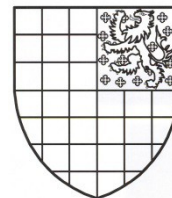


Town Hall
High Street
Lewes
East Sussex
BN7 2QS

☎ 01273 471469 Fax: 01273 480919

✉ townclerk@lewes-tc.gov.uk

🌐 www.lewes-tc.gov.uk



**LEWES
TOWN
COUNCIL**

To All Members of Lewes Town Council

A Meeting of **Lewes Town Council** will be held online* on **Thursday 14th May 2020**, at **7:30pm** which you are summoned to attend.

***VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE:** This meeting can be joined using computer video and audio using any suitably equipped digital device (eg laptop; tablet or smartphone) or, by audio only, using a telephone.

To join this meeting either follow this link: <https://zoom.us/j/92665824122>

Or telephone 0131 460 1196 or +44 (0)330 088 5830. Use **Meeting ID: 926 6582 4122**

***Please also see the note below regarding password-controlled access to this online meeting**

S Brigden, Town Clerk 7th May 2020

AGENDA

1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTION and MEETING PROTOCOL

2. QUESTION TIME

To consider any questions received regarding items on the agenda for this meeting.

3. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

To note any declarations of personal or prejudicial interest in items to be considered at this meeting.

4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To consider apologies tendered by Members unable to attend the meeting.

5. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

To receive any announcements from the Mayor.

6. COVID-19 EMERGENCY MEASURES

To consider Councillors' duties & roles; and governance amendments (*Report FC001/2020 attached page 3*)

7. MINUTES

To agree Minutes of the Council meeting held on 27th February 2020.

(attached page 6)

8. WORKING PARTIES & OUTSIDE BODIES

To consider matters arising from working parties; members serving on outside bodies *etc.*

a) *Audit Panel 11th March 2020*

(Minutes attached page 13)

b) *Personnel Panel 24th April 2020*

(Minutes attached page 15)

9. STATUTORY AUDIT Year ended 31st March 2020

To note Covid-19 emergency provisions and the Council's position (*Report FC002/2020 attached page 17*)

10. UPDATE ON MATTERS IN PROGRESS

(Q&A)

11. NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT

(oral report by Town Clerk)

For further information about items on this agenda please contact the Town Clerk BYE-MAIL at the above address

PUBLIC ATTENDANCE – Covid-19 emergency arrangements:

Members of the public have the right, and are welcome, to attend* this meeting of the Council – questions regarding items on the agenda may be heard at the start of the meeting with the Mayor's consent.

Questions or requests to address the Council must be submitted by email to the Town Clerk at least 3 days in advance.

This meeting will be held online via Zoom Pro video link. To join the meeting follow the instructions above.

***Members of the public wishing to join this meeting must request a password by email at least 24 hours before the published start time. Please submit your request to townclerk@lewes-tc.gov.uk**

For guidance on joining online meetings please see the notes overleaf

Guidance on attending ‘virtual meetings’



Joining a meeting:

1. Invitations to COUNCILLORS and officers to join a virtual meeting of the Council; a committee, or Working Party will be included in an email accompanying the agenda, and will look similar to this (*example only*):

Lewes Town Council is inviting you to a meeting of ??????????????????

To join the meeting, use this **link**: zoom.us/j/99590643212?pwd=bTdvYnVZSWIzdzlIL1p

Meeting ID: 995 9064 3212

Password: 003091

OR dial by your location

+44 (0)131 460 1196 United Kingdom or +44 (0)330 088 5830 United Kingdom

The link (but not the password) will be also repeated at the head of the Agenda and can be accessed from either. The **password** should not be shared, as PUBLIC attendees will be asked to request a password by email at least 24hrs before the scheduled start.

2. Using a digital device with camera and microphone (*eg* laptop; tablet, smartphone), access can be gained by following the link. If audio-only is preferred (or problems interfere with video connection), telephone connection can be made using either of the numbers and following the prompts. Meeting ID and Password may be required dependent upon your chosen method.
3. If using computer audio and video a screen will open, similar to this:

Launching...

Please click **Open Zoom Meetings** if you see the system dialog.

If nothing prompts from browser, [click here](#) to launch the meeting, or [download & run Zoom](#).

If you cannot download or run the application, [join from your browser](#).

4. If you cannot download the application (or choose not to), or cannot run it, you may join from your internet browser by selecting that option.
5. On first connecting with the meeting you will be admitted to a virtual **Waiting Room**. Please follow any prompts, whether on-screen or audible. Attendees will be admitted once the meeting starts and what you see or hear after entry to the meeting may depend upon the equipment you are using.
6. To begin each meeting, the Chair will introduce some **meeting protocols** and all those attending will have live audio connections but will be asked to ‘mute’ their microphone when not speaking. Those wishing to speak will be asked to indicate by raising their hand and they will be invited to do so by the Chair. The Chair can mute all attendees and selectively unmute individual speakers if there are interruptions or background noise issues.
7. While it is possible to use on-screen options to signify **voting** this will NOT be used. Should a vote be called during any meeting the Chair will ask Members to signify by raising their hand or, if there are any voting members attending by audio only, asking each in turn to voice their vote or abstention.
8. Attendees can send short **‘Chat’ messages** to one another privately during the meeting.
9. Meetings will be recorded, but records kept only until the Minutes have been subsequently validated.

PLEASE NOTE:

Before connecting, it is good practice to ensure that your equipment is adequately charged; that you will not be interrupted, and that your camera’s field of view or microphone do not capture anything you would prefer is not seen/heard publicly. Functions will be available once you have entered the meeting to alter the background, and your camera and microphone can be muted at will.

Please also ensure that other equipment nearby does not introduce audio ‘feedback’; that background noise is minimal, and that you select appropriate levels of microphone sensitivity and speaker volume on your device.

To learn more, a number of helpful FAQ’s and video tutorials are available at www.zoom.us

Agenda Item No: 6 **Report No:** FC001/2020
Report Title: Covid-19 emergency measures – effects on Council’s governance.
Report To: Council **Date:** 14th May 2020
Report By: S Brigden, Town Clerk

Purpose of Report: To apprise Members of the Council’s position and effects on governance with regard to emergency legislation established in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Recommendation(s):

1 That the schedule of recommendations in this report be resolved

Information:

1. The *Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020* (which can be found [here](#)) are emergency Regulations which have effect for a temporary period up to and including 6 May 2021. They apply to meetings of specified bodies including Parish Councils and operate by temporary modification or disapplication of several statutes. The Regulations override existing Standing Orders and, as they are temporary, amendment to affected sections of adopted SO’s is not required; a simple formal acknowledgement is sufficient. In summary, where applicable to parish councils, they:
 - Make emergency provision allowing remote attendance by Members and clarify public and press access. (*Regulation 5*). This is the main regulation that covers the holding of meetings without requiring Members to be physically present in a room. The ‘place’ at which the meeting is held may be a ‘virtual’ location (*eg* a web address or a telephone number.)
 - Remove the requirement for a parish council to hold an Annual Meeting (traditionally, “Mayor-making” at LewesTC) in May 2020. (*Regulation 6(c)*)
 - Carry, by default, the current appointment of chairman on until the Annual Meeting in May 2021, although councils may elect a chairman at earlier meeting should they wish to. (*Regulation 4 (2)*) this allows appointments normally made at an annual meeting to be continued until the next annual meeting or until such time as the authority determines. This cover the Chair (Mayor) as well as any Deputy (where appointed) and committee appointments *etc*.
 - Modify the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 allowing for remote attendance by the press and public. (*Regulation 13*)
2. The relaxation, by these Regulations, of certain requirements is designed to alleviate administrative burdens on local councils and maintain continuity and consistency during the difficulties. The emerging picture nationally is one where most Councils are resolving to roll everything (Chairmanship; Committee appointments *etc*) over for a year or until post-crisis stability can be fully assessed.
3. The simple options for LTC in this regard are:
 - a. Hold the election for Mayor and appointment of Deputy and other business as normal.
Points to consider: No definable benefit at the present time. Councillors elected/appointed will not enjoy the usual introduction and support in their roles and most, if not all, ‘civic’ activity is constrained or prohibited at present. It appears likely that the first half of the municipal year, as a minimum, will be conducted in an environment of restrictions and practical obstacles. In terms of civic activity, most third-party events which would have taken place in Summer and Autumn are unlikely to be simply rescheduled and will not happen in 2020.

- b. Adopt the default position created by the Regulations and continue existing elections; appointments, and duties until May 2021, by when normal rules are expected to be reinstated.

Points to consider: This represents continuity and consistency - everyone simply continues in familiar roles for a further year with only practical constraints to accommodate. Individual Councillors may have wished to step-down or otherwise alter their current role although, given the cessation of civic activity and likelihood of a very slow re-start, this does not represent the usual burden to the incumbents. An incoming Mayor and Deputy Mayor will not have the usual introduction and support in their roles and most, if not all, civic activity is constrained or prohibited at present. It appears likely that the first half of the municipal year, as a minimum, will be conducted in an environment of restrictions and practical obstacles.

NB: If adopted, this position may be revisited at any point during the year, as provided in Regulation 4(2). This is the recommended option.

- c. Adopt 'option b' (above) with a predetermined intention to review during the 2020/21 year.

Points to consider: There is no advantage to prescheduling a review – the Regulations provide for one at any point. If a mid-year change is made, the position for those taking-on a new role will be that they either serve a shortened year or, potentially extended service if Council were to re-elect or appoint in May 2021 for a further complete year

4. Recommended for resolution:

“Under provisions afforded by *The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020*, - “the Regulations” - the following matters are resolved:

1. Council Resolution Covid-19/001/1, 24th March 2020 delegating responsibility for decisions is rescinded, in favour of meetings to be held remotely. (*standing Order 11 iro Rescission of previous resolutions, is suspended for this purpose, in accordance with SO32*)
2. The schedule of meetings of Council published in March 2020 will be followed, so far as possible, with meetings convened online.
3. It is recognized and accepted that the Regulations displace some sections of adopted Standing Orders – notably SO1;2;A1;A2 and Appendix 2 – where these have practical effect on meetings and public access.
4. Current roles and responsibilities of individual Councillors* are continued unchanged until May 2021, specifically the elected Mayor; appointed Deputy Mayor; Committee, Working Party, and Functional Panel duties and bank signature authorities.”

* appended

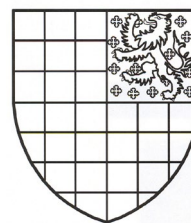
Steve Brigden
4th May 2020

Councillors individual duties 2019/20



Standing committees, Functional panels and active Working Parties etc

		Bank Signatory	Grants panel	Planning Committee	Audit Panel (6)	Personnel Panel (6)	Finance w/Pty (6)	ASC Steering Group	Comms & Events	Landport Bott Mgt (8)	Transport Committee	Buildings Refurb' nt	Pells land exchange	UN sust' y goals W/pty	Open Council W/p	Eqy;Divy;Incl	Devolution W/pty						
Janet	Baah	✓		✓							✓			✓		✓							
Matt	Bird				✓					✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓							
Richard	Burrows	✓	✓			✓		✓		✓							✓						
Stephen	Catlin (Dep' Mayor)		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓						
Guy	Earl	✓					✓		✓			✓					✓						
Rob	Handy			✓						✓	✓					✓							
Oli	Henman		✓				✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓						
James	Herbert	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓							
John	Lamb (Mayor)			✓	✓							✓											
Imogen	Makepeace		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓			✓	✓								
Wendy	Maples		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓						✓	✓	✓						
Graham	Mayhew	✓				✓	✓		✓			✓	✓				✓						
Merlin	Milner			✓	✓			✓			✓	✓											
Ruth	O'Keeffe	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓								
Shirley-Anne	Sains	✓		✓						✓			✓		✓								
Jonathan	Vernon								✓	✓	✓				✓								
Richard	Waring							✓			✓	✓			✓								
Kate	Wood		✓			✓	✓		✓				✓		✓		✓						



MINUTES

Of the meeting of **Lewes Town Council**,
held on **Thursday 27th February 2020**, in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall**, Lewes at **7:30pm**.

PRESENT Cllrs J Baah; M Bird; S Catlin (*Deputy Mayor*); R Handy; J Lamb (*Mayor*); I Makepeace; Dr W Maples; Dr G Mayhew; R O'Keefe; S Sains; J Vernon; R Waring and K Wood.

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*); Mrs F Garth (*Assistant Town Clerk & Civic Officer*) and Mrs E Tingley (*Committee Admin.*)

Observing: Ms V McLachlan (*Finance & Admin. Officer*).

The council's Chaplain, Canon Richard Moatt, offered a few words before commencement of the meeting, reflecting upon the supposed differences between communities in the North and South that had been prominent lately. He perceived many *similarities* and noted how helpful and important the role of a local council could be.

FC2019/104 QUESTION TIME: There were 2 members of the public present. Questions had been received: in relation to the Council's Website, and regarding the Council's Grants Scheme. The questions, together with the answers given, are appended to these minutes. A further message was read by a Member on behalf of a correspondent, although this was noted as a statement of opinion.

FC2019/105 MEMBERS DECLARATIONS of INTERESTS: There were none.

FC2019/106 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Burrows and Earl who were unwell; Cllr Henman who was working abroad; Cllr Herbert who had suffered a bereavement, and Cllr Milner who had a family commitment.

It was resolved that:

FC2019/106.1 Reasons submitted for absence from this meeting are noted.

FC2019/107 MAYOR's ANNOUNCEMENTS:

a) The Mayor presented Canon Richard Moatt with a gift to convey Council's appreciation for all his work and support to the Council over the last 7 years as Council Chaplain. Members offered a round of applause and wished him all the best in his retirement.

b) A Lunch meeting would be held for representatives of the media who cover Lewes, on 24th March in the Council Chamber at 12pm to raise awareness of the work of the Council. All Members were welcome to attend.

c) Members were informed of an invitation to Lewes Operatic Society's production of Sweeney Todd in the Assembly Toom on 1st April. Tickets were available from Fiona.

d) An event - 'Access for All' - would be held on April 17th, an exhibition of technology to aid the less-able.

e) On 1st May a coffee morning would be held in the Council Chamber to celebrate 150 years of the British Red Cross.

f) Stadtmusik; the town band from twin town Waldshut-Tiengen, together with LGB Brass, would be giving a Concert at Priory School on 2nd May at 7.30pm.

g) On Friday 8th May there would be a VE Day event organised by Cllr Mayhew which would be held in the Assembly Room from 6-9pm. Tickets to the event would be free.

h) A meeting had been arranged with the Friends of Lewes, to discuss issues of mutual interest. This would continue the occasional series that had become established over recent years and would take place at 10.30am on Tuesday 17th March in the Yarrow Room.

i) The Mayor had recently attended a Focus Group organised by the Police and Crime Commissioner which gave a brief of priorities of the Commissioner. The group was an opportunity for Parish Councils to ask questions about police work.

FC2019/108 MINUTES:

It was resolved that:

FC2019/70.1 Minutes of the Council meeting held on 23rd January 2020 are received and signed as an accurate record.

FC2019/109 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) Grants Panel 5th February 2020: Members considered report FC019/2019 (*copy in minute book*) containing recommendations for payments of grants for the fourth cycle (of four) for the year 2019/20.

It was resolved that:

FC2018/109.1 The grant payments recommended in report FC019/2019 (as shown in column **G** of the table appended to that report) be approved with the exception of no. 7 (Opendoors Housing Ltd) which would be referred back to the next meeting of the Grants Panel for further discussion.

b) Landport Bottom Management Committee 26th February 2020: Council considered the minutes of this meeting:

Higher-level Stewardship scheme renewal:

1 The meeting had welcomed Ms Outram, Lewes District Council's (LDC) Specialist Advisor - Downland and Nature Reserves, who was contracted to manage the land on the Town Council's behalf. Ms Outram gave a short but extremely informative visual presentation on the nature of chalk downland and its importance and rarity globally. Members were interested to note that the UK holds 5% of the world's chalk grassland and that, although the South Downs appeared to be a large area only 4% of that was in fact classified as 'Lowland Calcareous Grassland' – the greater portion being farmed too intensively; to the detriment of the natural-occurring species and habitats that were so important.

