

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held at the Town Hall, Rye, on Monday 26 October 2015**

**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, Ray Prewer, Andi Rivett, Andy Stuart

**IN ATTENDANCE** Richard Farhall - Town Clerk; Martin Wright – Acting Town Sergeant; Rother District Councillor David Amphill; Rother District Councillor Gennette Stevens; County Councillor Keith Glazier; 4 members of the public

*The meeting commenced at 6.32pm.*

**72 PRAYERS**

In the absence of the Mayor’s Chaplain prayers were said by the Mayor.

**73 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence – and the reasons (as notified to the Clerk) - were accepted from Cllrs Ian Potter and Shaun Rogers.

**74 CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Mayor advised that she would not be voting on item 78(a) because she is a member of the Rye Christmas Festival Committee.

**75 MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Town Hall had recently hosted an award ceremony at which the Lord Lieutenant, Peter Field had presented three local people (including Rae Festing) with British Empire Medals. Those attending (including relatives of the recipients) had been impressed by the organisation of the event.

The Mayor and Cllr Boyd (standing in a short notice for the Deputy Mayor) had attended Speaker’s Day in Hythe on 3 October. It was an opportunity to meet many newly-elected dignitaries.

Generally, the Mayor had been busy as a member of a number of Council and community working groups.

*The Mayor adjourned the meeting (see Appendix)*

*The meeting reconvened.*

**76 COUNCIL MINUTES**

**RESOLVED To adopt, as an accurate record, the Minutes of the meeting held on and 7 September 2015 (C7).**

**77 COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**(a) Planning & Townscape**

**RESOLVED To adopt the Minutes of the meetings of the Planning &**

**Townscape Committee held on 7 September 2015 (PT06) and 21 September 2015 (PT07).**

**(b) Policy, Resources & GP**

**RESOLVED To adopt the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy, Resources and GP Committee held on 21 September 2015 (PR02).**

**(b) Public Services**

**RESOLVED To adopt the Minutes of the meeting of the Public Services Committee held on 12 October 2015 (PS02).**

**78 RYE CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL**

**(a) New Events Fund**

The meeting was asked to consider an application from the Rye Christmas Festival for a grant of £3,340 to hire reindeer, an ice rink and a bucking bronco reindeer ride.

The Clerk advised that the 2014-15 Fund balance was £3,696.

Just prior to passing the chairmanship to the Deputy Mayor for this item, the Mayor (who would not be voting) commended the efforts of all those involved (on a voluntary basis) with this year's Festival – many of whom were busy also because they had young families. A wide range of activities/events had been organised for what was shaping up to be a highly successful day.

Cllr Izod was not persuaded by the business case presented. He had assumed that the event would be self-financing and observed that the amount requested was not insignificant.

Cllr Boyd considered that the revamped Festival had got off to an excellent start but was not certain that the application fully met the Fund's 'new event/activity' criteria. That said, he suggested it was unlikely that RTC would receive further applications in the near future.

Cllr Amphill advised that the principal purpose of the Fund was to support new events and that any event (or new activity associated with an existing event) should not be targeted solely at residents. He recalled reindeers forming part of the Festival offer around 3 years ago.

The Mayor reported that this year's organisers were undertaking considerably more publicity – with extensive use of social media. The Rye and Tenterden Festivals are supporting/publicising each other – and Rye can expect to benefit by drawing in visitors from Kent.

It had been some decades since Cllr John Breeds had observed an ice rink at the Rye Christmas Festival. Cllr Hughes observed that the presence of reindeer had been a huge draw in the past and suggested that this year's proposed activities would appeal to a wide range of ages and interests.

The Clerk reported that he had just received a draft New Events SLA for 2015-16 and that RDC would not be minded to sign it until the 2014-15 Fund had been expended.

