

Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held at the Town Hall, Rye, on Monday 1 February 2016

PRESENT Councillors John Breeds, Jonathan Breeds (**Deputy Mayor**), Cheryl Creaser, Mike Boyd, Justin Erswell, Bernardine Fiddimore (**Mayor**), Rebekah Gilbert, Charlie Harkness, Pat Hughes, John Izod, Jo Kirkham, Andi Rivett, Shaun Rogers, Andy Stuart

IN ATTENDANCE Richard Farhall - Town Clerk; Kevin Barry – Town Sergeant; The Reverend Canon David Frost – Mayor’s Chaplain; Rother District Councillors David Ampthill and Gennette Stevens; County Councillor Keith Glazier; Andy Hemsley - *Rye Observer*; 5 members of the public

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm.

102 PRAYERS
These were said by the Mayor’s Chaplain.

103 APOLOGIES
Apologies for absence – and the reasons (as notified to the Clerk) - were accepted from Cllrs Ian Potter and Ray Prewer.

104 CODE OF CONDUCT
There was none.

105 MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS
The Mayor had attended no civic events recently but had participated in a number of working groups.

*The Mayor adjourned the meeting (see **Appendix**)*

6.35 Cllr Jonathan Breeds arrived.

The meeting reconvened.

106 COUNCIL MINUTES (7 December 2016)
RESOLVED 1 *Page 1, 89 Code of Conduct, Cllr Kirkham To insert non before pecuniary.*
RESOLVED 2 *To adopt, as an accurate record, the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2015 (C9), as amended.*

107 COMMITTEE MINUTES
(a) Planning & Townscape
RESOLVED *To adopt the Minutes of the meetings of the Planning & Townscape Committee held on 16 November 2015 (PT10), 14 December 2015 (PT11) and 4 January 2016 (PT12).*

(b) Policy, Resources & GP

RESOLVED To adopt the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy, Resources and GP Committee held on 18 January 2016 (PR04).

(c) Public Services

RESOLVED To adopt the Minutes of the meeting of the Public Services Committee held on 11 January 2016 (PS03).

108 BUDGETS AND PRECEPT 2016-17

RESOLVED To adopt the Policy, Resources & GP Committee's Recommendation that the Draft Heritage Centre and Town Budgets for 2016-17 be approved – and that the precept for 2016-17 be set at £122,100.

109 TOWN HALL COTTAGE – RE-LETTING

Members were asked to consider whether to adopt any letting restrictions – such as: no pets (or pets considered); no DSS; no smoking (inside the property).

Comments included: the likely rental for the property was likely to deter those eligible for housing benefit; some pets (particularly cats and dogs) are often considered to be an integral part of the household; cats and dogs have the potential to cause considerable damage; pets should be considered; a previous tenant had a large dog; most tenancies prohibit smoking within the property.

RESOLVED To take advice from the letting agent appointed. Clerk

110 AFFORDABLE ACCOMMODATION: PROVISION

RESOLVED 1 To note that tenants of residential properties owned by parish/town councils have no (current) legal right to purchase them under Right to Buy.

RESOLVED 2 To receive and note:

- (i) The NALC Guide to Parish and Town Council Borrowing in England;
- (ii) The SSALC Borrowing Approval Protocol guide;
- (iii) *Loans to Parish, Town & Community Councils*;
- (iv) The current Public Works Loan Board *fixed* rates of interest;
- (v) Indicative repayment costs based on loans of £250,000 and £500,000;
- (vi) The Clerk's General Briefing Note – including costings;
- (vii) Advice in respect of an affordable rent;
- (viii) The Clerk's Briefing Note on Partial Exemption.

RESOLVED 3 To confirm that the Council remains minded to acquire 1-2 properties within the Parish that are suitable to be let, at an affordable rent, to Rye families in accordance with the Council's own eligibility criteria (*to be determined*) – and that it is prepared to borrow sufficient funds to achieve this objective.

RESOLVED 4 To ask the Affordable Accommodation WG to consider the proposal in more detail and to formulate – and Recommend – a proposal.

111 LIBRARY OPENING HOURS CONSULTATION

RDCT passengers had advised Cllr Hughes that they would prefer that Rye Library opened at 9.30am (rather than ESCC's suggested 10am) Tuesday-Friday. To compensate, the proposed new closing times could be brought forward by half-an-hour.

RESOLVED To adopt – and submit - this proposal.

Clerk

The meeting ended at 7.23

Date Chairman

Adjournment**a) Report of the County Councillor**

Cllr Glazier's report included:

Funding The Government had changed the formula for funding allocation – leaving ESCC £2.4m worse off (but still having to save £20m 2016-17). By way of 'compensation' principal authorities with social care responsibility are able to increase Council Tax by an additional 2% for social care-related expenditure only. This would raise £4.7m; however, ESCC is looking to make £40m savings in Adult Social Care over the next 3 years. Cabinet has decided to levy the additional 2% and this will be considered by Council on 9 February. Pressures are likely to intensify as average lifespans continue to rise. The county of East Sussex has the highest number of over 75s.

