



MINUTES

Of the **meeting of Lewes Town Council**,
held on **Thursday 13th December 2018**, in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall**, Lewes at **7:30pm**.

PRESENT Councillors A Ashby; J Baah (*Mayor*); R Burrows; S Catlin (*Wischhusen*); M Chartier; H Jones; J Lamb; I Makepeace; Dr G Mayhew; R Murray; S Murray (*Deputy Mayor*); R O’Keeffe; C Renton; T Rowell and E Watts.

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk*); Mrs E Tingley (*Committee Admin.*)

Observing: Mr B Courage (*Town Ranger*)

Council’s Chaplain, Canon Richard Moatt, offered a few words on the subject of peace.

FC2018/69 QUESTIONS:

There were 10 members of the public present. One statement (*copy appended to these Minutes*) and three emails were read to Council regarding Item 6c) on the Agenda (*Verges Working Party*). One member of the public made an oral statement regarding the same matter and mentioning a lamentable diminution of interest in Nature in modern times. A petition was presented on behalf of Wildflower Lewes, with 475 signatures, which encouraged support for the recommendations of the Verges Working Party.

FC2018/70 DECLARATIONS of INTEREST:

There were none.

FC2018/71 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies had been received from Cllr Milner who was working. There had been no message from Cllrs Barker or Elliott.

It was resolved that:

FC2018/71.1 The reasons submitted for absence from this meeting are noted.

FC2018/72 MAYOR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- a) Council offered thanks to the Lewes Branch of the Royal British Legion, and all the Councillors and staff who took part, for all they did to mark the Armistice centenary; which was particularly memorable.
- b) Thanks were also given to all the staff involved for all their help to make the “Winter of the World” at the All Saints Centre such a successful and poignant event to mark the Armistice.
- c) The Mayor informed Council of the success of her Christmas Party for children in unfavourable circumstances, and hoped this could be repeated next year. Particular thanks were given to Waitrose and ASK Restaurant for their contributions towards the party.
- d) The Mayor informed Members that there would be a Women’s Suffrage Soup Kitchen at the Railway Station on Friday 14th December between 11.00am and 1.00pm.
- e) The Civic Christmas Carol Service would be held at St Anne’s Church on Monday 17th December at 7.00pm.
- f) The Mayor announced that the group behind the establishment of ‘Tingle’s Way’ – a link route of the South Downs Way that will bring users through Lewes – would like two Councillors to accompany them on the inaugural walk in early January. Cllr Makepeace had more detail.

FC2018/73 MINUTES:

It was resolved that:

FC2018/73.1 The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 8th November 2018 are received and signed as an accurate record.

FC2018/74 WORKING PARTIES AND OUTSIDE BODIES:

Members are 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) Verges Maintenance Working Party 15th November 2018: This item was brought forward on the agenda, due to the number of people attending to observe on the subject. The Minutes were presented by Cllr O'Keeffe, as Chair of the Working Party:

Members had welcomed James Newmarch, Senior Asset Engineer at East Sussex County Council (ESCC); Joanna Carter, Chair of Wildflower Lewes (WfL), the community group who had been working with ESCC on distribution of natural species across the town; two members of WfL; Dr John Parry of the Railway Land Wildlife Trust and Kim Dawson, Specialist Advisor (Downland and Reserves) at Lewes District Council.

The Chairman had clarified the purpose of the meeting, which was to discuss the management of wildflower verges as highlighted on the Agenda, not to revisit the matter of cutting frequency. The Town Council had responded to ESCC's offer of a 'menu' and paid for two cuts in 2018/19 in addition to the ESCC default of two, on Lewes town verges except those previously-agreed as 'Wildflower areas'. It was understood that the option of four cuts would not be offered in future as ESCC could not accommodate the complexity of scheduling county-wide.

Mr Newmarch explained the distinctions his section applied to areas generally referred-to as 'Wildflower verges':

Meadow verges were cut once with special attention paid to the after-treatment

Wildlife verges had special considerations both floras and fauna

'Wait-and-see' verges were left to nature

Regardless of status, all verges were maintained so as to ensure clear lines-of-sight for drivers at junctions. He said that the two-cut regime addressed ESCC's biodiversity duties. Species 'baseline surveys' determined the appropriate regime and ESCC held a significant amount of data, gathered by WfL, which indicated 40-50 desirable species were evident in many areas without special management.

WfL members present wished to "let nature back" at all verges. They stated that immediate action was required and that decisions should not "appease those who want a manicured finish". This, it was said, was a matter of educating the public and reference was made to progress on a South Downs-town link to be named "Tingles Way" that would join Egrets Way. Behind these lay a broader eco-tourism initiative. The Railway Land Wildlife Trust was helping to educate the public in a number of ways.

It was commented that there was a significant percentage of the populace who feel that infrequent mowing gave an appearance that the community did not care about its own town. WfL consider that such perceptions can be addressed by media coverage to promote the background and reassure that the environment is not simply being ignored. It was moot that this would not assist with any visitors who might form such an opinion on first entering the town. The perception might be ameliorated if uncut verges exhibited a mown border, to show that there was planned management. Mr Newmarch explained that managed edges *should* be incorporated in the 'two-cut regime', certainly on all larger verges, but that contractors had not been clear as to their instructions. This should now be established practice. It was agreed that the Town Council would be recommended to support the 'two-cut regime', with the proviso that mown edges were maintained, to exhibit positive management and counter perceptions of neglect.

The science regarding the advisability of removing grass cuttings following any mowing of a 'wildflower' verge was said to be "not definitive". It was often considered that leaving the arisings would enrich the soil and hamper the establishment of species and varieties that prefer low nutrient levels. There was, however, long-standing contention to this view in academic circles and it had been demonstrated that there was often little appreciable effect.

