

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held at the Town Hall, Rye on
Monday 11 December 2023**

PRESENT Councillors David Bookless, Mike Boyd, John Breeds, Cheryl Creaser, Willy Everett, Bernardine Fiddimore, Rebekah Gilbert, Vagn Hansen, Chris Hoggart, Pat Hughes, Sophie Judge, Jo Kirkham, Sue Learoyd Smith, Andy Stuart (**Deputy Mayor**), Andi Rivett (**Mayor**), Shaun Rogers

IN ATTENDANCE Richard Farhall - Town Clerk; Jessica Neame – Deputy Town Clerk; Paul Goring – Town Sergeant; The Reverend Fiona Gill [part]; County Councillor Keith Glazier; Colonel Anthony Kimber; 33 other members of the public

The meeting commenced at 6.34pm.

93 PRAYERS

Prayers were said by the Reverend Fiona Gill, Minister, Rye Baptist Church.

94 APOLOGIES

There was none.

It was agreed generally to defer consideration of item 95 until after the adjournment.

96 CODE OF CONDUCT

The disclosures of interest following were made:

Cllr Gilbert	103 & 107	Project Manager and trustee of Rye Recreation & Wellbeing CIO
Cllr Hughes	100	Involved with the organisation of Rye Fawkes
Cllr Kirkham	101	Foundation Governor

*The Mayor adjourned the meeting for Mayoral Announcements; the Reports of the County and District Councillors; the appointment of the Mayor Elect 2024-25 and contributions/questions from members of the public (See **APPENDIX**).*

The meeting reconvened.

97 COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED 1 *Page 1, line two (heading) To delete 11 November and insert 13 November.*

RESOLVED 2 *To approve, as an accurate record, the draft Minutes of the Council meeting held on 13 November 2023 (C11), as amended.*

98 COMMITTEE MINUTES

RESOLVED To receive and note the Draft Minutes of the meetings of the Planning & Townscape Committee held on 16 October 2023 (PT05), 30 October 2023 (PT06) and 27 November 2023 (PT07).

99 FINANCE

a) Earmarked Reserves

The Clerk advised that the absence of a tenant at 97 South Undercliff for 6 months, plus the cost of a refurbishment, had resulted in £13,833 being drawn from the General Reserve and, in order to maintain the General Reserve, invited Members to consider viring this sum from Earmarked Reserves (proposed virements provided).

He added that utilising £2,497 from the Number 97 Earmarked Reserve would leave a balance in that reserve of £3,000 – not the £2,000 cited in his briefing paper.

Given that it is likely that there will be no expenditure on devolved services in 2023-24, Cllr Hansen suggested viring some of the £23,000 provision made this year. The Clerk anticipated that this (and further provisions) would be needed over the next 1-2 years.

RESOLVED To agree the virements proposed.

b) [RDC Budget Consultation 2024-25](#)

It was noted that the deadline is 17 December.

RESOLVED To ask the Clerk to draft a response for Members to consider informally. Clerk

95 MUSIC WELL CIC

Members were asked to consider a revised request for a grant of £800 towards the Music Well running its Children's Singing Club and Adult Singing Club for a year.

RESOLVED To award the grant in full. Clerk

Cllr Kirkham restated her interest in the item following.

100 RYE FOUNDATION GOVERNORS

Members were advised that, following the resignation of Ian Potter, there is a Rye Town Council governor vacancy.

Members were reminded that, at Committee Formation on 5 June 2023, Members resolved to ask if John Breeds could be invited to join the Foundation Governors.

Cllr Boyd proposed – and Cllr Hughes seconded – Cllr Breeds.

There being no other nominations, the Mayor declared Cllr Breeds to be appointed. Clerk

101 RYE FAWKES 2023

The Mayor invited Council to consider a response to the reduced level of street cleaning the morning following.

Comments included:

- Biffa's costs have increased significantly. RDC is not in a position to contribute to the estimated £4,200 cost of event-related litter collection.
- Battle Town Council gave Battel Bonfire Boyes a 'one off' grant towards hiring a road sweeper lorry.
- Rye Bonfire Society members did some clearing up – including ensuring the Remembrance parade route was free of litter.
- Some businesses cleared outside their premises.
- The High Street was cleaned on the Sunday morning.
- Black bags of litter cleared by volunteers – and some Biffa staff – were not removed until Monday morning.
- Biffa was supposed to have assessed the litter generated on a 'normal weekend' – and then compared this with the Bonfire weekend – but is not clear whether this actually happened.
- As at the Sunday lunch time, Market Street and Cinque Ports Street were strewn with litter – which would have given visitors a poor impression of the town.
- Graham Ellis is working on a proposal to provide large waste bins for use at events, separating biodegradable/organic waste (which he could use) and 'other' waste. Volunteers might be needed to guide the public on which bin to use.
- The Bonfire Society could spend less on fireworks (which frighten animals and cause pollution) and use the money saved to fund clearing up after the bonfire.
- Although expenditure of fireworks is harder to justify during a cost of living increase, Rye Fawkes is a popular tradition.
- Given that many businesses benefit from Rye Fawkes, they could be asked to contribute towards the clear-up cost.
- RTC (which is a registered waste carrier) could train – and authorise - volunteer litter collectors.

RESOLVED To explore Graham Ellis's proposal and encourage businesses to help with the post event clear-up. Clerk

102 PRIORITIES

RESOLVED To receive and note the (ranked) list of RTC's priorities 2024-25:

- 1 Affordable/Cheaper Housing
- 2 Swimming Pool and Sports Centre
- 3 Maintaining at least one public convenience
- 4 Town Steward Service
- 5 Control of public open spaces
- 6 Review of the Rye Neighbourhood Plan
- 7 Tourism Support Strategy
- 8 Landgate
- 9 Reducing the Council's carbon footprint
- 10 Town Crier Championship

103 RYE RECREATION & WELLBEING CIO

RESOLVED To confirm that Members are happy for the Clerk to continue to act as Secretary.

The Clerk advised that he would revert to the Council if he judged that the role was becoming too onerous.

104 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED In accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 (1)(2), to exclude (with the exception of RNP Co-ordinator for 105) the public and press from the items following on the grounds that item 105 includes consideration of commercially sensitive information that the Local Planning Authority has not yet released into the public domain; item 106 potentially involves discussion about achieving best value for a RTC asset; item 107 involves the consideration of contractual information that has been provided to RTC on a confidential basis because contractual arrangements with other parties are currently in place.

105 ROTHER LOCAL PLAN: RYE SITE (RE)ASSESSMENTS

Members were asked to confirm RTC's current position in respect of sites that have been identified – or put forward – for development in, and around, Rye, prior to the publication of RDC's Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (most likely Spring 2024), when RTC and others will have an opportunity to consider formally RDC's assessment of development sites.

The RNP Co-ordinator advised that, at this stage, The RNP Steering Group was inviting Members to confirm RTC's current position in relation to existing potential development sites – and the suggested approach when RTC is invited formally to comment on new sites.

Colonel Kimber reminded Members that RTC has a policy of resisting development outside of the development boundary. He suggested that RTC should be wary of any proposed development within adjoining parishes that would abut – or be close to – the Rye Parish boundary. It remains the case that development in – and around – Rye is constrained by a lack of available land, high land values, and special designations conferring high degrees of protection and flood risk.

Cllr Rogers observed that affordable/cheaper housing is RTC's highest priority and, given this, suggested that RTC support for a small 'affordable' housing scheme outside of the development boundary should merit consideration.

Responding to questions from Cllr Hoggart and Hansen, Colonel Kimber advised that the RNP would need to go to referendum again only if substantial changes were being sought. The RNPSG is focusing on increasing protection for the green spaces within the parish and addressing the need to reduce carbon emissions.

Colonel Kimber left the meeting.

106 TOWN HALL COTTAGE

Following on from the tenants' request to purchase the Cottage, Members considered the valuations received and the pros and cons of disposing of the property.

Members concluded that, at the present time, the disadvantages of selling the Cottage outweighed the advantages.

RESOLVED To decline the purchase request, for the time being – but to thank the tenants for their interest in, and care for, the Cottage. Clerk

107 RYE LEISURE CENTRE

**RESOLVED To approve the Draft Heads of Term between ESCC and RTC.
Clerk**

It was noted that RTC had not yet had sight of the Rye Recreation & Wellbeing CIO's Draft Business Plan.

Cllr Hansen highlighted the need to be mindful of the considerable financial risk that RTC could be exposed to and the need to ensure that adequate safeguards were incorporated within the final lease/s.

Cllr Stuart stated that it was remiss of him not to thank everyone for the way they conducted themselves during the Appointment of the Mayor Elect. He thanked Members for their support and hoped he would not let them down.

He reported that, during the count, the Mayor had advised him that he would not stand for another term at next May's Mayor Making. Cllr Stuart thanked the Mayor for this, adding that, at the appropriate time, he would appreciate a handover from the Mayor and the Clerk.

The meeting ended at 8.51pm

Date Chairman

Reports of the District Councillors

Cllr Creaser reported that she is ensuring that the transfer of the allotments freeholds is progressing.

RDC is looking to introduce 100% Council Tax relief for the very poorest in the community.

Report of the County Councillor

Cllr Glazier's report included:

Highways Repairs are continuing in – and around – Rye. Deadman's Lane is to be fully resurfaced (date TBA). The double yellow lining work in Harbour Road had been postponed because of bad weather.

Cllr Glazier had visited ESCC's 'new' highways contractor, Balfour Beatty at its Ringmer depot. The set up is impressive. Its operational staff increasingly use tablets to update records and more gangs are being deployed.

ESSC had directed an additional £15m towards highways maintenance.

Government settlement This is due to be announced w/c 19 December. There was a statement in the Commons recently to the effect that no local authority will find itself more than 3% worse off. ESCC is currently looking at an £18m funding shortfall.

Looked after children There is a pressing need to identify more foster parents.

Mayoral Announcements

The Mayor is continuing to write a column for *Rye News*.

He visited the Rye Conservation Society Christmas social for a short time, before heading to a Gurkha concert in Lydd. The following day he attended the St Michael's Hospice Tree of Lights Service at St Marys.

The Mayor and the Clerk attended a recent (online) meeting of the Standing Committee of the Confederation.

Appointment of Mayor Elect 2024-25

It was agreed generally to follow the process suggested, prior to the meeting, by the Clerk.

It was agreed generally that the Clerk should facilitate.

Members did not agree that the public should be permitted to participate in the process (For 4; Against 8; Abst 4).

Members then considered the voting method for the appointment of the Mayor Elect. One Member favoured a secret ballot on the grounds that it would be less divisive.

After considering a number of other methods – and upon the second attempt – a majority of members favoured a signed ballot (For 11; Against 4; Abst 1).

The Clerk asked for nominations for Mayor Elect 2024-25.

Cllr Creaser proposed – and Cllr Learoyd Smith seconded – Cllr Rivett.

Cllr Boyd proposed – and Cllr Hughes seconded – Cllr Stuart.

Both candidates accepted the nominations.

The proposers and seconders were invited to speak to their nominations.

Cllr Rivett

Cllr Creaser Given the significant projects that are being worked on – and relationships that Cllr Rivett has developed - with RDC, it is important that Cllr Rivett continues in his role as Mayor.

Cllr Learoyd Smith It is not about personalities – continuity is needed to ensure the transfer of the allotments and Leisure Centre community governance.

Cllr Stuart

Cllr Boyd If elected Mayor, Cllr Stuart would be perfectly capable of building on Cllr Rivett's work. The convention is that Mayors serve two 1-year terms of office. Past Mayors have found themselves continuing the work of their predecessors.

Cllr Hughes Cllr Stuart has the knowledge and expertise to step into the role and would not simply accept information at face value. The development of the RNP spanned a number of Mayoralities and was seen through to adoption at referendum.

The candidates were invited to speak for up to 3 minutes.

Cllr Rivett thanked Cllrs Creaser and Learoyd Smith for nominating him.

It has been a huge privilege to hold the Mayoralty – something he has pursued passionately. He has been motivated by the desire to secure change in an unstable world. The office holder should not be motivated by their own ego. He serves to make a difference for the children of the town – and their children.

RTC has found itself contemplating taking on a number of big projects – such as the Leisure Centre and devolved services – and being faced with some big issues – including affordable housing and the cost of living and climate crises.

RTC needs to work in partnership with RDC to ensure a smooth handover of services and facilities.

He seeks to make the Parish a better place for everyone – and this is why he is happy to volunteer his time.

Cllr Stuart considered that Cllr Rivett has been an excellent Mayor – but so had many of his predecessors. All loved Rye and have given freely – before, during and after their Mayoralities.

The convention is that Mayors serve for two years before handing over to new blood.

All Mayors being something different to the Mayoralty – but all bring drive and enthusiasm.

He would bring a range of skills and experience – including 30 years in business and involvement with a range of local voluntary and community organisations, such as the Rye Arts Festival.

Members were given the opportunity to ask each candidate one question.

Cllr Bookless to Cllr Rivett

What do/would you bring to the role?

Cllr Rivett The ability to connect with townsfolk and discuss their concerns.

Cllr Bookless to Cllr Stuart

What would you bring to the role?

Cllr Stuart Drive, enthusiasm and determination – whilst building on the great work of Cllr Rivett.

Cllr Boyd to Cllr Rivett

Given that RTC is about to receive the freeholds of the allotments, the Leisure Centre is heading towards a new head lease – and RTC has been involved with pursuing affordable/cheaper housing for some time – what single thing cannot be handed on to a successor?