2 The presentation demonstrated the variety of species and varieties of flora and fauna that had evolved to require this specialized environment; and emphasized the fragility of the ecosystems. Whilst the grazing (by sheep) of the land often appeared to observers to be 'farming' it was described as extremely low-intensity and carefully managed to optimum benefit of the landscape.

3 Since the initial reversion of the land in 1992, which had previously been used for arable crops, it had benefitted from successive environmental support programmes funded by European grants. Currently the land was part of an 'estate' entered into the Higher-Level Stewardship Scheme (HLS) and comprising LDC's nature reserves and specialized land-holdings. Due to the importance of Chalk Downland and the land area represented by Landport Bottom, it validated a high proportion of the total grant payable. Whilst this grant was actually 'pooled' and used across all the sites in the estate, it was nonetheless a beneficial scheme as it also offered expert advice services and other ancillary advantages.

4 The present 5-year scheme Agreement expired in April 2021, and the government Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) was already trialling a new ("post-Brexit") Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELM); expected to be in place sometime after 2022. This would follow the evolving Environment Bill, delayed by the national elections and 'Brexit', and was anticipated to match the needs of Landport Bottom extremely well. With this in view DEFRA had offered HLS scheme members with agreements expiring in 2019 and 2020 the option to 'roll-over' for an additional year or more. It was extremely likely that this opportunity would be offered for the current

Agreement, but the decisions had hitherto not been announced until within one year of expiry. An offer was unlikely, therefore, before May or June (or later). Lewes District Council's preferred option would be to apply to roll over the HLS agreement until 2022 (when/if offered). This would involve continuing the current arrangement between LTC and LDC until April 2022 – by which time there should be more clarity on what the new ELM grants scheme would involve and detail of availability/eligibility. This was recommended by Ms Outram and supported by the Town Clerk, who had been closely connected with these issues since original purchase of the land in 1992.

5 There followed a brief discussion regarding possible alternative options, and a question about potential for tree-planting. It was accepted that trees were damaging to an evolving Lowland Calcareous Grassland ecosystem and would essentially destroy it. Also, it was noted that there were likely to be many hectares of conventional farmland available in the future where tree-planting would be more appropriate, especially if farming practices changed to reflect reduced meat production.

6 Members concluded that they would recommend extension of the present HLS Agreement, when/if the option was offered, pending announcements regarding the anticipated Environmental Land Management Scheme (ELM).

Hire of land

The Committee had sought assurance that the prevailing land use Agreement for hire of the land to *eg* local Bonfire Societies, was sufficiently robust in terms related to restoration of the landscape following events. Example Agreement forms, currently used by Lewes District Council as the Town Council's contracted Agent, were considered and it was acknowledged that the relevant clauses were appropriate.

Some discussion followed on the actual experience, in recent years, of both Ms Outram and Mr Courage when dealing with post-event activities by regular hirers. A minor extension to one descriptive paragraph was suggested and accepted, but both officers confirmed that they were confident of proper consideration by hirers, and simply noted that it was helpful to them to know that the Committee was supportive of their role in such day-to-day matters.

Historic sign

A request had been received from Lewes Racecourse History Group regarding location of an historic commemorative sign somewhere on the Council's land at Landport Bottom. The sign had been made by local blacksmith Ben Autie and erected for the 50th anniversary of the closure of the Lewes Racecourse. A photograph had been provided depicting its inaugural ceremony. The two men who had unveiled it were the jockeys who were first and second placed in the last race in 1964. The sign was later removed to safe storage as someone had unilaterally cut it down and re-erected it on another part of the race hill. The Group hoped that the Council would assist in agreeing a permanent place where it could be seen and appreciated as originally intended.

Members were happy to agree this request, and some locations were suggested for discussion with the Lewes Racecourse History Group.

Realignment of fencing to dempond ("Jill's pond")

Ms Outram outlined proposals for extending outward the fencing surrounding Jill's Pond. This area housed an important colony of protected Great Crested Newts (*Triturus cristatus*) and a larger area of protected ground was desirable. The enclosed zone provided a breeding pond, nesting habitat and foraging ground. There were considerations regarding planning consent as the area had been originally protected by an 'Article 4 direction' under planning statutes, which required special permissions. The current status of this Direction following designation of the South Downs National Park Authority was not clear. TC would investigate this, as it also has bearing on other matters which would need to be addressed by the Committee in the foreseeable future. Members were supportive of the extension to the fenced area proposed, in-principle.

Councillors posed some questions to Committee members, which were answered, and it was noted that the next meeting would be preceded by a site familiarization visit to which all Members would be welcome.

It was resolved that:

FC2019/109.2 The Minutes of the Landport Bottom Management Committee (*copy in minute book*) held on 26th February 2020, and recommendations arising, are noted and agreed as:

FC2019/109.3 The Council will agree to an extension of the Higher-level Stewardship Agreement expiring in April 2021, when/if the option is offered, pending future replacement by the anticipated Environmental Land Management Scheme

FC2019/109.4 The siting of an historic wrought-iron commemorative sign, by Lewes Racecourse History Group, at a mutually-acceptable location within Landport Bottom is agreed (at the Group's expense).