There was discussion about desirable species, and WfL promoted the sowing of Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*). WfL thought that they could obtain Yellow Rattle seed from local sources and were prepared to distribute it using their volunteers. It was noted that grants may be available from a number of sources, to assist with any costs. In answer to a question, it was recognized that such a programme would be for agreement between ESCC and WfL. Further advice could be sought from specialists at Kew Royal Botanic Gardens' facility at Wakehurst Place, the Millennium Seed Bank, the largest wild seed conservation project in the world.

Council then held a short debate, in which several Members spoke. Thanks were recorded to Cllr O'Keeffe for her Chairmanship of the Working Party on a difficult and emotionally-charged subject. It was suggested that there was an opportunity to create biodiversity and wildlife corridors and, given climate change, this was not really a matter of choice. Mown edges were important, for the reasons discussed, and there should be education of the public and a period of two years anticipated to properly establish. All Members were exhorted to assist ESCC by monitoring the establishment of wild flowers, reporting encroachment by species such as Rapeseed and Ragwort, and observing that managed edges were maintained.

Consequently, **it was resolved that:**

FC2018/74.1 Lewes Town Council supports a 'two cut regime' for highway verges within the town, with the proviso that mown edges are maintained on larger verges, to exhibit positive management and counter perceptions of neglect, and clear sightlines are maintained at junctions for safety reasons.

b) Commemorations Working Party 13th November 2018: Council considered the minutes of this meeting which were presented by Cllr Chartier, as Chairman:

1) The meeting had welcomed Mr David Scott Cowan and his wife Carol. March 2019 would mark the centenary of the death of the Sussex architect Rowland Hawke Halls, Mr Scott Cowan's grandfather, and he presented an illustrated proposal that this might be an appropriate time to remember an architect who contributed much both to the built environment and to the life of the town. Partly, it was suggested, because he was a fine architect working in the Arts and Crafts tradition, but also to remember him for his love of Sussex: its landscape, its nature, and its people. His houses were built by local builders, and fitted out by local craftsmen. He fostered and valued his relationships with them, and they had responded in kind.

Halls lived all of his life in Sussex, most of it in Lewes and Seaford, and he designed many houses and public buildings, and restored several others.

Many of his houses are on The Avenue – *Rowland's* being a notable example, and several others on the same side of the road. What was considered perhaps his finest building in Lewes is the former Municipal Offices in Fisher Street (No4).

Resources were available within the family and elsewhere, that might make an interesting exhibition, including a large collection of his drawings in the East Sussex Record Office and a family collection of watercolours of Rowland Halls's houses, painted by George Montague Ellwood. These included the house on The Avenue that is now called *Bindons* and *Rowlands*, the "House with the Lych Gate". The family also held many letters written by Halls from the Western Front, many of them remembering the Sussex Downs in the midst of war, and also a long and moving account titled "A Day's Routine in Wartime" which was thought both moving and historically interesting.

Councillors thanked Mr Scott Cowan for his most interesting presentation, and were

happy to support the idea of an exhibition at the Town Hall during 2019; there were also suggestions that the family might engage with Sussex History Society, and perhaps investigate with the Friends of Lewes the possibility of a commemorative plaque for an appropriate building. It was also possible that the Mayor might consider hosting a civic reception to celebrate architecture.

2 *Lewes Light 2018*: Members had considered a report from the organizers which described the festival as a “resounding success”. Visitor numbers were estimated at about 12,000 over the three evenings, and there had been extensive media and social media coverage. The number of designers and artists contributing had been extended, and the team had included contributors not only from Lewes, Seaford, Brighton and London but also Scotland, France, Poland, Ireland, Thailand and Japan. The organizers had worked with young people from Lewes Youth Theatre and Brighton Met College, providing work experience and mentoring.

Councillors were pleased to learn of the success of the Council-supported Festival, and congratulated the organizers. It was noted that they would be interested to see some financial background information in due course and there were comments regarding the duration of road-closures on the three evenings and observations of sparse audiences at times.

3 *International Day of Peace 2019*: It was agreed that the Council Chamber should be provisionally booked for an event on 21st September 2019, as it was understood that local groups who had marked the day in 2017 would be happy to do so again.

4 *Miscellaneous matters*:

- > The recent event at the Depot, commemorating 250 years since Tom Paine arrived in Lewes, had been hailed as a success.
- > Council had received, the previous week, profuse thanks from the Royal Sussex Regimental Association for the commemorative stone tablet mounted in the Town Hall foyer.
- > The *Suffrage to Citizenship* project recognizing 100 years of votes for women would include light-boxes at Town Hall windows, and there were ancillary projects planned with support from Sussex Community Rail Partnership. Two banners, depicting photographs of the twelve female Mayors to date, would be displayed to enhance the entrance to the photograph exhibition in the Baxter corridor. Reeves photography had offered to re-photograph two of these for which no archive copy exists.
- > There was some discussion on National Heritage Open Day, and it was confirmed that the Town Hall and All Saints Centre were included (although not always featured in the Friends of Lewes leaflet). Posters were always mounted outside the premises. In answer to a question; it was confirmed that there was regular use of the organ at All Saints, although other organists would be welcome if they wished to use it; as regular use helped prevent some cumulative damage such as seized or ‘sticky’ valves. Direct approaches should be made to the Manager or Assistant Manager to ascertain availability. A welcome suggestion for enhancing future open days at All Saints was to run the films of Lewes in the 1930’s which had been discovered and digitized a few years ago.
- > Lewes District Council had agreed to ring ‘Gabriel’, the Market Tower bell, during events at the War Memorial to mark the centenaries of the renewal of the WW1 armistice, preceding the 1919 peace treaty.
- > Cllr Mayhew’s research project on Lewes casualties in WW1 was almost concluded and there was currently an exhibition of photographs in the Baxter corridor to accompany lectures in the Council Chamber. To complete the project it was considered that a booklet similar to that produced for the ‘*Our Pictures*’ project, and an online version, would offer a suitable legacy for the project; and this was agreed. The proposed date to complete was the 1922 centenary of the dedication of Lewes War Memorial.

Work was underway to the Magic Circle. A liaison meeting with the Friends of Lewes would be arranged in January.

Special thanks were offered to Cllr Dr Mayhew for his research and exhibition, which had been well-attended. The 'mini-remembrance' events planned to mark the prolongation of the 2018 Armistice were noted.

It was resolved that:

FC2018/74.2 The Minutes of the Commemorations Working Party meeting on 13th November 2018 (*copy in minute book*) are noted.

c) Buildings Working Party 14th November 2018: Council considered the minutes of this meeting;

The meeting had considered the latest position regarding the refurbishment project for **Malling (Bridgeview) Community Centre**.

Building works: Planning consent had been granted a few days before, and the managing agents had suggested an outline timetable:

- > Recommendations of the Working Party could be approved by Council at its meeting on 13th December, which would enable tender documents to be released in mid-January.
- > It was reasonable to allow six weeks for return of tenders which would mean a date in late February 2019. Prices would be held for 90 days, which was the longest duration considered reasonable in the industry.
- > Two weeks would be needed for BLB Surveyors to conduct appraisals and prepare a tender report.
- > The Working party would receive reports by the end of March, which would allow recommendations to Council for its meeting scheduled for 11th April.
- > It was presumed that the successful bidder would be unlikely to start works within four weeks, as a detailed timetable would be required. In any event it was proposed to include a statement in tender documents that the building was required for use as a polling-station on 2nd May.

BLB would meanwhile prepare all standard documents:

Draft JCT Design & Build contract;

'Preliminaries' *eg* Contractor's obligations *inro* times of day for operations/Health & Safety/liquidated damages;

Form of Tender;

Contract Sum analysis;

Employers' requirements (Architects drawings; specification *etc*);

Mechanical; Engineering & Public Services reports *etc**;

Annex of all pre-construction information (survey reports *etc*.)

*The recommended specialists who had prepared other preliminary surveys had proposed their method and costing for the necessary M&E and Asbestos surveys and this was accepted.

Funding: It was believed that elements of the scheme would be eligible for grant from various sources. Advice had been sought and suggestions included:

For the community aspect of the project the Council could apply to BIG Lottery's 'Reaching Communities' and their 'Awards for All' scheme. Grants had been awarded to parishes for projects such as installation of new equipment for teenagers at a local leisure area to encourage behaviour change, increase fitness levels and reduce anti-social behaviour due to boredom. Larger grants were also possible from this source.

Projects submitted under these two programmes have to:

- > Bring people together and build strong relationships in and across communities
- > Improve the places and spaces that matter to communities
- > Enable more people to fulfil their potential by working to address issues at the earliest

possible stage

For the changing/sports facilities, Sport England Community Asset Fund offered grants of up to £50,000.

Low Carbon Across the South East (LOCASE) had been suggested for environmental measures. Grants were up to £20,000, although there were eligibility criteria which would need to be investigated.

Members recognized the importance of researching possible grant support, but appreciated that there would probably remain a shortfall and that borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board was inevitable. Currently, a loan of £300,000 over 25 years would cost approximately £16,000 in repayments each year. Borrowing was not considered inappropriate, as the Reserve funds accumulated to date had been paid-for by past and current taxpayers who had benefitted from the Centre, and loan repayments would be paid by future taxpayers who would enjoy the refurbished building. Members asked TC to begin researching grant sources in earnest, and make preliminary applications/expressions of interest.

Management: The Working Party had been asked by Council to consider options for management of the Malling Community Centre, following refurbishment, and to formulate recommendations. Key considerations were:

- > Redesigned building will introduce new, more flexible, facilities such as café/bar and terrace and two multi-purpose rooms which are attractive for a wider range of users (*eg* business seminars), and will evolve a different, extended, user-profile over time.
- > Adjacent play-area and recreation ground improvements, arising from a major share of >£1million s106 agreement *iro* North Street Quarter (NSQ) development, will increase casual use; especially likely demand for café/bar with terrace and WC's, accessible for users of play area and sports spectators.
- > Local catchment will increase when North Street Quarter is occupied and accessible via proposed new footbridge.
- > Investment of the magnitude estimated means that Council will wish to ensure careful control of the building and proper maintenance of equipment; facilities, décor *etc.* to sustain the benefits for the community over several decades. Some equipment, such as the ground-source heat pump system and café facilities, will not be suitable for unsupervised operation.
- > Despite recent decision by Lewes District Council to withdraw from devolution of the Recreation Ground to the Town Council, this remains a prospect once NSQ is underway or completed.

The options discussed were, in summary:

- a) *Lease to tenant* – A straightforward handing-over of responsibility to a tenant, in return for a rent payment.

Pro: Minimum burden on LTC resources. Financial management is simple, with predictable income.

Con: Choice of appropriate tenant not straightforward. Natural lifecycle of Trusts and community groups tend to wax/wane with leading individuals over relatively short periods of time. Commercial organizations are unlikely to see adequate potential. Failure to reach income necessary for rent cover and maintenance of building and equipment could leave LTC to resume control and deal with outstanding problems. Conversely: in case of successful income generation, maximum benefits not enjoyed by Council.

- b) *Management agreement/license/shared responsibility* – This could suit an appropriately-experienced organization, and could be structured in several ways *eg* low fixed service payment with retention of income; higher fixed payment with LTC retaining all income; income share/collaborative development *etc*

Pro: Minimum burden on LTC resources. Financial management is simple,

with predicable income. Less risk of outright 'failure' of the partner organization.

Con: Choice of appropriate partner not straightforward. Shared responsibility inevitably raises occasional contention.

- c) *Direct Management* – This could be implemented in different ways:
- i) Employment of additional staff exclusively to manage the Centre, either establishing a team at the outset or building incrementally to three staff (as history of All Saints Centre [ASC]).
 - ii) Employment of additional staff to form a 'buildings management team' with existing Town Hall and All Saints Centre staff, where the team flexibly cover all three buildings.
 - iii) Hybrid of i) and ii), with key staff at fixed bases plus itinerant cleaning/security staff.

Pro: Ensures Centre and its facilities are properly cared-for and its potential maximized. All income retained by Council.

Con: Choice of model ii) or iii) disruptive to established effective working at T/hall and ASC. Model iii) does not cover all operating hours as effectively. No particular advantage to ii) as each building has very different operating profile and minimal shared detail. Model i), if a full complement is not immediately employed, leaves much to chance/trust when operating the building without resident staff.

Each option had very different resource implications, and there were many aspects to be considered. There were potential and ancillary issues already known which would affect the Centre and its likely user-profile, both in the foreseeable future and longer-term.

Option b) had been explored in some detail with Wave Leisure; the charitable Trust that had evolved from the original Lewes District Council direct service organization and was now recognised as an award-winning charity, managing leisure facilities for Lewes District Council; Eastbourne Borough Council (from April 2019); East Sussex County Council; Newhaven Town Council; Ringmer Academy and East Grinstead Sports Club, and providing a vast range of activity programmes and outreach initiatives. Wave employs over 300 staff, and has an annual turnover of more than £5million. Supporting over 1 million active customer visits annually, all surplus revenues generated from activities are reinvested back into the community in the form of facility developments and refurbishments, new programmes of activity or outreach initiatives, working across a range of sectors including Sport and Activity, Education, Public Health and Adult Social Care.

Members recognized that the ethos of Wave Leisure was an ideal 'fit' with a Council such as LTC, and that its structure offered significant advantages in terms of experience and resources. They were interested to see detail from a preliminary submission prepared by Wave, which proposed a draft working agreement and showed some financial modelling. Wave would work with Lewes Town Council with the obligation of:

- Operating the site to a high standard.
- Alignment to the Lewes Town Council's objectives.
- Working with the local community to "Inspire Active Lifestyles" and promote the benefits of active living.

The Council and Wave would develop a strategic partnership, and the financial model assumed a no rental/no service fee model. Within the proposal the Council would not be liable for any financial losses or cash shortfalls from operation, and Wave would provide equipment and fittings such as the café. Wave would operate the site as a tenant responsible for fixtures and fittings, and LTC would remain responsible for building fabric and plant.

The agreement would be for ten years, with appropriate break clauses. The draft proposal included two points which Members would wish to amend: they would not agree an option for Wave to underlet the whole agreement, and they suggested a 'ceiling' level of income should be established, beyond which an income share would operate. It was thought likely that such amendments would be acceptable to Wave, and it was agreed that, subject to confirmation of such details, this should be recommended as the preferred option for management of the Centre.

All Saints Centre:

The ASC Manager, Lizzie Zeyfert had attended for this item, and gave an overview of prospective works at the Centre:

There was a small water leak towards the front of the stage and some render had degraded. This was being investigated and would require scaffolding.

Stained-glass window panels, whilst still weatherproof, would soon require remedial work to address age-related deterioration of the lead frameworks.

Soakaway drains caused some recurrent problems, and these may need attention next year.

It was proposed that a full survey of the building should be commissioned next year.

Council then held a short debate, and it was noted that Members would like to see more detail of alternative prospects for management of Mallig Community Centre.

It was resolved that:

FC2018/74.3 Lewes Town Council notes the work of the meeting of the Buildings Working Party on 14th November 2018 and agrees the principles and recommendations put forward, *except* the Working Party is asked to continue to investigate alternative management models and potential management partners/contractors for Mallig (Bridgeview) Community Centre, and to report further on that aspect in due course.

d) Communications Working Party 22nd November 2018: Council considered the minutes of this meeting which were presented by Cllr S Murray as Chairman:

The Council's new website was projected on screen and the present position with regard to 'snagging' items and outstanding content was reviewed. TC explained that there were technical issues regarding the operation of visual 'buttons' designed to allow visitors to sign-up to mailing lists, and also to the "Contact Us" page which should accept e-mail messages and forward them to the Council's Reception address. The contractors were actively engaged with the Council's IT services and broadband providers to resolve these, which appeared to relate to transmission security protocols.

Documents related to past meetings of Working Parties *etc* were systematically posted and cross-linked to appropriate reference pages, and enhancement of some entries was undertaken as opportunities arose. Documents and information required by law were in place, and appearance and functionality would be improved in due course.

Cllr Makepeace expressed dissatisfaction with the site, and suggested that it should more closely emulate one of the parish council sites originally viewed as a reference. It also did not offer many features which she felt were essential. It was explained that the design and appearance had been presented to the Working Party and approved in February. Members had been given ample opportunity then to present ideas for content, and many entries now being suggested were, in fact, already in place.

There followed a lengthy discussion as to possible future content, and it was acknowledged that the site was flexible and could accommodate many of the suggestions in due course. They could not, however, be described as essential and accorded priority over other Council projects.

It was noted that the 'Community links' entries on the old website had evolved over years as local groups and organizations had asked to be featured and provided details, and it was likely that the same pattern would be seen with the new site. Some of the suggestions being made were good ideas that could ultimately enrich and enliven the site,

but some would involve unacceptable prominence of other bodies' affairs.

A graphic design was in-hand to depict the financial structure of the Council, although the figures for 2019/20 would soon be agreed. New Ward boundaries were established with effect from May 2019, and new page designs would be needed to reflect these.

Cllr Makepeace proposed that staff resources should be deployed to develop the site and social media activities far more quickly. It was recalled that the suggestion of dedicated staff had been considered as recently as the last meeting and not agreed by the majority. TC again described the priority of the website as being relatively low in the context of the Council's planned activities and other factors. Other Members considered that there was an attractive and functioning site, which should soon move on from technical snags. They felt that deadlines were impractical, and enhancements and additions could await the normal course of business.