**RESOLVED (with the Mayor abstaining) To award the £3,340 requested. Clerk**

**(b) Town Steward**

**RESOLVED To donate 20 hours of the Steward's time towards assisting with the Festival on the day (12 December) – and the lead up to it. Clerk**

**79 PARKING ENFORCEMENT**

The Mayor reported that she and Councillor Boyd (both members of the Rye Highways Forum) had recently attended a PCC-ESALC briefing at Hailsham Civic Centre – at which, the Police had outlined its funding situation and sought interest in establishing pilot community warden schemes. The Police had emphasised that they no longer had the resources to respond to 'low level' crime.

Powers that could be conferred upon a warden by the Chief Constable had been distributed but, disappointingly, these did not include parking enforcement. It had been made clear that addressing on street parking issues was a priority not only for Rye but a number of other parishes attending the briefing; however, it had taken a while for the PCC representative present to acknowledge the strength of feeling.

It had been suggested that the cost of employing a community warden would be c£28,000pa; however, this did not include travel and cover costs.

Cllr Ampthill advised that Wealden (the other district in Sussex with no CPE) – and which provides free off street parking – was not interested in introducing CPE. He detected also that the focus of concern in Bexhill is on continuing to regenerate the town. RDC is disappointed that the Police has limited the resources it makes available for parking enforcement.

Cllr Stuart observed that concerns about parking were on the front cover of last week's *Bexhill Observer*.

It was noted that Members had earlier adopted the Minutes of the last Public Service Committee meeting which include a Recommendation to invite the PCC to a public meeting to consider local policing concerns. This would provide an opportunity to raise parking enforcement issues – and to ask her to reconsider RTC's and Battle TC's suggestion that parishes be permitted to fund traffic wardens.

Cllr Gilbert had concerns about the community warden proposal – communities are effectively being asked to pay for their own policing. If RTC wishes to consider funding a community warden it should be the one determining that individual's terms and conditions. She suggested that, on the issue of parking enforcement, RTC needed to work with other (similarly-affected) parishes.

The Clerk observed that every 3 months the Police Priority Setting Panel agrees the top three local Police priorities. The next would be held at the Town Hall on 11 November, 5.30pm. The meetings are open to the public.

**RESOLVED To confirm approval of the Public Services Committee's Recommendation (see above). Clerk**

**80 LANDGATE TOWER**

It was noted that:

- (a) The condition survey and specification for restoration have been published;
- (b) RDC is looking for another body to take on responsibility for the Tower

**RESOLVED To arrange an exploratory meeting of interested parties**

(including RTC, Rye Conservation Society, Rye Castle Museum, Rye Amenity CIC, English Heritage, RDC Ward Members and Mike Eve).  
Clerk

**81 67 NEW ROAD**

It was noted that, on 2 November, the Rye Rugby Club Committee would be considering the findings of an independent drainage consultant that the installation of hard standing at the Freda Gardham Playing Field has contributed towards flooding of the rear garden of 67 New Road.

Cllr Izod advised that he would be attending the Committee meeting – and understood that the water ponding in the residential garden originated from a number of areas of land.

**RESOLVED To ask the Club to submit a proposal to RTC by 9 November.**

**82 CHRISTOPHER COVERDALE: CIL COMPLAINT**

Members noted that the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Vice Chairman of the PRGP Committee have, in accordance with the penultimate stage of the Council's Complaints Procedure, considered Mr Coverdale's complaint – and were asked to consider approving their draft response.

**RESOLVED (unanimous) To approve the draft response. Clerk**

*The meeting was adjourned to allow the Mayor to attend an engagement. The meeting reconvened and was chaired by the Deputy Mayor.*

**83 ELECTORAL REVIEW OF EAST SUSSEX (COUNTY AND DISTRICTS)**

The meeting was asked to consider whether to appoint a Member to review the documentation and recommend a response (*deadline: 30 November 2015*).

Cllr Glazier advised that the current proposal for Rye were for it to form a new (2-Member) District ward with either Winchelsea or Udimore.

**The Deputy Mayor and Cllr Boyd offered to review the documentation.  
Cllrs Jonathan Breeds and Boyd**

**84 ESALC**

Members were invited to consider whether to appoint 1-2 Members/representatives to attend the ESALC AGM at the Emmanuel Centre, Harrier Lane, Battle on 12 November 2015, 2pm (which would be followed by a conference on flooding).

**RESOLVED To appoint Cllr Erswell and the Clerk. Clerk**

**85 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**RESOLVED In accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 (1)(2): To exclude the public and press on the grounds that item 86 entails consideration of a member of staff's terms and conditions of employment.**

**86 RYE TOWN STEWARD**

Council considered the Human Resources Working Group's Recommendation that the Town Steward's hours be increased from 20 to 30 a week throughout the year (not just during the summer). The Clerk advised the additional weekly cost that would be incurred.

**RESOLVED To increase the Town Steward's hours from 20 to 30.**

*The meeting ended at 7.46.*

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

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

Cllr Glazier's report included:

*Budgeting* ESCC expects to lose £70m-£90m of Government funding over the next 3 years and is reviewing all its activities, guided by its core priorities. Inevitably, there will be service reductions/reorganisation; however, ESCC will continue to invest £350m pa delivering services. The additional funding reductions mean that ESCC will have £300pa less to spend per resident than at the beginning of the decade. Final decisions on service changes will need to be made by February – in the meantime members of the public are being encouraged to get involved in the discussion by visiting

[https://new.eastsussex.gov.uk/yourcouncil/finance/budget/?utm\\_source=yourcountya&utm\\_medium=printed&utm\\_campaign=budget](https://new.eastsussex.gov.uk/yourcouncil/finance/budget/?utm_source=yourcountya&utm_medium=printed&utm_campaign=budget)

*Road repairs* Houghton Green Lane (Playden) will be closed 3 December and Rope Walk will be closed 5-6 November, 7pm-6am.

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

**Lord Amptill** (see Appendix B)

*Cllr Prewer* Is it correct that RDC intends to require the low paid (in receipt of Council Tax benefit) to pay 20% of their Council Tax charge? If so, is this fair – especially given the current debate nationally around tax credits?

*Lord Amptill* It would not be appropriate to comment in detail at this stage because the matter (including establishing a hardship fund) had not yet been considered by Cabinet. RDC recently consulted on a range of options and the overwhelming majority of those consulted take the view that everyone should pay something towards their Council Tax charge.

**Gennette Stevens**

Cllr Stevens advised that, as a member of the Public Realm WG, she had recently visited a number of parishes (including Rye, Fairlight and Staplecross) to assess the appearance and condition of the public realm. The condition of public conveniences is poor wherever the WG has visited. She and Cllr Amptill had accompanied the Harbour Master and identified some areas on the Rye peninsula that are in need of 'tidying up'. She would like to arrange to have a discussion with the Town Steward in order to become familiar with what he is doing.

The Mayor advised that the Heritage Centre is continuing to keep a record of complaints it receives about the condition of the Strand conveniences. The peak time for concern is the period between lunch time and the locking up of the conveniences – when there are no cleaning visits scheduled.

**c) Public Question Time**

There was none.

From: **David Amphill** erskinewhitney@me.com  
Subject:  
Date: 26 October 2015 14:26  
To: dwerussell@btopenworld.com  
Cc: RTC 26th October

## RYE TOWN COUNCIL, 26TH OCTOBER 2015, REPORT OF ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

A number of issues for this evening including **Fishing**, the **Landgate**, the **Sports Centre**, the **Cemetery**, the **Boundary Review** and the **Public Realm Working Group** set up by Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Members may have seen the story in last Friday's Observer of an intervention by our MP on behalf of Rye **fishermen**. This followed a discussion at the previous Harbour of Rye Advisory Committee meeting on the upcoming ban on the practice of throwing fish back overboard. A delegation went to brief Amber Rudd on the matters of the banning of discards and the low quotas available to the under-ten-metre fleet of some 25 boats venturing out from Rye. The Fisheries Minister, Mr Eustice, and DEFRA officials can be in no doubt as to the devastating effect on our locality if there is not some flexibility within quota management - particularly since our fishermen know how to preserve fish stocks. There are indications that the Minister and his officials are prepared to listen.

The report on The **Landgate**, commissioned by RDC from Thomas Ford & Partners, has been published: and Rother's Cabinet duly authorised officers to explore options for devolving ownership of the historic monument to a body which might more successfully uncover the funding necessary for its restoration. There are recommendations for works. As to the suggested ways forward, clearly leaving the monument "as is" is not an option; and Members may not like the notion of creating usable space for a museum or holiday let or indeed of offering regular public access. There is unlikely to be much chance of a sensible income-generation approach. Which leaves the alternative of re-roofing and securing a renovated structure for the long term. The cost will be significant; but it is likely that Rother *will* find capital funding towards it when we are all able to agree on the way ahead.

Despite unhelpful claims during the election period that funding had been *withdrawn* from **Rye Sports Centre**, a negotiation has been concluded with a contractor who will manage Rye Sports Centre for a ten-year term (with the option to extend for a further ten years); and manage Bexhill Leisure Centre and Pool for a shorter period. Our existing Gym will enjoy an investment of £300,000; and there will be a further investment of £246,000 into energy management which includes new sports hall lighting. The contractor will fund a Sports & Community Development officer post. Overall, the new agreement will save the Council £373,000 in revenue funding annually - since the deal is for the Leisure sites to be operated at nil cost to the Council when the present contract with Freedom Leisure expires next 31st March. The successful bidder will be identified on November 5th.

As regards **Rye Cemetery**, at last a ground radar survey of an area in the northern part of the cemetery has been completed. Records have been studied and trial holes have been undertaken in key places. They confirm that the area is vacant of burials: and the land will provide sufficient capacity for burials for a further thirty years, based on current rates. The removal in 2012 of a large tree in the Garden of Remembrance will secure additional space for the interment of ashes which will, together with an area to the west of the site, provide capacity for the next twenty years. These areas are already consecrated by the Church of England and no further planning or other consents are required. RDC may need to spend some £20,000 - towards clearing, landscaping, the provision of a pedestrian pathway, vehicle turning circle and other works.

The **Boundary Review** has been through three meetings of a Steering Group and has been considered by Overview & Scrutiny Committee whose conclusions will now go to Cabinet and full Council on the 16th November. I think that the Scrutiny recommendation is likely to be accepted - with minor changes in some rural wards. The decision of the Boundary Commissioners is final: and RDC has followed the guidance that the new pattern of wards should mean that each of 38 Councillors should represent roughly the same number of voters as elected members elsewhere in the Authority. This means 2,027 electors per Member. Ward patterns should reflect community interests and identities; and boundaries should be identifiable. But it is principally a numbers game.

In 2021, Rye is projected to have 1,805 electors for each of its two Members - which the Commissioners are unlikely to accept. Therefore, an option is likely to be proposed which will create a new combined Rye & Winchelsea ward - which would draw in 4,020 electors and be spot on target for a two-member ward. Another option would be to combine with Udimore - but that presents more difficulties when trying to form natural links between parishes around the rural areas. By inspecting the Agenda with its supporting papers for the 2nd November Cabinet, Members can see how difficult it is to form natural and agreeable alliances around the entire District when we are so constricted by the requirements. All interested parties are invited to have their say; and there are, of course, discussions ongoing with the County Council as to how parish and district areas might conveniently build up to the required population for ESCC wards..

Finally, the **Public Realm Working Group** seems to me to be a really helpful initiative. Members were in Rye last Thursday making inspections and taking notes. They are examining current practices and hope to draw on the experiences of this Council following the successful Town Steward initiative. Having put my nose into the affair, I slightly wished that I hadn't following my visits to three of the four public conveniences in town. They were all damp and carried a strong smell of urine. They are unappealing and functional at best. We have some work to do. The other comment I would make is that Rye has more than its share of weeds and moss-covered cobbles. I am told that that is how some people like to see Rye. Are we sure?

DA/26/10/15