FC2019/109.5 Proposed extension outward of the fencing enclosing Jill's Pond, to provide a larger habitat for the important colony of protected Great Crested Newts, is agreed subject to Planning considerations.

c) Pells Exchange Working Party 27th February 2020: Council considered the Minutes of this meeting:

1 Members were reminded that Council had previously acknowledged that (with reference to the suggested exchange areas A; B and C (*plan copy in the Minute book*)) the area designated 'A' (170sq m) would be of benefit as it would allow improvements to changing rooms and other facilities of the swimming pool, and provide an ideal location for the installation of solar panels – a long-held aspiration of both the Town Council and the Pells Pool Community Association. The area designated 'B' was understood to include the vestigial Town Brook watercourse and a question had been raised as to the prudence of incorporating a potential water hazard within the recreation ground. This was a concern, although the ditch had been almost dry for many years and it was thought that this risk could be minimized by culverting, or a similar engineering solution. The area shown as 'C' was seen as simply a 'tidying-up' of eventual boundary demarcation, which offered no other particular benefit. It was noted that there would need to be agreement on responsibilities for the necessary removal of residual footings/service connections, and other structures at this location and a general agreement on legal costs and costs of final boundary structures (*eg* fencing).

2 Overall, the Working Party had confirmed its view regarding the overall potential increase in land area; the inherent benefits of some of the land, and the opportunity to tidy boundary lines. There were, however, residual concerns over aspects such as the vestigial watercourse and questions to be answered regarding costs and responsibilities.

3 The meeting noted that: having considered recommendations in June 2019, Council had not agreed them all and had proposed acceptance of only two of the areas offered – areas 'A' and 'C' – given concerns regarding the vestigial watercourse in Area 'B'.

4 Lewes District Council had been advised of this and, in response to the concerns described, commissioned an exercise by specialist landscape architects Macgregor Smith to assess the technical position: reasoning that the Council may wish to reconsider if assurance could be offered with regard to Area 'B'. The Working Party was furnished with copies of the resulting report (*copy in the Minute book*) and welcomed the clearly drafted information.

5 During lengthy re-consideration of the issue, Members reviewed aspects such as surface water run-off currently accumulating in the area and noted the planned engineering measures within the adjoining North Street development which were expected to ameliorate this in future. There was interest in retaining the last vestige of the historic Town Brook and *not* re-profiling the land as suggested in the report. On balance, Members favoured ownership and attendant control of future treatment of the land, rather than exclusion and potential loss of the feature within a bland boundary zone incorporated into the proposed adjacent car parking. It was felt that risk was manageable by judicious placement and maintenance of fencing and signage, and the options to reprofile, culvert *etc*

It was resolved that:

FC2019/109.6 The Minutes of the Pells Exchange Working Party (*copy in minute book*) 27th February 2020 are noted, and the recommendations arising are agreed as:

FC2019/109.7 The Council (as Town Brook Trust) agrees to the three land areas proposed at the Pells (*plans in Minute book*), subject to agreement with Lewes District Council that:

- > All associated costs of valuation; technical assessment; legal transfer, and boundary relocation (enclosure) costs shall be met by Lewes District Council, and no cost shall fall to the Town Council
- > Independent specialist valuation of the land areas concerned is undertaken.
- > 'Area B', containing the historic Town Brook, shall be cleared of existing industrial debris and general detritus and the profile of the vestigial watercourse retained, with fencing to both boundaries retained (as now) including reinstatement when development adjacent to the area's Eastern boundary is completed.

d) East Sussex Association of Local Councils meeting: Cllrs O'Keeffe and Catlin recounted recent attendances at meetings of the East Sussex Association of Local Councils (ESALC) and the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) conference.

It was resolved that:

FC2018/109.8 The oral reports on the recent meeting of East Sussex Association of Local Councils and the National Association of Local Councils conference are noted.

FC2019/110 UPDATE ON MATTERS IN PROGRESS

- a) *Annual Plan update distributed:* An update on progress with the Annual Plan was distributed (*copy in minute book*) and TC elaborated on various salient points.
- b) *Offham Road Trees:* TC reported that work was going well at the site and was expected to be completed on 28th February.
- c) *Lewes Priory* – TC had received a response from the owners of the area of Scheduled Ancient Monument representing a large section of the Priory of St Pancras, lying to the North of the railway line, which stated that they had no interest in selling the land.
- d) *Malling Community Centre* – The loan for the centre project was in the bank and work at the building would commence on 16th March.

FC2019/111 NOTICE of ITEMS IN PROSPECT

Members, asked to consider items arising from this meeting worthy of a Press Release, indicated:

Malling Community Centre refurbishment.

Dates to note were given as:

- The next Member's Surgery would be between 10am-12noon on Tuesday 3rd March in the Corn Exchange. Cllrs Catlin and Sains volunteered to attend.
- The Audit Panel would meet at 2:00pm on Wednesday 11th March in the Council Chamber.
- A meeting had been arranged with the Friends of Lewes, to discuss issues of mutual interest. This would continue the occasional series that had become established over recent years and would take place at 10.30am on Tuesday 17th March in the Yarrow Room. All Members were welcome to attend
- The next Planning Committee meeting would be at 7pm on Tuesday 17th March. The subsequent meeting would be on Tuesday 7th April.
- The next Council meeting would take place on Thursday 2nd April 2010 at 7:30pm, with a deadline for agenda items to reach TC by noon on Monday 23rd March.

There being no further business the Mayor closed the meeting; thanked everyone for their contributions and invited all present to join him in the Mayor's Parlour for refreshments

The meeting ended at 9.10pm

Signed: Date:



QUESTION RECEIVED:

Received from Mrs R Ellis 25th February 2020:

When will the town council website be updated?

* Some members' contact nos. are still missing.

* No date has been published for the Town Meeting.