There followed a brief discussion on the responsiveness of local newspapers to occasional press-releases, and the function of the *Mailchimp* feature in distributing newsletter material.

Council received these Minutes, and Cllr Catlin called for recognition that there were nine members of the Working Party, and 'credit' for the new website should not be attributed to any one, as had been described in a recent party political leaflet.

It was resolved that:

FC2018/74.4 The Minutes and conclusions arising from the Communications Working Party meeting on 22nd November 2018 (*copy in minute book*) are noted.

e) Finance Working Party 27th November 2018 : Council considered the minutes of this meeting; presented by the Chairman: Cllr Chartier:

In the year of introduction (2013/14) of the Government's Council Tax Reduction Support Grant (CTRSG) scheme to offset government changes to calculation factors, Lewes District Council (LDC) had passed-on the whole amount which had been sufficient to maintain the Town Council's "band 'D' equivalent" precept unchanged. However; this grant had reduced significantly each year and was to reduce from the current year by an as-yet unknown value for 2019/20. The Town Council (LTC) therefore faced an enforced increase to precept to simply maintain budgeted nett expenditure at the prevailing level. TC advised that whilst parishes would normally have received specific figures from LDC by this point, he was able to make an informed estimate of the likely sum by reference to LDC reports in the public domain.

2 The Working Party considered the service budget estimates for 2019/20. Alongside the Council's financial systems generally ("a model of good practice..."), the assumptions and basic principles and the process of compiling the recommended budget had again been commended by the Council's independent Internal Auditor (IA) during a recent inspection.

3 It was acknowledged that there was a continuing need to address the proper maintenance of the Council's physical assets and adequately fund continuing services and to continue the restoration of the General Fund with further allocation of precept. Building and engineering works were of particular concern in this regard, as the Council's assets had all been taken-on with considerable historic dilapidation, and contexts such as heritage listing status. Also; applications for grant from community organizations continued to increase in number and value as other sources, such as principal councils, diminished.

4 With these issues in mind, Councillors considered the draft annual plan; proposed contributions to reserves, and operational requirements, in detail.

The draft budgets presented took account of:

- Provision for known/anticipated increases in public Utility supplies, NNDR *etc.*
- Adjustments for completed and imminent (previously-approved) projects.
- Provision for elements identified in the Council's forward plan.

- Appropriate reserves for agreed/anticipated projects.
- Provision for anticipated increases in insurance and other overhead costs *etc.*
- Provision for known increase in employers' pension and NI contributions.
- Refinement of overhead allocation to services and base service cost estimates.
- Recognition of anticipated adjustment to salaries (a national agreement had been reached through the local government joint negotiating body the previous year, covering both 2018/19 and 2019/20).
- Provision for known and anticipated increases in cost of contracted services.
- Provision for increased small grants fund, to recognize the increasing number of applications received.
- Re-establishment of exhausted reserves and continuation of prudent contributions.
- Provision for costs of assets or services acquired through devolution.
- Fees & charges tariff increase of 5% proposed, rounded to an appropriate value for the service concerned.

5 The draft budget combined specific amounts for known costs and committed project items, with prudent allowances for reserves, and provided for a flexible response to unforeseen issues. The Council's forward plan was considered, and it was understood that this was as expansive as could be practically undertaken.

6 Members of the working party were keen to make prudent estimates and maintain some flexibility in the budget, although concerned to keep increases within reasonable limits. Provision was made for all 'unavoidable' increases to give a base value, and live modelling of various options was conducted throughout the meeting with the implications and overall impact carefully assessed at each point. Borrowing was also considered, available through the Public Works Loans Board, but not considered appropriate at this time.

7 The budget finally arrived-at for recommendation to Council was agreed unanimously, and resulted in a precept requirement of £1,097,216. This represents an increase on the current year of 5.88%, with the actual cost to a Band 'D' household rising to £178.18 per year. This equates to an extra 19 pence per week

Council then held a short debate in which it was repeated that details had been carefully considered before formulating the recommendations, and a number of comments were passed regarding the need for adequate funding of the Council's activities and services, and proper maintenance of substantial assets.

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

FC2018/74.5 The Minutes and recommendations of the Finance Working Party (27th November 2018) (*copy in minute book*) are noted and agreed.

FC2018/74.6 Fees and Charges for Council facilities and services be increased by 5% (rounded to an appropriate value for the service concerned) from 1st April 2019

FC2018/74.7 Budgets for estimated operational service expenditure and income and contributions to financial Reserves for the 2019/20 financial year; recommended by the Finance Working Party following its meeting on 27th November 2018 (*Copies in minute book*), be approved.

FC2018/74.8 The total sum to be raised by precept on council tax for 2019/20 be set at £1,097,216 when anticipated Council Tax Support Grant of £29,221 is accounted-for.

FC2017/74.9 The Council Plan for major areas of work or projects in 2019/20 (*Copy in minute book*) proposed by the Finance Working Party following its meeting on 27th November 2018, is approved.

f) Diversity Working Party 29th November 2018: Members considered the minutes of this meeting, presented by Cllr Catlin as Chairman:

Members attention had been drawn to report FC010/2017 (*copy in minute book*) which outlined the Council's duties regarding Equality. They were reminded that Council had addressed its responsibilities under the Equalities Act and observed relevant principles in

all that it does. The report (appended to the agenda) had been received by Council in November 2011; formally accepted, and was a matter of public record. Unlike principal authorities, a Parish Council was not required to publish a formal diversity policy. It was bound by the general Public Sector Equality Duty (*s149 Equality Act 2010*) and that was believed to be accommodated by a clear decision-making process and the formal recording of such. No ‘statement’ was required, but Members should remain mindful of responsibilities when addressing matters put before Council. Extant policies included a published Statement of Community Engagement, and an Equal Opportunities Statement used in employment matters, which was consistent with all legal requirements in that regard. It was acknowledged that the Statement of Community Engagement, which defined the ‘Community’ as everyone (*ie* wholly inclusive), was in need of updating and could be amended to refer to the nine ‘protected characteristics’ defined in the Act.

