

BEXHILL-ON-SEA TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Meeting of Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council** held in the Council Chamber, Bexhill Town Hall on Wednesday 9th June 2021 at 6.30pm

PRESENT: Cllrs Paul Plim Town Mayor
Claire Baldry Deputy Town Mayor
Dan Barfoot Sharon Blagrove Lynn Brailsford
Tony Carroll Bryan Clasby Brian Drayson
Tim Fenner Elly Gibson David Harding
Ben Izzard Charlie Rustem Viv Taylor-Gee
Richard Thomas Connor Winter Stuart Wray

IN ATTENDANCE: Cllr Christine Bayliss R.D.C.
Mr. Paul Lendon former Rother Councillor and Mayor
Elise Liversedge and Nick Weekes Town Forum
Linda Butcher Interim Town Clerk

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Members of the public are welcome and encouraged to attend. The first ten minutes of the meeting will be available for the public to express a view or ask a question on relevant matters on the agenda. The public and press are also welcome to stay and observe the rest of the meeting.

Paul Lendon said how pleased he was to see everyone here and invited everyone to the Sussex Day reading of the Sussex Charter which would take place on 16th June in the colonnade at midday. He also referred to Bexhill Day on 22nd August and asked if the Coat of Arms would be retained by Bexhill Town Council.

The Town Mayor thanked him for his comments and questions and said the Interim Town Clerk would contact him shortly.

APOLOGIES – to receive apologies for absence

Cllr Julie Norris – health matter

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are invited to make any declaration of personal or prejudicial interests that they may have in relation to items on the agenda and are reminded to make any declarations at any stage during the meeting if it then becomes apparent that this may be required when a particular item or issue is to be considered. There were none at this time.

MINUTES

To resolve that the minutes of the 1st Annual Statutory Council Meeting held on Wednesday 19th May 2021 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

- 00016** **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes as amended to include the names of two members of the public who were present.

There were no matters outstanding that were not listed on the agenda.

APPOINTMENT OF TOWN CLERK

Cllr Claire Baldry spoke in addition to the Interim Town Clerk's report and said she was delighted to recommend to Council the appointment of Julie Miller as the permanent Town Clerk who would be starting on 5th July 2021. She confirmed that excellent references had been received.

- 00017** **RESOLVED** unanimously to appoint Julie Miller to the post of Town Clerk to Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council.

REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

There were no reports from Rother District or East Sussex County Ward Councillors at this time.

The Town Mayor's report was attached to the agenda and was noted.

In answer to a question the Interim Town Clerk suggested that as there are 18 Rother District Ward Councillors for Bexhill, perhaps a rota could be set up to ensure that not all Members report at the same time. Cllr Brian Drayson volunteered to speak to his fellow District Councillors.

OFFICER'S REPORT

Calendar of meetings and costs

The Clerk confirmed that the Council Chamber is unavailable on 18th August because there is a Public Enquiry booked in for that day. The Council will need to consider whether it changes the date or the location of that meeting. Council Chamber £40 per hour but the option to live-stream has unfortunately been withdrawn due to "significant resource and technical issues in livestreaming."

- 00018** **RESOLVED** to still hold the Council meeting on 18th August 2021 and to find an alternative location.

The Council wished to record its thanks to the Town Forum [Elise Liversedge and Nick Weekes] for undertaking the streaming at tonight's meeting.

Policy Documents

The Interim Town Clerk had previously forwarded copies of the following policy documents: Media and Communications Policy, Freedom of Information Policy and Information Management Policy and suggested

these should all be read in conjunction with the Town Clerk's Job Description. The Clerk advised of one amendment to the Information Management Policy which should refer to the Data Protection Act 2018. Noted.

00019 **RESOLVED** unanimously to adopt all three policy documents

FEEDBACK FROM WORKING GROUPS ON STANDING ORDERS, FINANCIAL REGULATIONS, COMMITTEE STRUCTURES and OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

Copies of these notes had been circulated to all Councillors prior to the meeting although it appear some had not been received.