* Generally, the website does not seem at present to be a particularly good means of communicating to the public

ANSWER:

o The website is updated according to priority on a continuous basis.

o There is no legal requirement for Members to publish telephone numbers (or any other contact details) and all those who have provided a number for publication are on the website.

o The parish meeting (which is not a meeting of the Council) is publicized (noticeboard; website, and local newspaper) when the invitation is issued by the Mayor – usually four weeks or so beforehand.

o Our website ‘at-a-glance’ calendar

<https://lewes-tc.gov.uk/your-council/public-notices/at-a-glance-calendar/>

which is accessed from the top line menu, was published in March 2019 and shows the date of the 2020 Town Meeting (23rd April 2020). This will also appear in the ‘live’ calendar a little nearer the date.

It is appreciated that the drop-down menu for the two complementary calendars could be clearer, and their descriptions have been modified.

o Your last comment is not a question.

Cllr John Lamb
Mayor of Lewes 2019/20

QUESTION RECEIVED:

Received from Tony Rowell on 26th February 2020

I would like the following question asked at Council on 27 February 2020. I aim to be there but if not would still like the questions asked and answered as last month a question wasn't put because of my absence.

I am pleased that the Council continues to award grants to organisations providing services to those needing them. However, grants are subject to a number of conditions and I would like to confirm that these are complied with. I would prefer not to receive a blanket answer that conditions are met and confirmation that each of the conditions I list below have indeed been met. After all the Council is distributing public money and in light of the increase in Council tax should ensure it is giving out money appropriately and in line with Council policy.

Questions

1. A general Condition to receive a Grant is 'Applications will not be considered from private organizations operated as a business to make profit/surplus.'

Would you please confirm that all the grants for approval on 27 February meet this condition? If not which organisations don't comply and why are they on the list for approval?

2. A general Condition to receive a Grant is 'The organization must provide a written Constitution that has been formally adopted by the members of that organization or, where their association is less “formal”, similar evidence of agreement between individuals.'



Would you please confirm that all the grants for approval on 27 February meet this condition? If not which organisations don't comply and why are they on the list for approval?

3. A general Condition to receive a Grant is 'The organization is required to submit audited accounts or accounts that have been independently examined by a suitably qualified person, for the previous two financial years or, in the case of a newly-formed organization or less formal group, a comprehensive budget and business plan.'

Would you please confirm that all the grants for approval on 27 February meet this condition? If not which organisations don't comply and why are they on the list for approval?

4. A general Condition to receive a Grant is 'The organization is required to have a bank account in its own name with at least two authorized representatives required to sign each cheque, or similar demonstrable financial control system.'

Would you please confirm that all the grants for approval on 27 February meet this condition? If not which organisations don't comply and why are they on the list for approval?

5. A general Condition to receive a Grant is 'Organizations that receive a grant will be required to submit a report detailing how the grant has been applied, once their project or initiative is underway/complete, using the pro-forma provided with their grant confirmation.'

Would you please confirm that all the grants for approval on 27 February will be made to comply with this condition?

Regards

Tony Rowell

Green Party

for the common good

ANSWER:

Please note that if a questioner is not present, questions *may* be asked on their behalf, at the Mayor's discretion. If the tenor of questions is such that no public interest would be served, or answers could be sought during normal business hours, it is unlikely that this will happen. It is noted that you continue to use the address of a political party which is already well-represented on this Council by seven elected Members; three of whom serve on the Grants Assessment Panel. All Councillors are aware of their responsibilities with regard to the use of public funds.

To address your specific questions, as posed:

- 1 Confirmed
- 2 All appropriate *bona fides* provided and found acceptable
- 3 One 'startup' in the field of youth social development – no history but assessment panel considered detail provided to be satisfactory
- 4 All appropriate *bona fides* provided and found acceptable
- 5 It is, as you have recognized, a condition. Beneficiaries receive an award letter in which is highlighted:

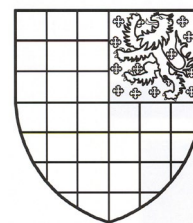
“As a condition of this award, we require that you provide a brief report at the conclusion of the project; USING THE FORM PROVIDED (please do NOT submit alternative formats or supplementary material).

Please provide enough detail to enable Councillors to assess the application of these public funds. **Failure to do so may affect future applications.** Please send this to the address above, or scan and send by email.”

It is difficult to conceive a means by which a beneficiary could be “made to comply”, and any breach of this condition would be dealt-with in a manner appropriate to circumstances.

Cllr Stephen Catlin

Member of Grants Panel and Deputy Mayor of Lewes 2019/20



MINUTES

of the **Audit & Governance Panel** held on **Wednesday 11th March 2020**, in the **Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lewes at 2:00pm.**

PRESENT Cllrs Catlin; Lamb; Maples; Milner (*Chairman*). Also (*not appointed to Panel*) Cllr Baah
In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*)

AudPan2019/17 QUESTIONS: There were none at this point.

AudPan2019/18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Apologies were received from Cllr Bird, who had a work commitment.

AudPan2019/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: There were none.

AudPan2019/20 MINUTES: The minutes of the meeting held on 17th October 2019 were received and signed as an accurate record.

AudPan2019/21 BUSINESS OF THE MEETING:

1. *Routine financial monitoring:* Members were furnished with detailed information (*copies in minute book*) following the end of the third quarter of the financial year.
2. *Budget monitoring update* – this showed actual expenditure and income values as posted to the Council's *Sage* accounting system for all transactions processed in the period. There was some discussion on salient points of detail, and TC responded with reference to the identified sources. Apparent variations were related to known events, such as specific payments in respect of works and purchases, or perceived 'overspend' which are attributable to Reserves in the final accounts prepared at year-end. There were no items of concern.

