate to send all councillors the information given in response to District Councillor Edmond's Freedom of Information request about the composition and cost to Lewes Town Council of official delegations sent to Blois and Waldsbüt-Tiengen?*

### **ANSWER:**

The Town Clerk responded that this was a subjective decision and as the responsible officer under the Act, he had not done so. He did not see this as a matter of "appropriateness".