

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held at the Town Hall, Rye, on  
Monday 18 April 2016**

**PRESENT** Councillors John Breeds, Jonathan Breeds (**Deputy Mayor**), Cheryl Creaser, Justin Erswell, Bernardine Fiddimore (**Mayor**), Rebekah Gilbert, Charlie Harkness, Pat Hughes, Andy Stuart

**IN ATTENDANCE** Richard Farhall - Town Clerk; Rother District Councillor Lord Ampthill

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*The meeting commenced at 6.47pm.*

**136 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence – and the reason (as notified to the Clerk) - were accepted from Cllrs Michael Boyd, Jo Kirkham, Ian Potter, Ray Prewer and Shaun Rogers.

**137 CODE OF CONDUCT**

There was none.

**138 DEVOLUTION OF ASSETS: RYE STATION PUBLIC CONVENIENCES**

Members were invited to agree a response to Cllr Ampthill's letter to the Mayor of 7 April 2016.

Cllr Ampthill advised that:

- The land is owned by the British Rail Residuary Board.
- RDC calculates the cost of running each convenience by adding the total costs over the District and dividing by the number of conveniences – giving an individual cost of £15,100pa. In reality, the cost of the Crownfields convenience could be double.
- The joint (with Hastings and Wealden) public conveniences cleaning and maintenance contract expires on 31.12.16 – but is likely to be extended until 31.3.17.
- It is difficult for RDC to devolve Lucknow Place and The Strand convenience because they are associated with car parks (different legislation applies) and the income from the car parks help to maintain the conveniences.

Comments included:

- The Crownfields facility is the busiest and most strategically important convenience.
- Previous monitoring by Town Councillors had revealed that more cleaning visits are required on Thursdays and that there is a higher risk of damage at the end of the school day (likely to worsen after the PCSO restructuring).
- Rye & District Bonfire Society hires a security firm to monitor the use of the conveniences on Bonfire Night.
- Various statutes prevent local authorities charging for use of urinals and installing turnstiles – however, some get around this by contracting out.
- Councils can charge for access to cubicles.
- It might be possible to gain revenue from allowing advertising within the building.
- RDC could easily advise the businesses rates payable.
- Charging would encourage responsible use.
- Businesses benefit from the provision of public conveniences.

- Some towns which have closed public conveniences have a scheme entailing local businesses allowing visitors free access to their toilets during their opening hours.
- It would be more cost effective for RTC to take on all the Rye conveniences.
- Southern Railway is keen for the facility to remain.
- The plywood and ceramic fittings are easily damaged – stainless steel would be more durable and easier to clean.
- If the interior was a more attractive/interesting environment visitors might be prepared to make a donation.
- If an attendant was based on the premises this should deter vandals; however, provision would have to be made for the attendant's safety and welfare – and this could reduce the space available.
- The Cattle Market Company could be invited to contribute to running costs.
- Usage would have to be high to cover running costs (RTC would have to be prepared to provide a subsidy).

**RESOLVED To invite Brenda Mason, RDC Service Manager  
(Community & Economy) to meet with the Public Conveniences  
WG (after Committee Formation) to discuss the proposal in more  
detail. Clerk**

**139 CAMBER FIELDS AND  
7 WISH WARD – LAND ADJACENT**

Members noted that Camber Fields is due to be auctioned by Savills on behalf of Rother District Council on 9 May 2016 – but that RDC has withdrawn land adjacent to 7 Wish Ward from the auction in order to allow RTC or the owner of 7 Wish Ward to consider any interest one – or both - might have in acquiring the plot.

Although RDC had indicated, last summer, that it would keep RTC informed about the disposal of its first tranche of Rye assets, RTC had not become aware of the auction until it had received an email from Savills a few weeks ago.

Comments included:

**Wish Ward (land adj)**

- This open space is important because a section of the Town Wall is visible.
- Its future as an open space would be more assured in the hands of RTC.
- Public assets like this one are disappearing as they are sold off by cash-strapped principal authorities.
- The land is likely to be of greater potential development value to the owner of number 7.
- Small 'quirky' sites like this one should be protected rather than 'infilled'.
- Could small affordable dwellings be built?
- RTC is not a developer.
- It would be good to reinstate the bench (removed by RDC) – the public seating within the John Ryan Memorial Garden is well used.

CIlr Ampthill suggested that RDC might be amenable to selling the Wish Ward land to RDC for less than £10,000.

**Camber Fields**

- Even with improved flood defences the land would continue to be at risk and part of the site comprised a public tip (contamination issues).
- The piling for any development would have to be very deep.
- The adjacent land occupied by the former Freda Gardham School could be developed in the near future.
- The site has excellent views of the town and has considerable river frontage – both attractive features to a developer.

- There is increasing pressure to build in the SE.
- The current tenant has a secure agricultural tenancy (length of lease unknown) and is reportedly uninterested in purchasing the freehold because of the likely contamination.
- It is likely to sell for significantly more than the £50,000 valuation.
- Local authorities are no longer obliged to obtain best value by selling to the highest bidder – social and environmental considerations can be prioritised.
- Acquisition would be a long-term investment.
- Paying £50,000 was unrealistic.
- RTC could not quickly access £50,000.
- RTC could sell some of its community assets within the Town Hall – many of which are not seen by the public (sale proceeds could be put to better use).
- RDC should have offered the field to RTC first.
- The £50,000 valuation should be verified before purchase.
- Rental from the agricultural tenancy might not cover maintenance costs – the river bank is eroding.
- The Partnership is exploring building on the Rye Peninsula and, with appropriate technological solutions, it should be possible to build on the field.
- It was believed that former Cllr Mike Eve had looked into acquiring the field via The Rye Fund.

**RESOLVED To aim to purchase the land adjacent to 7 Wish Ward in order to protect it for long-term community benefit – and to ask RDC to withdraw Camber Fields from the May auction to allow RTC more time to consider if it wishes to acquire it on behalf of the community.**

**Clerk**

*The meeting ended at 7.50.*

Date ..... Chairman .....