There were general questions on the financial systems and accounting structure, to which TC gave detailed answers.

3. *Oversight as required by the Governance & Accountability Code of Practice:* TC introduced the file of periodic bank reconciliations, for review of the scrutiny already conducted. The Chairman appended his signature to verify this.
4. *Criteria for 'major' grant requests:* Members considered report AP001/2019 (*copy in the Minute book*) which reminded Panellists that Council had asked them to draft a clear set of criteria and assessment process, along similar lines to that employed by the Grants Panel, by which all applications for funding could be assessed if falling outside the established miscellaneous grants scheme. It was noted that:

The Grants Panel, when assessing smaller grants within the established Scheme, uses a system, approved by Council in December 2003 whereby each panellist evaluates applications on their merits in five categories:

- i) Closeness of match to Lewes Town Council's grant scheme policy
- ii) Overall "robustness" of the proposal – *ie* general likelihood of success/sustainability
- iii) Financial planning exhibited – *ie* adequacy/prudence/appropriateness *etc.*
- iv) Scope and sustainability – *ie* beneficiaries; scale; thoroughness
- v) A personal (subjective) assessment, based on any special insight or considerations.

Also considered are factors such as the balance or proportion of Council funding being sought, compared with other sources and the applicant's own funds, and other detail elements of a proposal.

The assessors record a score for each element (max score 20 for each = total max 100) according to their own judgement, and the resulting totals are entered into a spreadsheet which, on behalf of any absent or non-voting Panellists, applies a median average of the scores recorded by those present and aggregates the individual totals. This process is a first-stage and serves to moderate any inherent 'high' or 'low' scoring tendencies among individual assessors. The final recommendations are achieved through consensus following a Panel discussion – informed by the relative 'ranking' of individual applications within the batch in terms of their total score and proportion of the theoretical maximum.

Requests to Council arise from time to time for financial support in larger sums, usually related to projects within the community that appear to the applicant body to have some resonance with the aims of a parish council, and these may be brought direct to Council or to a Committee or Working Party according to context. It is rare that these are received in batches, and so a system of comparative ranking (as described above) would be less relevant than a simple, structured, assessment that can be understood by both applicant and assessors. This could, however, follow the same principle of five equally-weighted elements and criteria ii) to v) above could be considered appropriate with no amendment; whilst criterion i) can be simply modified to assess "*closeness of match to the council's objectives and underlying values*". *These are inherent in the establishment of a parish Council and enhanced by published policies in specific areas of activity.

It was suggested that a template could be used at any meeting of Council; Committee or Working party, where applicants are asked to submit their request in whatever form is appropriate to them, as now, and Members attending the meeting then apply a score, with a moderated aggregate arrived at as described above. Council could set a minimum threshold score required before a request might be eligible for further consideration (say, 65%), and the matter then concluded following scoring and discussion, as now.

There followed a detailed discussion on these suggestions, and Members were generally in favour of this approach and keen to ensure that the first criterion – closeness of match – should be clearly related to the 'grouped' themes in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals which Council followed. There were questions as to whether a specific budget should be identified for such purposes, but TC advised on the principles of reserves and General Funds and noted that reservation of funds with no identified specific purpose would conflict with accounting rules. The nature of the requests envisaged would always involve a report or presentation and at the appropriate time financial considerations would be highlighted.

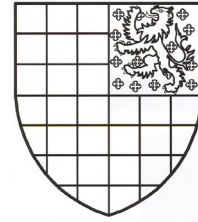
AudPan2019/22 CONCLUSIONS:

- 1 Members considered information on the Council's financial status and management and found no items of concern.
- 2 In accordance with the national audit and governance guidelines: where member oversight is required, the Chairman of the Panel signed to attest the veracity of reconciliation records presented.
- 3 Principles of a 'major' grants assessment scheme were agreed, and a draft template would be prepared for further consideration.

AudPan2019/23 There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and declared the meeting closed.

The meeting closed at 3:15pm

Signed date



☎ 01273 471469 Fax: 01273 480919

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MINUTES

of the **Personnel Panel** held on **Friday 24th April 2020**, online via Zoom meetings at **11:00am**

PRESENT: Cllrs R Burrows; S Catlin; I Makepeace; Dr W Maples; Dr G Mayhew; K Wood (*Chairman*)

In attendance: S Brigden (*Town Clerk [TC]*) Mrs F Garth (*Asst TC/Civic Officer*); Richard Penn (*retained consultant*)

PersPan2019/27 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: There were none.

PersPan2019/28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: There were none.

PersPan2019/29 EXCLUSION of the PRESS and PUBLIC: This meeting was held online, and no press or public had been admitted.

PersPan2019/30 MINUTES: The minutes of the meeting held on 27th November 2019 were accepted as an accurate record.

