

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Policy, Resources & General Purposes
Committee, held at the Town Hall, Rye, on
Monday 17 July 2017**

- PRESENT** Councillors Mike Boyd (**Committee Chairman** - Deputy Mayor), Jonathan Breeds (Mayor), Cheryl Creaser, Bernardine Fiddimore, Rebekah Gilbert, Andi Rivett (**Committee Vice-Chairman**)
- IN ATTENDANCE** Richard Farhall - Town Clerk; Cllrs Pat Hughes and Andy Stuart; Louisa O'Shaughnessy – HC Manager *[part]*; Jessica Neame – General Assistant *[part]*; Gerard Reilly - *Rye News*
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The meeting commenced at 7.56pm.

11 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence – and the reasons as lodged with the Clerk – were accepted from Cllrs Sam Barnes, Jo Kirkham and Ray Prewer.

12 CODE OF CONDUCT: DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest.

13 MINUTES

RESOLVED To adopt the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2017 (PR01) as a correct record.

14 MATTERS ARISING

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51.2d) HC – Structure (seeking guidance on alternatives from Hedleys and SSALC. Outstanding.

5.5 Grant application (ascertaining whether the Rye Festival's Constitution provides for RTC representation) Outstanding.

52 Supporting Local Businesses, Recommendation (Holding an annual reception for all Rye businesses – to coincide with Small Business Saturday) Outstanding.

21.1b) Town Hall Budget Monitor, para 2 (briefing on the TH and HC financial reports) To be arranged.

34.1a) Drafting appropriate procedures to facilitate online banking Outstanding.

34.5 Millennium Wall: insurance (all risks) Ascertaining the additional premium Outstanding.

38 Business Planning (Drafting a matrix of the Visioning priorities) Outstanding.

6.1a) Ceremonies – providing the number held so far this year – as well as the previous period. Outstanding.

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23.2a) *Heritage Centre: progress report, Resolved 2 (Ascertaining the status of RDC's contract with Brochure Connect)* Outstanding.

23.2a) *Heritage Centre: progress report, Resolved 3 (Asking the Rye Ward Members to chase up the lack of progress in relation to brown 'I' signage)* Outstanding.

25 *BT Payphones, Resolved (To ask BT Payphones to repair the kiosk at the Railway Station)* Outstanding.

44 *Town Hall Access (Asking the Conservation & Design Officer to discuss the installation of a handrail on the main staircase)* Outstanding.

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5.2c) *Heritage Centre – Budget Monitor (Exploring charitable status)* Ongoing.

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5.5 *Future Funding Requirements, Resolved 1 (Cllr Creaser drafting idea to raise funds for RRIN)* Cllr Creaser reported that she had discussed an event (utilising volunteers) with the Mayor. She needed to see the General Assistant to identify a suitable date when the Mayor would be available.

7 *Public Seat, Top of Udimore Road (Accepting Cllr Rivett's offer to examine the works required and liaise with the Town Steward)* Cllr Rivett was manufacturing replacement slats and would install these using new fittings.

8 *Provision of Discounted Accommodation* The Clerk advised that RTC was awaiting an opinion from a barrister – adding that if progress did not speed up he would arrange an urgent Council meeting if necessary.

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Pension Scheme Council had determined this matter; however, a response had not yet been received from the member of staff concerned.

15 FINANCE

15.1 Town Hall

a) Schedule of Authorised Payments and Statement of Income

RESOLVED To receive and adopt the Schedule of Authorised Payments and Statement of Income for April 2017-May 2017.

b) Budget Monitor

Responding to Cllr Gilbert's observation that the budget provides for rent being paid on 97 South Undercliff from September, the Clerk suggested that was still possible. Cllr Gilbert highlighted the importance of obtaining generating rental income to service the loan repayment.

RESOLVED 1 To advise Heringtons that RTC needs to be in a position to let the property from 1 September. Clerk

RESOLVED 2 To receive and note the actual income and expenditure to 31 May 2017 against budget.

15.2 Heritage Centre

a) Progress report

Louisa O'Shaughnessy (LO) – HC Manager spoke to her update (see **APPENDIX**).

RESOLVED To accept the Clerk's suggestion that adopted 2017-18 HC Budget should be updated to take into account: performance thus far, the removal of VAT, new pensions costs and the additional winter hours requested. Clerk

Cllr Stuart suggested that RTC could, if necessary, considering releasing funds from the Marketing/Economic Development Earmarked Reserve.