2 Training had been provided by a local government specialist from the South East Employers organization, although some members considered that as this was largely in the context of employment it had not fully addressed their needs. It was understood that training was available in other aspects of Equality & Diversity, and Members undertook to provide examples of any with which they were familiar.

3 It was stated that Lewes had a “large and diverse community” and that some were “unhappy that [the Council] does not have a policy”. This was not clarified, but another suggested the community should be surveyed and results monitored. This was considered vague, and specific ideas were promoted such as encouraging grant applications from groups with ‘protected characteristics’. It was contended that this could result in conflict and complaints and was inadvisable.

4 The discussion moved into the area of policies for room-hire, and the recent issue of perceived racism at a Bonfire Council costume competition held in the Town Hall. The question was posed whether ‘best practice’ room rental models could be separated from policy related to users/attendees. It was recognized that such matters could spark a community-wide debate and that dealing with issues around Bonfire was nuanced and difficult. A member of the public attending, Scott Durairaj, was invited to contribute and warned that “the offence should not be minimized”. This was, he said, “not just about Bonfire – but about the 21st Century. Other Bonfire Societies do not colour their skin”. It had been anticipated that members would have researched examples of policies from elsewhere, but none were presented. TC had consulted the national e-group for Clerks of larger parishes, but the few examples resulting had all been similar to LTC’s own existing employment-related and community engagement statements.

5 Some suggestions promoted community workshops or outreach activity, and all were reminded that the function of an elected Councillor was to engage with their community at first-hand and to bring forward hopes/fears/aspirations/needs *etc* in a form that could be considered and decided by Council. One suggested that all members and staff should undergo anti-racism training. Mr Durairaj cautioned that “engagement with minority politics is problematic as minorities are intrinsically silent”, and that policies should cover all prejudice, not simply racism. Suggestions were advanced for training, and TC advised that all should be detailed to allow proper consideration following procurement rules.

It was recommended that Council opens a dialogue with the community, addressing the need to eliminate prejudice & discrimination and to promote understanding between the people of Lewes, especially those having protected characteristics. The Working Party would meet again, preferably in January.

It was resolved that:

FC2018/74.10 The Minutes and recommendations arising from the meeting of the Diversity Working Party on 29th November 2018 (*copy in minute book*) are agreed.

g) Grants Panel 5th December 2018: Members considered report FC014/2018 (*copy in minute book*) containing recommendations for payments of grants for the third cycle (of four) for the year 2018/19 and **it was resolved that:**

FC2018/74.11 The grant payments recommended in report FC014/2018 (as shown in column **G** of the appended table) be approved.

h) Sussex Community Rail Partnership: Cllr Catlin gave a brief oral report on this: Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) had held a Stakeholder forum on November 9th to present their plans for substitute services during a nine day suspension of service from 16th – 24th February 2019. During this period there would be no Brighton Main Line service to London or from Lewes-London; however the East Coastway service would run. Brighton-London services would run via Littlehampton with replacement buses to Three Bridges as well as East Grinstead and Uckfield. Southern tickets would also be valid on Southeastern trains from Hastings particularly for passengers from Glynde, Berwick, Hampden Park and Eastbourne. The work was being carried out now as in the previous 5 years GTR had not been given enough money from Central Government to carry out the work on the Brighton Main Line. The railway operator believed it to be more expedient to have a 9 day closure when rail travel is 10% lighter due to the half term holiday, than 84 weekends if the work were to be confined to this more traditional work pattern. Southern had announced a further period of closure of the lines west of Polegate, the Seaford branch, and in all directions from Lewes including Cooksbridge and Polegate for signalling engineering. During this period the 37 year old signalling service at Haywards Heath would stop and signal boxes at Lewes and other locations would be closed and decommissioned. This would be in March 2019. The re-signalling would enable a more intensive service to be provided on the section south of Balcombe, where the four track main line becomes only double track, and a more intensive service on the Seaford branch.

It was resolved that:

FC2018/74.12 The oral report on the Sussex Community Rail Partnership is noted.

FC2018/75

UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABILITY GOALS:

A motion (*NOM007/2018*) (*copy in minute book*) was presented that asked the Council to note the UN Sustainable Development goals, which are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. It was recognised that achievement of the goals requires action at all levels from the international to the local, from organisations to individuals and from national government to parishes.

It asked Council to establish a working party with three main purposes:-

A To assess the current activities of the Town Council against the 17 over-arching goals, as well as their sub-categories, to establish what we are doing to help bring about the goals.

B To look at what further activities the Town Council might promote that would enable Lewes to make its contribution towards achieving the goals.

C To create a snapshot report against which all future activities can be measured.

The goals are:

1: No poverty

"End poverty in all its forms everywhere."

2: Zero hunger

"[End hunger](#), achieve [food security](#) and improved nutrition, and promote [sustainable agriculture](#)"

3: Good health and well-being for people

"Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages."

4: Quality education

"Ensure [inclusive](#) and [equitable](#) quality education and promote [lifelong learning](#) opportunities for all."

5: Gender equality

"Achieve [gender equality](#) and [empower](#) all women and girls."

6: Clean water and sanitation

"Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all."

7: Affordable and clean energy

"Ensure access to affordable, reliable, [sustainable](#) and modern energy for all."

8. Decent work and economic growth "Promote sustained, inclusive and [sustainable economic growth](#), full and productive employment and [decent work](#) for all."

9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

"Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster [innovation](#)".

10: Reducing inequalities

"Reduce income [inequality](#) within and among countries."

11: Sustainable cities and communities

"Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable."

12: Responsible consumption and production

"Ensure [sustainable consumption](#) and production patterns."

13: Climate action

"Take urgent action to combat [climate change](#) and its impacts by regulating [emissions](#) and promoting developments in [renewable energy](#)."

14: Life below water

"Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development."

15: Life on land

"Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial [ecosystems](#), sustainably manage forests, combat [desertification](#), and halt and reverse [land degradation](#) and halt [biodiversity](#) loss."

16: Peace, justice and strong institutions

"Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for [sustainable development](#), provide [access to justice](#) for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels."

17: Partnerships for the goals

"Strengthen the means of implementation & revitalize the global partnership for [sustainable development](#)."

It was resolved that:

FC2018/75.1 A Working Party be established with three main purposes:-

- A To assess the current activities of the Town Council against the 17 over-arching United Nations Sustainability Goals, as well as their sub-categories, to establish what we are doing to help bring about the goals.
- B To look at what further activities the Town Council might promote that would enable Lewes to make its contribution towards achieving the goals.
- C To create a snapshot report against which all future activities can be measured.

FC2018/75.2 The Working Party shall consist of Cllrs A Ashby, J Baah, I Makepeace, R Murray and S Murray. Any members who were not present at the meeting (Cllrs Barker; Elliott, or Milner) would be invited to join this Working Party if they so wished.

FC2018/76

LOCAL INTERNET FORUM:

Members considered a Motion (*NOM008/2018*) (*copy in minute book*) that proposed the Council make a statement regarding recent posts on the local website Lewes Forum

It was stated that at approximately 10:00pm on Saturday 1st December, on the Lewes Forum website (www.lewes.co.uk/forum) a question was posted under the title "Christmas Lists" asking for ideas for gifts. Immediately two replies were posted which both made unmistakable references to Holocaust events in the most offensive terms. It was acknowledged that these were removed shortly after the site operator was informed, at around 11:00am the next morning, but nonetheless this blatantly anti-semitic material was in the public domain for over twelve hours.

The webmaster of the site had submitted a statement for Members' consideration (*appended to these Minutes*) in which it was explained that registration had now been

introduced, with a much more rigorous monitoring system, and overnight postings were now prohibited

A debate followed, to which several Members contributed. It was said that the site often contained a number of ‘disturbing’ posts, and suggested that the anonymity of published items still meant that subjects could not see who was posting items about them, and the point of illegality had to be reached before the measures took effect. There was general support for the motion and a recorded vote was requested (*appended to these Minutes*); consequently **it was resolved that:**

FC2018/76.1 Lewes Town Council condemns in the strongest possible terms the recent posting of abhorrent anti-semitic material on the local website Lewes Forum. It calls upon the Forum operators to introduce much stronger editorial controls to prevent personal abuse and hate speech and to assist in any investigation by providing technical details to appropriate authorities.

FC2018/77 UPDATE ON MATTERS IN PROGRESS

- a) *Annual Plan update:* Item 10 – costs for updating/upgrading the office computer system were being reviewed and a report would be brought to Council.
- b) *Pells play equipment:* the new multi-play unit was in place, and it was noted that the fabric roof element was supplied in error by the manufacturer and would be replaced by the correct wooden structure, although this was unlikely before February.
- c) *Neighbourhood Plan:* Ian Linton, Chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, reported that the Examiner had concluded his work and it was anticipated that his report would be submitted to the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) shortly. This would result in final revisions to the Plan, to accommodate the points or requirements raised, and then presentation to the SDNPA with recommendation that it move to a public referendum. A provisional referendum date had been set as 7th March 2019. SDNPA were responsible for that stage in the statutory process, but the Steering Group would be convened and asked to enhance whatever publicity was used by the Authority, to promote a ‘healthy’ turnout.
- d) *Handrails, DeMontfort Rd:* These had, unexpectedly, been installed recently by ESCC.

FC2018/78 NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT

- a) *Members were asked to consider items, arising from this meeting, worthy of a Press Release, and indicated:*
 - Precept
 - UN sustainability goals resolution
 - Web forum resolution
 - Handrail at Bradford Road and DeMontfort Road

Dates to note were given as:

- a) *Office closure for Christmas period 2018* – The Town Hall offices would be closed between 12.30pm Friday 21st December and 9:00am Wednesday 2nd January.
- b) The next Members’ Surgery was scheduled for Tuesday 8th January – 10:00am – 12:00pm in the Corn Exchange. Cllr R Murray would attend.
- c) The next Planning Committee would take place on Tuesday 15th January at 7:00pm
- d) The next Audit Panel quarterly meeting would be on Tuesday 22nd January at 7:00 pm in the Yarrow Room
- e) The next Council meeting would take place on Thursday 24th January at 7:30pm, with a deadline for agenda items to reach TC by noon on Monday 14th January
- f) Meetings to be arranged were Diversity Working Party, UN Sustainability Working Party and Buildings Working Party.

There being no further business the Mayor closed the meeting.

The meeting ended at 9:35 pm

Signed:

Date:

Statement

received for Council meeting Thursday 13th December 2018



LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL

Re AGENDA ITEM 6c – (*Minutes of Highway Verges Working Party 15th November 2018 – page 17*)

Statement by the Chairman of Houndean Residents Association

Ref. LTC Council Meeting 13th December 2018, Item 6c

On a matter of democratic deficit, and having read the minutes of the LTC Verges Working Party of 15th November 2018 HRA wishes to raise a concern about the status of Wildflower Lewes as consultants to ESCC and its perceived influence on certain LTC matters. Specifically that two leading members of Wildflower Lewes are on the LTC Verges Working Party and appear to be driving LTC policy in this area without a mandate to do so. We note that Wildflower Lewes is an unelected and possibly unregistered body. We assume it is well meaning and may have some public sympathy in the Lewes area, but we must point out that these aims appear in places to be at odds with the wishes of local residents.

For instance, on Brighton Road there has for two years now been a road safety concern at the exit from Southdown Avenue and to a lesser extent from Houndean Rise that visibility is seriously impeded as the roadside grass and tall weeds grow on the high banks. We have tried on numerous occasions to engage ESCC and WFL on this but all we get back is that "sight lines" will be cut. Believe me this approach just does not work in these locations because these cuts do not continue up onto the high banks. What we need is clear *lines of sight* so that we can determine if the Brighton Road is clear or not before pulling out in our vehicles.

Then there is the issue of the unkempt roadsides on the main entrance to our county town of Lewes from Brighton. A straw poll of our residents so far shows a split between two and four cuts per year, while accepting the wildflower test areas as at present. However, whilst we appreciate public budgets are becoming strained everywhere, most respondents request at least some extra cutting to alleviate our road safety problem, and also to restore some civic pride in the county town of Lewes, as the town becomes more and more reliant economically on visitors and tourism.

Ian Linton

Chair – Houndean Residents Association

*Representing residents in Houndean Rise, Southdown Avenue, Houndean Close, Downside and Houndean Bottom
13 December 2018*

Statement

received for Council meeting Thursday 13th December 2018



LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL

Re AGENDA ITEM 8 – (NOM008/2018 – page 29)

Dear Town Council,

I understand a motion has been put down for your meeting on Thursday evening concerning a posting on the forum on the website, Lewes.co.uk. I consider this a most serious matter, a grave abuse of a much used and valued part of our local media, and I would like to share with you action being taken to prevent any recurrence.

Lewes.co.uk is a general news and information website freely available to the public since being created and launched in 2004. The website is funded by advertising but it is intended primarily as a service to the town, a facility for all residents to find out about local events, jobs, accommodation, local businesses and to discuss matters of public interest.

The website includes a forum which allows people to bring up topics for discussion, covering a wide range of issues from Christmas lights to parking, lost pets to local teams etc. These forums, by their very nature, often includes issues that provoke opposing opinions, and they provide a platform for people to openly share views and perhaps achieve compromises, solutions, or at least understanding of others viewpoints. We are proud of this facility.

On occasion, of course, emotions rise and from time to time contributors become frustrated and may become hostile and abusive. All the forums are, of course, subject to moderation and on the rare occasion when it becomes necessary, a moderator will intervene to remove inappropriate posts and ot threads and possibly ban posters from contributing further.

On the evening of Saturday December 1st a thread was started entitled ‘What’s on your Christmas List this year? I’m looking for ideas’ This thread did not initially appear of concern, but subsequently two posts were entered which were truly appalling, containing racially hateful statements. I was alerted to these postings the following morning and they were immediately deleted for contravening terms and conditions of use. In addition, the individual who wrote the posts was immediately banned from further use of the forum.

It is very much regretted that the individual wrote these posts at the time, when on this occasion the moderator was not on duty.

Sadly the free and easy open access thus far enjoyed by users of this forum must now be curtailed to some degree and so a mandatory and verifiable login system was implemented within 24 hours of the offending posting. A much more rigorous monitoring system has also been introduced and overnight postings have been prohibited.

This new system means that anyone contributing to the Lewes Forum from the day after these posts were added is required to supply a valid email address which then has to be verified before they can start or respond to a thread. This also means that all posters are now traceable via their email address which will undoubtedly go a long way to deterring those tempted to put up spurious and offensive posts.

This oversight system has become the industry standard online as all operators and service providers find the best way to manage what remains a new media. To some extent, the freedom of expression has been curtailed, which is perhaps a loss, and there has been an increased burden on our limited resources. However, we are confident this will result in a more pleasant, if less active, environment for our many supporters in the town.

I hope the above will reassure members ahead of your consideration of the motion tabled by Councillor Catlin. While I am in complete agreement with the views expressed regarding the appalling post, I hope you will not in any way confuse this with the contribution of this website and forum, and I hope you will approve of the measures already taken to prevent recurrence. Please let me know if you have further concerns.

Finally, I would hope that the motion might be considered unnecessary since I believe the very last thing we should all do is give the perpetrator the one thing they most certainly desire, a public audience. In this case, actions speak louder than words.

Yours Faithfully

Webbo

The webmaster of Lewes.co.uk



VOTING RECORD SHEET

MEETING of: Council

date: Thursday 13th December 2018



**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

Please note: this is a record of voting *where this has been requested* under Standing Order 1(s) [following provisions of Local Government Act 1972 Sch12 p13 (2)]

✓ = Indicated "For" ✘ = Indicated "Against" C = Chairman's casting (supplementary) vote A = Abstained NP = Not Present NV = not voting		<i>Green</i>	<i>LD</i>	<i>Ind Green</i>	<i>LD</i>	<i>Ind</i>	<i>LD</i>	<i>LD</i>	<i>Ind</i>	<i>LD</i>	<i>Green</i>	<i>Ind</i>	<i>LD</i>	<i>Ind Green</i>	<i>Ind Green</i>	<i>Ind</i>	<i>Green</i>	<i>Green</i>	<i>Green</i>					
Agenda item	MOTION or AMENDMENT VOTED UPON	ASHBY	BAAH	BARKER	BURROWS	CATLIN	CHARTIER	ELLIOTT	JONES	LAMB	MAKEPEACE	MAYHEW	MILNER	MURRAY R	MURRAY S	O'KEEFE	RENTON	ROWELL	WATTS	No. FOR	No. AGAINST	No. Abstentions	Not Present or Not Voting	CARRIED ? Yes/No
8	NOM008/2018 as amended <i>iro</i> comments re internet forum posting	✓	✓	NP	✓	✓	✓	NP	✓	✓	✓	✓	NP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	15	0	0	3	Y