Cllr Rivett If the Leisure Centre is to be governed by the community the working relationship with RDC needs to be maintained. There is a long way to go yet.

Cllr Boyd to Cllr Stuart

Do you feel especially passionate about any of the projects RTC is pursuing currently?

Cllr Stuart His previous/current business/voluntary experience would stand him in good stead when taking over from Cllr Rivett.

Cllr Creaser to Cllr Rivett

What plans do you have when you have handed over to your successor in 12 months' time?

Cllr Rivett If elected for another year, he would work closely with Cllr Stuart to ensure a smooth handover.

Cllr Creaser to Cllr Stuart

Is it imperative that you are appointed Mayor Elect?

Cllr Stuart The convention is that Mayors serve two years, regardless of who they are.

Cllr Fiddimore to Cllr Rivett

In the interests of transparency, why did you not make certain Members aware of your intention to stand again? (When I was approached, I was told that the Deputy Mayor and Clerk had not been informed.)

Cllr Rivett The approaches were made others.

Cllr Fiddimore to Cllr Stuart

Are you aware of the rumour circulating that some RDC officers have a negative view of you?

Cllr Stuart I am not aware of this being the case.

Cllr Hansen to Cllr Rivett

Given the (pleasing) high public attendance this evening, how would you build on this?

Cllr Rivett I would continue to serve the people and cater for their needs.

Cllr Hansen to Cllr Stuart

Given the (pleasing) high public attendance this evening, how would you build on this?

Cllr Stuart It is great that so many people have attended this evening – probably the most for 12 years or so. RTC should be open and transparent and use social media to provide regular updates on its work.

Cllr Hughes to Cllr Rivett

Were you involved with initiating the approach to safeguard the future of the Pool?

Cllr Rivett I have chaired the Rye Leisure Centre Working Group.

Cllr Hughes to Cllr Stuart

Were you involved with initiating the approach to safeguard the future of the Pool?

Cllr Stuart No.

Cllr Judge to Cllr Rivett

Would not being Mayor next year jeopardise any of the projects you are involved with?

Cllr Rivett Some of the projects are chaired/headed up by the Mayor. However, he could continue with some of the projects he is involved with currently.

Cllr Judge to Cllr Stuart

Would remaining Deputy Mayor for another year affect any plans he might have?

Cllr Stuart Probably not.

Cllr Kirkham had no questions – but could not recall the Council being in this situation over the last 52 years. She was sure that, whoever was appointed Mayor Elect, the successful candidate would do his very best.

Cllr Learoyd Smith to Cllr Stuart

Mindful of the importance of the Leisure Centre to the community, what involvement have you had with safeguarding its future?

Cllr Stuart I am a member of the working group and have attended two of its meetings. He had also applied for membership of the Centre and was of the opinion that it is a case of 'use it or lose it'.

Cllr Rivett to Cllr Stuart

If Cllr Rivett was successful in being re-elected Mayor, would Cllr Stuart be prepared to work with him for the next 12 months?

Cllr Stuart Referring to his meeting with the Mayor and Clerk last week, Cllr Stuart re-stated his view that the '2 years' convention should be upheld. Without the convention, previous Mayors could have sought a 'third term'.

Cllr Rogers to Cllr Rivett

How would you promote diversity (so that RTC does not continue to see the 'same old faces')?

Cllr Rivett It was unfortunate that, unusually, there was no Town Council election this year. He would encourage people to take an interest in RTC's work and would continue to engage with them.

Cllr Rogers to Cllr Stuart

How would you promote diversity (so that RTC does not continue to see the 'same old faces')?

Cllr Stuart All Members should promote diversity. RTC could utilise social media more.

The appointment was conducted by way of a signed ballot, with both candidates observing the count.

The Clerk declared the result as follows

Cllr Rivett	7 votes
Cllr Stuart	8 votes

There was one abstention.

The Clerk declared Cllr Stuart to be appointed Mayor Elect for 2024-25.

Public Contributions/Questions

Colonel Kimber reported that the number of households from Ukraine and decreased from 15 to 10. After delivering 60,000 jabs, the Rye Vaccination Centre would be concluding its current round of covid jabs on Thursday.

Ian Potter suggested that the majority of members of the public present had attended solely for the appointment of the Mayor Elect. Referencing the difficulty Members had agreeing the method of making the appointment, he suggested that RTC had not been presented in a favourable light – and asked if, on behalf of the Council, the Mayor would apologise.

The Mayor apologised – adding that he was aware that some of the members of the public attending had hoped to have been given the opportunity to speak.