The Clerk advised that he proposed to review the Earmarked Reserves and suggest virements in order to replenish the (dwindling) General Reserve. **Clerk**

LO reported that RDC's OSC would shortly be considering re-tendering the £23,000pa leaflet distribution contract with Brochure Connect. She intended to explore whether it was feasible for RTC to express interest.

Cllr Gilbert suggested that, relative to the floor space they occupied, the Old Pier Machines generate a relatively low return. LO considered that the number of machines could be reduced with limited impact on revenue. Freeing up space on the first floor would create an area for groups/school activity – which should lead to increased retail sales. Cllr Gilbert thought there were around 100 schools within 15-20 miles of Rye. Cllr Creaser suggested that using the first floor for educational purposes would support any application for charity registration.

LO added that she was also looking into what would be required to permit the Centre to sell alcohol.

The General Assistant, Jessica Neame added that efforts were still being made to find a reliable local supplier of preserves and chutneys.

b) Payments and Income

RESOLVED To receive and adopt the Income by Customer Summaries and Expenses by Supplier Summaries for April 2017-May 2017.

c) Profit & Loss Account

The Clerk advised that the usual Budget Monitor was not yet available because the VAT needed to be removed from the adopted 2017-18 (cash flow) budget.

RESOLVED To receive and note the P+L Statement as at 31 May 2017.

The HCM left the meeting.

15.3 Account Balances

RESOLVED To receive the Statement of Account Balances as at 31 May 2017.

15.4 Earmarked Reserves

RESOLVED To receive the Statement of Earmarked Reserves as at 31 May 2017.

15.5 Grant Application

The Committee considered an application from the Tilling Green Residents' Association for £250 towards the cost of booking a band for the next Summer Fete.

RESOLVED To award the grant requested.

RECOMMENDATION To award an additional £150.

15.6 Rye Heritage Centre: Unity Trust Bank current account application

The Clerk asked the Committee to consider making the declarations as set out below (omitted from the 26 June 2017 Council meeting agenda):

RESOLVED:

We agree to use the Telephone Banking Service to authorise transfers between our Unity Trust Bank accounts and to request balance and other general account information.

We agree to use the Internet Banking Service in accordance with the Terms and Conditions.

The individuals named on this application form will be our authorised Telephone Banking and Internet Banking service users.

The Trustees acknowledge that they will be jointly and severally liable for any of the Trust's liabilities.

Responsibility for all transactions performed on our internet banking service lies with the final authorising user.

We acknowledge your right not to grant or to suspend operation of this account until we have given Unity Trust Bank and requested documentation or information.

We authorise the bank to make any enquiries that it considers necessary to confirm the details in this form. The information we have provided is true to the best of our knowledge.

We confirm that we have read the Terms and Conditions for the bank's accounts and agree to and acknowledge that we will be bound by them.

15.7 Hodge Bank

RESOLVED 1 To:

(a) **Note that the Council holds the Hodge Bank deposit accounts following:**

(i) **02313600 7-day short term fixed rate (0.05%)**

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|------|---|-------------------|
| | Balance | £46,637.62 |
| (ii) | 02313601 7-day short term fixed rate (0.05%) | |
| | Balance | £30,804.70 |
- (b) **Agree to transfer the balances to two new Hodge accounts as follows:**
- (i) **02313600 to a 90-day notice variable interest account (currently 1% gross);**
- (ii) **02313601 to an 8-day notice variable interest account (currently 0.25% gross).**
- (c) **Agree that the existing authorised signatories (Cllrs Erswell, Fiddimore, Gilbert and Kirkham) shall remain in place.**

RESOLVED 2

- (i) **We request and authorise that Hodge Bank honour and debit our account on any instructions signed by any two of the authorised signatories;**
- (ii) **We agree that the list of directors and/or other officials of the Club/Society who are authorised to sign instructions on its behalf as set out in this application are accurate;**
- (iii) **We agree to notify the Bank of any changes to signatories or otherwise relevant to the operation of the account;**
- (iv) **We confirm that this mandate shall remain in force and the Bank may act upon it until we notify the Bank that it is to end or be changed.**

16 WORK PROGRAMMES

- (a) **Clerk**
Cllr Gilbert observed that a notable number of items remained behind schedule – suggesting that the priority action items (ie those that will raise revenue or save money) should be highlighted.

RESOLVED To receive the summary of the status of key tasks/projects as at 11.7.17

- (b) **General Assistant**
Speaking to her summarised work programme, the General Assistant highlighted:

- The replacement TH telephone system was now in place.
- She would be taking annual leave in August.
- She hoped to return to the TH web site in September.
- RTC would be attending a wedding fayre in Hastings in September.
- RTC now had a printed (as well as a digital) copy of the new weddings flyer.