PersPan2019/31 BUSINESS OF THE MEETING:

- a) The meeting began with a range of questions. Members raised questions as to current staff deployment and were keen to know that staff were supported with appropriate training opportunities. TC reminded everyone that the Council had a supportive and robust policy on training and all staff were aware of how they could raise requests or take advantage of opportunities. In answer to a specific question as to progress on the District Council's review of Member Allowances; there had been no announcement of progress since an open meeting had been held in late January.
- b) *Update on TC appraisal programme.* Richard Penn presented a summary of the analysis of questionnaires returned by Councillors, staff, and outside contacts. There arose a lengthy discussion on the principles of this, and Members noted they were hampered in forming meaningful opinions; having not been sent a report in advance of the meeting. There were issues of compromise to the usual methods of preserving required confidentiality when holding a virtual meeting, and it was agreed that this would be investigated further alongside preparation by Mr Penn of some additional analysis of the distribution of 'scores'. There was discussion on the introduction of appraisal as a contractual obligation when recruiting a successor to TC, and a review of the target principles. There would be a further Panel meeting within a month at which these matters would be considered in greater depth.
- c) *Matters re prospective retirement of staff.* The Panel had been tasked with an assessment of impacts on the Council arising from the number of staff eligible to retire in the next 2-3 years, and their roles. This was to begin with the assessment of the option to separate the functions of TC and Responsible Finance Officer, which may offer some advantages in recruitment of a successor to TC. Some illustrative examples of job descriptions for both models had been collected from other 'larger' parishes by the Town Clerk and would be made available to Panel Members before the next meeting.

TC advised that he had scheduled a meeting with prospective retirees, to enquire whether any had yet made firm plans for their retirement, when the Covid-19

situation disrupted this plan. He reminded Members that eligibility did not mean that individuals would necessarily choose to retire and this could not be enforced. Members considered that understanding the position and views of current staff was vital in the Panel taking an holistic view about future steps and organisation structures, and it was proposed that a member of the Panel might join such a meeting to understand the general views of staff approaching retirement. TC would forward current Job Descriptions which the Panel could consider further at their next meeting.

- d) *Training* Whilst not normally within the remit of the Panel, members considered that with the onset of a new municipal year and compromised working conditions, a review of training to assess what was delivered and how effective it was for councillors would be helpful. The Panel considered that it should ask Council to temporarily extend its mandate to look at training needs for 2020, especially given the needs for new or upgraded skills or understanding among members. An understanding for the Panel of current staff training needs and skill sets and what was also planned for staff would also help with work on any restructuring.

PersPan2019/32 CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Panel would meet again within the next month.

The meeting closed at 12:55pm

Signed Date.....

Draft

Agenda Item No: 9 **Report No:** FC002/2020
Report Title: Audit Year-ended March 2020 – Emergency regulations and Council’s position
Report To: Council **Date:** 14th May 2020
Report By: S Brigden, Town Clerk

Purpose of Report: To apprise Members of the Council’s position regarding the statutory Audit programme for year-ended 31st March 2020.

Recommendation(s):

That this report be noted.

Information:

1. The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 s5 defines Lewes Town Council as a “smaller authority”, and it is governed in its audit process by The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234).
2. In response to the Coronavirus emergency, these Regulations have been amended by The Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (SI 2020/404). The overall effect of these emergency Regulations is to allow a two-month delay in the normal statutory programme of audit.
3. This Statutory Instrument was issued on 7 April and is effective from 30 April 2020. It amends the deadline by which the Annual Governance Statement and Statement of Accounts (two components of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return [AGAR]) together with any certificate or opinion issued by the ‘internal’ auditor (a third AGAR component) must be published; from 30 September 2020 to 30 November 2020.
4. Previously there was a requirement for all smaller authorities to have a common period for the exercise of public rights*; being the first 10 working days of July. Under the emergency amendments this prescription has been removed. We are still required to set a period for this purpose, but the only requirement is that the 30 working day period for the exercise of public rights should start on or before the first working day of September, *ie* on or before 1 September 2020. The latest possible dates that comply with the statutory requirements are Tuesday 1 September – Monday 12 October 2020.
5. The authority itself (through its Responsible Finance Officer) informs the electorate of the inspection period by publishing the relevant (prescribed) Notice and Sections 1 & 2 of the approved AGAR at least the day before the period for public rights commences. ‘Publishing’ means inclusion on the website. Publication on a notice board is not mandated but is good practice and LTC has always done this

*Public rights, in summary are:

- o With certain exemptions for items containing personal data, any person interested has the right to inspect and make copies of the accounting records for the financial year to which the audit relates and all books, deeds, contracts, bills, vouchers, receipts and other documents relating to those records must be made available for inspection by any person interested.

Local government electors and their representatives also have:

- o The opportunity to question the appointed auditor about the accounting records; and
- o The right to make an objection which concerns a matter in respect of which the appointed auditor could either make a public interest report or apply to the court for a declaration that an item of account is unlawful. Written notice of an objection must first be given to the auditor and a copy sent to the smaller authority.

The right to ask the external auditor questions is limited. The external auditor can only answer 'what' questions, not 'why' questions. The external auditor cannot answer questions about policies, finances, procedures or anything else unless it is directly relevant to an item in the accounting records. They are only able to respond during the allotted period.

Effect on Lewes Town Council:

6. For the past 18 years Lewes Town Council has conducted its end-of-year accounting procedures and arranged a final 'internal' audit in time for presentation to Council at a meeting in June. This allowed the programme described above to be adhered-to and all submissions to externally appointed auditors to be made in good time.

7. For the year ended 31st March 2020 the final internal audit, building upon and completing the interim process already reported to Council at mid-year, has been provisionally arranged for early June although this will be conducted 'remotely' by our retained auditors and flexibility has been built-in to allow for any unforeseen issues or change in circumstances.

8. While it should be possible to bring the usual report and statutory documents to Council in June (scheduled meeting is 18th), this may be deferred until July (scheduled for 30th).

9. Until the internal audit is concluded I will reserve our position on the dates for the exercise of public rights, but these will likely fall in August.

Steve Brigden

4th May 2020