Working Group for Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Committee Structure

Standing Orders

There was a debate about adjusting the wording to make all references non-gender specific but the Interim Town Clerk gave the advice of the solicitor that the Council should refrain from tampering with the wording used in legislation. A proposal to adopt the Standing Orders previously submitted by the Interim Town Clerk but to adjust specific wording was LOST.

00020 **RESOLVED** to adopt the Standing Orders as previously submitted by the Interim Town Clerk and instruct the Clerk to source appropriate training in Standing Orders.

Financial Regulations

00021 **RESOLVED** unanimously to adopt the Financial Regulations as previously submitted by the Interim Town Clerk and instruct the Clerk to source appropriate training in Financial Regulations.

Review of Council Structure

00022 **RESOLVED** unanimously to adopt a structure similar to that previously submitted by the Interim Town Clerk as follows:

a) Planning and Development Advisory Committee (6 Members) with the terms of reference previously presented by the Interim Town Clerk. Monthly meetings

b) Finance and General Purposes Committee (9 Members) with the terms of reference as previously presented by the Interim Town Clerk but with the following caveat "the Committee is mandated to seek areas of income generation as a matter of priority and to facilitate grant applications."

Monthly meetings initially then quarterly, time and dates to be agreed by the Committee.

c) Community Committee (9 Members). The terms of reference will be agreed prior to embarking on a Visionary Exercise for Council approval but must include Community Engagement, Youth Engagement and Town Regeneration. Monthly meetings, time and dates to be agreed by the Committee.

d) Climate, Nature and Environment Committee (7 Members). The terms of reference will be developed by the Committee for approval of Council but will include Allotments and Green Spaces. Monthly meetings, time and dates to be agreed by Committee.

Working Group on Premises

When the report had been presented there was debate about several of the buildings that had been identified and in particular a question was asked as to why the building in Egerton Park had been included when there seemed to be firm reports that it was not available for consideration. It was felt to be in the wrong place anyway the general view seemed to be that Members felt something in the town centre would be more appropriate. There was also concern about housing the Town Council within a building that had been a church.

Some suggestions for further research included free use of halls for meetings and whether it might be acceptable for the new Town Clerk to work remotely on a temporary basis to give the Council longer to find something suitable. The Interim Town Clerk was asked to speak to the new Town Clerk.

00023 **RESOLVED** unanimously to ask the Interim Town Clerk to help the Working Group do a scoping exercise and viewings to include Egerton Park, Methodist Church, shop fronts in St. Leonards Road and Devonshire Road, the Bagnall Hall and possibly the empty ground floor of the big flats at the sea end of Sackville Road (if not flooded). It should also include the possibility of using the Town Hall as a base in the immediate term.

A proposal to ask the Interim Town Clerk to request ESCC and RDC allow the Working Group on Premises to access the Egerton Park Children's Centre was LOST.

PROPOSALS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS FOR CONSIDERATION

Bexhill Town Youth Council – Item requested by Cllr Connor Winter

A report and a letter from Cllr Sam Coleman had previously been circulated to all Members and it was suggested that a new Working Group should be created to see if the young people of Bexhill-on-Sea want a

Youth Council and they should also be included within the Visioning Exercise. It was suggested that perhaps a new name could be considered and to see if RDC has any funding which would assist the Town Council.

00024 **RESOLVED** unanimously that this item should be transferred to the Community Committee

Bexhill Town Council's response to the Climate Emergency – item requested by Cllr Ben Izzard

Cllr Izzard spoke to his report and asked for a recorded vote.

The last few years has seen unprecedented recognition of the climate emergency. This could should debate our response and consider the motion:

00025 **RESOLVED** unanimously that this Council

- 1) Recognises and declares a 'Climate and Nature Emergency' and will raise awareness ensuring all town councillors and staff are knowledgeable about the climate and nature issues we face.
- 2) Pledges to support Bexhill as a town to become carbon neutral by 2030.
- 3) Empowers and enables a committee (when formed) to create a free expert led Community Climate Panel for local people, organisations and business representatives to develop evidence-based ideas and solutions to enable the town to meet its climate emergency targets.
- 4) Explores staffing who could actively seek environment and climate related funding or grants that would help support and implement a climate emergency strategy plan which should be created from the Community Climate Panel's recommendations.