It was agreed generally that the appointment of JN had been of huge benefit to RTC.

RESOLVED To receive the General Assistant's work programme summary.

17 BEXHILL COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Clerk reported that Cabinet/Ruling Group had amended the Community Governance Steering Group's Stage II consultation options – so that they were now: (a) No change; (b) A Bexhill Town Council (which could take possibly take over grounds maintenance and public conveniences in 2022); (c) An Area Committee (with no devolved power); (d) A parish council for each of the four Bexhill North, South, East

and West ESCC ward areas. The Cabinet/Ruling Group had decided also that sending a Stage II consultation flyer to every Bexhill household would be too expensive.

Democracy4Bexhill has decided to promote option (b) and fundraise to leaflet every Bexhill household, encouraging them to respond to Stage II.

It was agreed generally that it was appropriate for Bexhill to have its own local council.

RESOLVED To respond to Stage II of the consultation. Clerk

18 TRANSFER OF ASSETS:

**LAND OCCUPIED BY FERRY ROAD NURSERY &
7 WISH WARD – LAND ADJACENT**

The Clerk advised that these had been delayed - apparently because the relevant RDC-Wealden officer had been away.

19 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 items 20 and 21 entail consideration of the welfare and terms and conditions of staff.

Cllr Harkness left the Chamber.

20 STAFFING

RESOLVED To receive and note the Clerk's summary.

Cllr Hughes reported that a number of long-standing residents had told her that they had never seen Tilling Green looking so nice.

21 HERITAGE CENTRE GOVERNANCE REVIEW

RESOLVED To receive and note the Clerk's progress report.

The meeting ended at 8.03pm.

Date Chairman

Business Report for Rye Heritage Centre, April and May 2017

Louisa O'Shaughnessy, July 2017

There are four main sections to this business report:

1. Sales update
2. Promotional activities update
3. Stock update
4. Staff update and proposed staffing budget changes

1. Sales Update

• **Town Model viewings**

	April and May 2017 Tickets sold	April and May 2017 Income (£)	Last year Income (£)	
Adult entry	960 (average 15-16 per day)	3360	5731	
Child entry	316 (average 5 per day)	474		
Groups through till:	1377 (average 22-23 per day)	1377		
Groups on invoice:	-	671	482	
TOTAL:	-	5882	6213	-331

Points to note:

- As noted at the last policy meeting, April and May experienced an average group cancellation rate of 15%, which severely affected Town Model takings. Moving forward, from January 1st 2018, we will be asking for a £25 deposit to reserve a specific Town Model show. This will then be deductible from the final total due. We have started informing groups of this as we start to receive enquiries from agents. This is in line with policies for other attractions in the 1066 area.
- Invoice/BACS income is often relating to months previous to the reporting period, so can be an unreliable indicator of current performance. As of the beginning of July, the centre is awaiting payment on £580 on invoice for Town Model shows which will appear on future bank statements. Reporting will be more accurate once online banking is operational.
- **Old Pier Penny Arcade** takings for the period are up on last year, with a total of £773.50 for April-May (averaging £12.68 per day), compared to £657.50 or £10.77 a day.
- **Books and Maps, accommodation bookings and stamp sales** are all up on last year.
- The main loss in takings has come from **gift sales**. This is a result of cancelled groups, and uncertain group spend as outlined at the last policy meeting.

2.Promotional Activities: April- June

- **Meetings with Rye Castle Museum and Rye Harbour Nature Reserve to establish closer working relationships.** Planning on sending out a joint email mailshot with the Nature Reserve to boost school trip bookings.
- **1066 attractions meeting:** attended the group attractions meeting to build relationships with surrounding attractions and visit 1066 team. Distributed leaflets to surrounding attractions.
- **Mailshot to schools before half term- did not see much return on the school flyers.** We only had 3 vouchers come back in that week, although the vouchers do cover the summer holidays too, so we may see more. The centre did not see enough of a return on these to repeat this type of action in the future.
- **Leaflet distribution:** These have been distributed around the town, via Brochure Connect and direct to other attractions in the area via the 1066 attractions group meeting. We are now on a second print run that is being distributed to hotels/b and b's, to language schools both inside and outside the UK, and to top up venues in the town. We are also using these in the centre

when visitors express an interest in the model, but don't have the time to see the show then and there, to act as a prompt for later in their visit. Response to the leaflet has been good.

- **Posters:** We now have posters that have been distributed around the town. This has also been sent to representatives of the Cruise companies
- **New A boards:** fresher posters with larger images of the Town Model, these are much more visible from the road and from Mermaid Street to draw visitors in.
- **Social Media:** Facebook is being updated far more frequently and is attracting more attention. Most popular post was a video of the 'Sidney Knows' penny arcade machine which has been viewed more than 1,200 times.

3. Stock Update

- The centre is now almost back to correct stock levels for the peak season after extensive ordering to restock after the changeover of management and financial years. This is the main reason why purchases for April and May are so high.

Stock purchasing is likely to remain high for the rest of this financial year, as my plan is to stocktake and deep clean all stockrooms at the end of the main season (November) to calculate how much has been sold, forecast stock needed for the 2018/2019 season accordingly, then buy it in over winter before we reopen full time for the February half term.

The advantage to this is that management time spent placing multiple orders throughout the season will be minimized, staff time spent sorting deliveries during opening hours will be minimized, freeing them up to concentrate on sales and enquiries, and we will be able to secure better wholesale prices on larger orders. This will also mean that stock purchasing in the 2018/2019 financial year will be significantly lower than this year.

- **New ranges such as Romney Marsh Wools, Olio of Oxney and Kent & Sussex Tea are selling steadily.** By far the most successful new product is the 'Around and About' maps of Rye and Winchelsea, which retail at £4. To date, we have sold 170 since May
- **Sale table working well to clear unwanted stock.** Products being sold at between 70%-50% of original price to at least recoup wholesale price paid.

4. Staff and proposed changes to staffing budget

- Staff have now had 2 full team meetings. The first in May updated the team on the vision for the Centre and the sales targets for the financial year. The second meeting in July focused on upcoming events and sales training. Both have been well received, and staff are motivated to turn more enquiries into sales.
- **Staffing structure:**

The revised staffing structure in the centre is making it very difficult to carry out any management duties in the centre, as I am needed to assist on the shop floor for the majority of my hours.

I have rota'd to utilize the summer temporary staff on weekdays as much as possible in order to allow me to catch up on emails, ordering, reports etc, and am being as frugal as possible with staffing levels.

During a peak season in a retail business, it is to be expected that management are active in delivering a customer facing service, however, I am concerned that the current proposed working pattern for the winter closure period will not allow for any administrative, planning, promotional or centre improvement time.

As it stands, between November and February, I am rota'd and budgeted to work every other Saturday and Sunday only. Gill Pascall (Senior Sales Assistant) is rota'd to work the weekends that I am not, and Jessica Neame (admin support) is not budgeted to continue working in the centre over winter.

There are numerous tasks in the centre that can only be carried out on a weekday, or that need performing regularly. These include but are not limited to: banking the till takings, answering booking enquiries promptly, contacting stock suppliers, receiving deliveries, planning the following years financial budget, timesheets and payroll.

In addition, there are many tasks that are overdue that would streamline and update the centre, and increase the financial viability for the future such as: applying for an alcohol licence for sale of local wines, proactive promotion to new foreign language schools, uk schools and hotels, investigating possible charity status, updating computer systems, producing/ commissioning new town trails and maps for sale in the centre, deep cleaning the Town Model, and updating the ghost walk audio tour.

Looking back on email records and invoices from last year, previous management were working in the centre at least 2 weekdays a week over the winter period in a voluntary capacity.

Proposed changes:

I propose that over the winter season, I work for 2 x 5 hour days during the week on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, that Jessica Neame continues to provide the financial administrative support to the centre for up to 5 hours a week on a Tuesday and that Gill Pascall (Senior Sales Assistant) works 5 hours on a Wednesday. If the current summer temporary sales assistant (Kate Smith) was to be kept on, they would be available to work every other weekend in my stead.

This would allow us to carry out a full overhaul of the administrative procedures in the centre, to fully enact our plans to increase the centre revenue as outlined above and at the last policy meeting, to keep up to date with bookings and promotion, to produce an accurate and thorough budget for 2018-2019 and to prepare fully for the 2018-2019 season.

Cost:

The current staffing budget for the financial year, excluding NI contributions and pension, is **£49,379**.

I have calculated that my proposed changes to the staffing budget would cost **£51, 694** – again, excluding NI and pension. This is an extra **£2315** in staffing hours and holiday but it is my firm belief that this would be of enormous benefit in moving the centre forward in terms of productivity.