

Minutes of an Additional Meeting of the Town Council held at the Town Hall, Rye, on Monday 29 February 2016

PRESENT Councillors John Breeds, Jonathan Breeds (**Deputy Mayor**), Cheryl Creaser, Mike Boyd, Justin Erswell, Bernardine Fiddimore (**Mayor**), Pat Hughes, Ian Potter, Andy Stuart

IN ATTENDANCE Richard Farhall - Town Clerk

The meeting commenced at 7.01pm.

115 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence – and the reasons (as notified to the Clerk) - were accepted from Rebekah Gilbert, Charlie Harkness, Jo Kirkham, Ray Prewer, Andi Rivett and Shaun Rogers.

116 CODE OF CONDUCT: DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Cllr John Breeds	item 121	Recipient of a past Mayor's Badge
Cllr Fiddimore	item 121	Prospective recipient of a past Mayor's Badge
Cllr Potter	item 121	Recipient of a past Mayor's Badge

117 ACCURACY OF MINUTES

RESOLVED To adopt, as an accurate record, the Minutes of the meetings held on 1 February 2016 (C10) and 1 February 2016 (C11).

118 AFFORDABLE ACCOMMODATION: PROVISION

Members were invited to consider the notes of the Affordable Accommodation Working Group meeting held on 8 February; the 2-bed costings (original and amended) – and the Working Group's Recommendations.

The WG had decided to Recommend that a 2-bed property be purchased, but let at a discounted (rather than) affordable rent – with the difference between what would have been the affordable rent and the discounted rent being ring-fenced by RTC. Assuming the (maximum) 5-year tenancy had been satisfactory, the outgoing tenant/s could apply for a grant from the ring-fenced fund for a contribution towards the deposit on their next property.

Cllr Stuart queried whether a discounted rent would be cheap enough to achieve the stated objective – ie enabling younger Rye families to remain within the Parish. Charging lower rents on RTC properties should help to drive down rents generally.

Cllr Creaser advised that the WG's thinking was that RTC should prioritise 'helping those who are helping themselves' by (effectively) helping them to save for a deposit towards their first house purchase. RTC is not a registered social landlord and is acting in a private capacity. The proposed discounted rent scheme could well be unique.

Cllr Potter reported that there was a concern that some local taxpayers might not agree to pay extra to 'subsidise' the running costs of a (discounted rent) buy-to-let property. If RTC could cover the purchase and running costs without further

increasing the precept – and the initiative was successful – taxpayers would, most likely, be more amenable to a precept rise to fund the further properties. Cllr Jonathan Breeds emphasised that this initial proposal was a ‘toe in the water’.

Cllr John Breeds observed that private landlords tend to have a bad image; however, this proposal is a positive one.

The Mayor suggested that there is a need for a more socially-conscious private landlord.

Cllr Boyd thanked the Clerk for his work on this matter to date.

The Clerk advised that credit for the discounted rent proposal rests with Cllr Potter.

Cllr Potter added that, although the PWLB interest rate appeared to be high in relation to the current Base Rate, it would be fixed for 50 years and there would be an early repayment option (which RTC had taken advantage of before – in relation to the HC).

The Clerk’s original 2-bedroom costing had been ‘precept neutral’ – it had been based on the assumption that the THC Cottage could be let for £1,150pcm and that the difference between this and the budgeted rent (£875pcm) would be used to subsidise the running costs of the discounted buy-to-let property. However, it was possible that the THC rent might need to be reduced to £995pcm. This scenario - reflected within the amended costing – would mean that £1,398pa would need to be found from another source. If this was the precept it would equate to 76p pa rise for a Band D Taxpayer.

Cllr Potter was aware of a prospective tenant prepared to pay £1,150pcm for the TH Cottage but his interest had been put to one side because he had a dog.

It was noted that Council had previously decided to be guided by the letting agent on occupancy restrictions – consequently, the TH Cottage was being advertised with a ‘no pets’ restriction.

It was acknowledged that dogs have the potential to cause damage to the fabric (or floor coverings) of the TH Cottage – but was suggested that, if necessary, the cost of repairs could be deducted from the tenant’s deposit.

RESOLVED 1 To adopt the Working Group’s Recommendations as follows:

- (a) That, as a first step towards providing accommodation below market rent, RTC resolves to purchase – primarily by way of a loan - one 2-bed property located within the Parish boundary.**
- (b) That RTC operates a discounted rent scheme which incorporates the maintenance of a reserve which tenants reaching the end of their tenancy may seek to draw on in order to help them secure their next property.**
- (c) That the WG be tasked with overseeing the public consultation required to support the application for borrowing approval.**

RESOLVED 2 To record the Council’s preference for proceeding on the basis of the Clerk’s original ‘precept neutral’ costing - ie achieving a TH Cottage rental of £1,150pcm, whilst accepting that this might require flexibility in relation to the ‘no pets’ restriction. Clerk

119 JULIAN HODGE BANK: AMENDED MANDATE

RESOLVED:

- A That accounts be continued with Julian Hodge Bank Limited at 29 Windsor Place, Cardiff CF10 3BZ.
- B That the Bank be instructed to honour and debit to the accounts of Rye Town Council whether in credit or overdrawn or becoming overdrawn in consequence of any such debit all cheques drafts or other orders or receipts for money signed on behalf of Rye Town Council provided that they are signed by any two of Michael Boyd, Jonathan Robert Breeds, Bernardine Lee Fiddimore, Josephine Clare Kirkham.
- C That being no longer Members of Rye Town Council Granville Hamilton Bantick and Mary Jean Smith be removed as account signatories.
- D That the Bank be furnished with a list of the names of the Members of Rye Town Council and the Town Clerk and that the Bank be authorised to act on any information given by the Town Clerk as to any changes therein.
- E That these resolutions be communicated to the Bank and remain in force until an amending resolution shall be passed by Rye Town Council and a copy therefore certified by the Chairman and Town Clerk shall have been received by the Bank.

120 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED Not to exclude the public and press from the consideration of item 121.

121 PAST MAYOR'S BADGES

Cllrs John Breeds and Potter restated their interest in this item.

Immediately prior to handing the chairmanship to the Deputy Mayor, the Mayor restated her interest and advised that she would not be participating in – or voting – on this item.

Members were invited to re-consider the quotations received originally (7.12.15) – as well as new quotation to supply 10 badges, manufactured from base metal with an enamel shield, for £759.60 + VAT.

Comments included: whenever possible, RTC should endeavor to use the services of local trades/crafts people; the cost of the current Past Mayor's Badge (£540 + VAT) fairly reflected the amount work undertaken voluntarily by a Mayor during a typical two-year Mayoralty; given that the badge holder may find themselves standing in for the Mayor or Deputy Mayor at a civic engagement the badge needs to be of an appropriate quality.

Cllr Potter requested a named vote.

PROPOSAL FOR RESOLUTION That Peter Farrow be asked to provide three Past Mayors Badges (at £540 + VAT each).

For John Breeds, Creaser, Erswell, Hughes, Boyd

Against Potter, Stuart, Jonathan Breeds

CARRIED

Clerk

The meeting ended at 7.37

Date Chairman