Cllr Glazier, as Leader of ESCC, recently wrote to the Prime Minister (copying in the Chancellor and Secretary of State) seeking clarification on the Government's intentions – and explaining that it was difficult to plan service provision when ESCC still did not have its final settlement figure.

Pot holes Please keep reporting these.

Mike Eve *Given the increasing demand for health and social services are the statutory bodies now working in an integrated manner?*

Cllr Glazier The East Sussex Better Together initiative – comprising CCGs and senior ASC staff – is helping to facilitate this because there is now a single line management structure. Within the next 6 months, a business (care) plan for joint commissioning will emerge. This will change the way that funding for the bodies is administered.

b) Report of the Rye District Councillors**Lord Amphill**

*Strolling in Rye this morning, I could see virtually no parking spaces available. Many vehicles were sitting happily on double yellow lines: and there is added pressure following new charging arrangements at Jempson's. Current levels of congestion will result in increasing difficulties; and we are avoiding mayhem only because relatively few people abandon all consideration when parking. An on-going problem concerns delivery drivers in the heart of town. Both the PCC and Chief Constable want Rother to adopt **civil parking enforcement**: and there are imminent meetings to continue the assessment, notably through Overview & Scrutiny. Cllr Stevens, as a Member of the Committee, will, I hope, assist the development of Council policy on what is a big and irrevocable decision. It would help us to be as certain as possible of this Council's view on Parking permits, pay & display and all the ramifications of a civil parking regime.*

The Landgate. *Following a meeting here on 9th December, the way ahead seemed a little clearer: and officers have gone back to work, with architects, on costs associated with stabilising this Scheduled Ancient Monument - leading to an on-going management plan.*

Rother's **budget proposals** are currently out for consultation. Overview & Scrutiny Committee has agreed with Cabinet's recommendation that council tax should be raised by 1.94 per cent to help to offset required savings following Government funding cuts. Such a percentage increase would see the District Council's share of bills go up by 3.13 pounds a year for a Band D property. This would generate an extra 115,200 pounds. Just to remind that the new leisure services contract, which includes Rye Sports Centre, now costs the taxpayer nothing and brings savings of 350,000 pounds off the Council's budgeted expenditure. When our bills arrive at the end of March, the Rother element of a Band D charge will be 164.32 pounds for the year 2016/17. The consultation has produced a couple of hundred responses so far - many of them coming via the "My Alerts" web page which now has 23,000 subscribers.

In future, as the Government's Revenue Support Grant dwindles to nothing, district councils will become more dependent on retaining a small share of **business rates**. I mention this because of a recent well-publicised case of an increase in rateable value of their premises suffered by a business in Rye and thus a higher business rate payable. In this particular case, there are grounds for appeal: but it is worth reminding that such assessments are the responsibility of the Valuation Office Agency (which has an office in Eastbourne) - not Rother.

An Independent Remuneration Panel has considered the RDC **Councillors' Allowances** arrangements. It is proposed to link any increase, and there has not been one for several years, with any staff pay award. Such a staff award of one per cent was agreed in September 2015; and thus it is proposed to increase Members' allowances by one per cent from May 2016 - leading to an award of 43 pounds per annum which will be considered shortly by Council.

There have been continuing problems over **waste collections** in the Citadel including those involving pink bags. There is no doubt that Kier Group is stretched by this contract - which also includes Hastings, Eastbourne and Wealden. At the time the contract was agreed, the price for recyclates was very much higher than now - and this was reflected in the agreement. It is easy to say that this is not our problem. As a matter of interest, the Rother recycling rate, including garden waste, is not far short of 50 per cent. And here are some more lovely **statistics**. In the year 2014/15, Rother answered 198,000 telephone calls - many of them related to the changes to the waste and recycling service. Calls are now much reduced: but 40 per cent of calls answered still relate to waste issues; whilst 20 per cent are concerned with benefits; 15 per cent with council tax; and 8 per cent with housing. Planning and other matters take up the remaining 17 per cent.

Mayor Would the possible introduction of CPE entail public consultation?

Lord Amphill Yes, this would be lengthy. It would be helpful if RTC could let RDC know its views on CPE.

Mayor Does Lord Amphill have any thoughts about the closing down sign in the window of Bargain Box? Other businesses with air conditioning systems appear not to have been penalised in respect of their RV.

Lord Amphill The owners will be meeting with the MP regarding their RV revaluation and backdated business rate bill. They have the right to appeal. He added that the owners have around 18 months left on their lease.

Colonel Kimber When will gull proof bags be rolled out throughout the town centre?

Lord Amphill The trial within the High Street needs to be firstly assessed.

Cllr Stevens

Cllr Stevens advised that she had no report because she had been sick and had only recently recovered.

c) Public Question Time

There was none.