As this was resolved unanimously it is not necessary to list Councillors at this point for the recorded vote.

In addition to ask the Town Clerk to issue a press release was not included as the Clerk can do this without a formal resolution.

Communications Committee – item requested by Cllr Claire Baldry

Cllr Baldry acknowledged that the Council had earlier in the meeting agreed to have a Communications Committee so it was

00026 **RESOLVED** unanimously that the new Town Clerk would be asked to make the priority the setting up of a Website, produce regular Newsletters, engage on Social Media in order to make Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council more visible to the residents and others. It is important that everyone has access to the Council and not just those who use social media. It was further AGREED that when in post the new Town Clerk would report when

these targets could be achieved and in particular to try and source a website provider within the South East if there is no suitable organisation within Bexhill itself.

Training – item requested by Cllr Viv Taylor-Gee

Given how new the procedures and processes of a town council are to most of the town councillors, and to enable business to be carried out swiftly and efficiently for the benefit of the town, it is proposed that the town clerk with two councillors arranges some appropriate training over one half day, to include innovative and experienced speakers.

00027 **RESOLVED** unanimously.

Hello Bexhill – item requested by Cllr Viv Taylor-Gee

To ensure that the town and the town council increases its profile, it is proposed that the town clerk with three councillors plus appropriate residents prepares a strategy – Hello Bexhill! This strategy to explore for example, but not limited to:

- Commissioning Bexhill-on-Sea signs where they are lacking, e.g. on the London Road entrance on the A259, securing any necessary permission and the bids to make and erect the signs as soon as possible.
- Asking Rother if we can use say two benches as a pilot scheme for Happy to Chat benches on the prom. These are benches which have a sign on them saying “Happy to chat – sit here if you don’t mind someone stopping to say hello.” This scheme launches in Cardiff and is now international. Bexhill is already known as a friendly town, this would reduce isolation and enhance daily social contact.
- Exploring speedy set up of hanging baskets round the town, with sponsorships and maintenance plans in place.

Following discussions about including other Wards, e.g. Sidley it was

00028 **RESOLVED** unanimously to refer this item to the Community Committee.

After discussion it was AGREED to take the following items together and to rename Recovery Team to “Best way of Recovering from COVID”

Recovery Team – item requested by Cllr Viv Taylor-Gee

There is £10,000 in the budget for post-COVID recovery. It is proposed that a Working Group be set up to explore the best way to spend this responsibly on appropriate initiatives, in conjunction with community organisations, to report back to Full Council by the end of July.

Neighbourhood plan – item requested by Cllr Viv Taylor-Gee

It is proposed to start work on a neighbourhood plan, exploring its funding, scope and timing. This to be done by the relevant committee.

Audit Team – item requested by Cllr Viv Taylor-Gee

Many residents are baffled by who does what, and who should do what. The Council proposes to create an audit team to monitor how East Sussex and Rother are delivering on their contractual obligations to the town, and work with them to improve communications and results.

Bexhill, a fair rent town – item requested by Cllr Viv Taylor-Gee

Propose that a working group be set up with estate agents, residents groups, landlords and tenants to implement the proposed 10 principles for the Betterment of Bexhill, as a standard to aim for in the town.

Interim Town Clerk's guidance – several of the above items involve financial commitments and would need to be part of any Financial Committee that is eventually set up bearing in mind you cannot delegate spending authorisation to Working Groups.

00029 **RESOLVED** unanimously to defer these items to next week's Council meeting when budgets can be apportioned to spending Committees.

**URGENT MATTERS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN FOR NOTING
and/or INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA**

The Town Mayor brought to Members' attention an email and survey he had received from Raymond Konyn, Chairman of Bexhill Heritage concerning the Royal Sovereign Lantern Tower Consultation Paper. Although the matter was discussed briefly, it was not an agenda item so there could be no resolution from Council, the Interim Town Clerk noted the Members' comments.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the date of the next Council Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 16th June 2021 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea.

Cllr Ben Izzard tendered his apologies for that meeting due to work commitments.

The Council thanked Elise Liversedge and Nick Weekes for providing the recording of the meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm