

BEXHILL-ON-SEA TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the **FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE** meeting of
the **BEXHILL-ON-SEA TOWN COUNCIL**
on **Wednesday 23rd November 2022 at 7pm**

PRESENT: Cllr Brailsford; Cllr Baldry; Cllr Clasby; Cllr Rustem;
Cllr Taylor-Gee; Cllr Plim;

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: J Miller, Clerk; Cllr Winter; Cllr Izzard; five members of
the public.

00444. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

a) Cllr Izzard asked for the committee to consider how the council engages with the public during meetings at the public participation session.
The standing orders relating to public participation can be reviewed by the committee.

b) Cllr Izzard asked that the committee consider funding a climate officer to deliver the Climate Action Plan projects.
This has been included in the budget recommendation to Full Council.

A member of the public asked the following: -

c) The Wreaths for Remembrance seems high at a cost £250; how many wreaths were purchased?
Ten wreaths were obtained from the Royal British Legion in 2022, with a donation made of £25 per wreath to the Poppy Appeal.

d) Two parking permits £700 – what are they for?
Parking permits have been provided to the town council staff, as part of their employment contract terms.

e) Can the £600 per month for gas and electric for the council's shop premises be investigated?

This question has been addressed in the questions asked at the last meeting of Full Council as follows:

“The town council premises is occupied by staff and is being prepared for opening to the public. The gas and electricity meter readings have been taken and submitted to the provider however until the account set up has been completed the bills are currently estimated readings. The council must pay these estimated bills for now, to prevent disconnection. Once the meter readings are up to date on the account the figures will be adjusted to actual use and billed accordingly.”

f) Can the town council consider the increase on council tax on those suffering in the cost-of-living crisis?
This will be for the committee to decide.

A member of the public asked the following:

- g) With reference to the Ravenside Roundabout, a town councillor has stated that £180k has been put aside “to do this up” and now it’s not going to be “done up”. here has that come from and where is it going?

We are not aware of which town councillor has made this statement, Rother District Council is organising the Ravenside Roundabout improvement project, the town council is not involved.

- h) With reference to the art gallery in Beeching Road, the town council received funding to “do that up,” why is there extra £250,000 in costs. The town council has not received any funding for this and is not involved. Rother District Council is organising this project.

- a) The town council had a meeting two weeks ago and stated that it is going to fund an extra £2,000 towards Light Up Bexhill’s Christmas event. They are already receiving £20,000 from Rother District Council. If it is part of RDC funding, why are the town council funding an extra £2,000 to an RDC event? The town council operates a grant funding programme for local groups. Light Up Bexhill applied for funding from this programme to put on additional Christmas activities and the committee decided to donate £2100 towards this. The Light Switch on is not an RDC event, it is organised by a not-for-profit community organisation.

- i) Cllr Winter asked the following:

Why did Cllr Baldry stay in the room when a vote was taken concerning the Bexhill Senior Citizens Club? The minutes of the meeting state that Cllr Baldry left the meeting, will these be amended?

This question was address at the last meeting of Full Council as follows:

“A councillor is personally responsible for deciding if they hold an interest (whether disclosable or not) and what action they take. After seeking advice, Cllr Baldry considered that the repairs to the flooring at the BSCC did not have a greater effect on her than on the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by this decision. Cllr Baldry made the decision to disclose to the meeting her membership and participate in the voting in good faith, as she is not an active member of the club. Cllr Baldy’s vote did not have a significant impact on the decision, it was a majority decision of the committee. In order to prevent any ambiguity, Cllr Baldry is no longer a member of the BSCC.”

Minutes are approved by the committee and any amendments are proposed as a motion at time of approval. The minutes have been approved as a true record.

The minutes have been added to the agenda for the meeting of the 21st December to review accuracy.

A member of the public asked:

- j) Why are some of the meetings closed to the public?

The public may be excluded from meetings where discussion in public of business being considered would be prejudicial to the public interest because of its confidential nature or other special reason.

The public has no statutory right to attend a meeting of a sub-committee. If the work of a sub-committee under its delegated responsibilities is confidential (e.g., staffing matters) or considers information about individuals, disclosure of which

would breach the obligations of the council under the Data Protection Act 1998 or General Data Protection Regulations or if the information is commercially sensitive then it is not desirable for the public to be present. When those recommendations are presented to full council, the same principle applies.

- k) What plans are in place to get the Neighbourhood Plan established, has the funding been applied for?

A Neighbourhood Plan project is included in the council's draft five-year strategic plan. This is yet to be approved by the council.

- l) How many more staff does the council envisage they will take on in the next year?

The budget for 2022/23 has been agreed for two part-time customer service assistants, a full-time facilities co-ordinator. The staffing budget for 2023/24 has not yet been approved.

- m) Will the Deputy Mayor be giving up her space on committees to allow the new councillor to assume a committee space?

There is no statutory requirement for any councillor to resign from a committee to allow a new councillor to assume a committee place. Notwithstanding this, a councillor cannot pass a committee place to another councillor. Should a councillor resign from a committee the full council decide upon the replacement member using a strike out vote method.

- n) Would the council give thought to the set-up of meetings, for public to look at councillors?

The purpose meetings of the council are to conduct debates and discussions and make decisions, not to present to the public. The lay out of the meeting table will be of a 'horseshoe' nature to allow councillors to interact with each other more easily.

A member of the public asked: -

- o) Can the council have more transparency in advertising meetings for the public attend.

The council posts meeting dates and agendas on its website and the noticeboard outside the town hall.

- p) A member of the public asked if there could be a service level agreement for responses to questions from the public raised at meetings.

The standing orders relating to public participation can be reviewed by the committee.

00437. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was **RESOLVED** to receive and approve apologies for absence from Cllr Harding with reasons,

00438. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were none.

00439. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cllr Brailsford asked that in the budget discussions all councillors be alert to the fact that the Asset Transfer Committee has not yet formed a recommendation on the transfer of the public toilets.

00440. MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** to sign and approve the meeting of the 19th October 2022.

00441. PRECEPT AND BUDGET

- a) To note comments from full council and Climate, Nature, and Nature Committee and to prepare next draft for recommendation.

It was **RESOLVED** to prepare two budget scenarios for the full council to consider, either with or without toilet maintenance. The cost of a project officer shall be allocated in the reserves under the heading 'additional staffing' as this has not been spent in 2022/23.

00442. GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- a) To note Full Council allocated management of premises budgets to Finance and General Purposes Committee – noted.

Cllr Rustem left the meeting at 21:15pm

Cllr Rustem re-entered the meeting at 21:16pm

- b) To note updated risk assessment to follow at next meeting – noted.
 c) To note report being prepared on the investment of funds to increase returns – noted.
 d) To receive and approve bank reconciliation as of 31st October 2022
 It was **RESOLVED** to approve the bank reconciliation as of 31st October 2022.
 e) To consider budget position as of 31st October 2022 – noted.
 f) To note reserves position as of 31st October 2022 - noted.
 g) To approve BACS payments November 2022:

Opus Energy	Utilities	£ 171.61	£ 8.17	Electricity bill 35 Western Road 05/10-04/11 (estimated)
Opus Energy	Utilities	£ 438.13	£ 21.91	Gas bill 35 Western Road 05/10-06/11 (estimated)
NALC	Training - Councillors	£ 90.05	£ 15.01	Empowering communities Cllr Plim
NALC	Training - Councillors	£ 51.71	£ 8.62	Local Councils Comms Cllr Gibson
Mulberry & Co	Audit	£ 172.80	£ -	Interim Audit
Local Payroll Company	Professional Fees	£ 48.00	£ 8.00	October payroll 2022
BT	Utilities	£ 41.57	£ 6.63	Broadband 20/10-31/10
Rother District Council	Printing	£ 15.00	£ 2.50	Printing for Cllr Harding
Rother District Council	Events	£ 700.00	£ 116.67	Parking permits x 2

Blue Response	Events	£ 360.00	£ 60.00	First aid provision Remembrance Day
Breakthrough Communications	Training	£ 495.00	£ -	BoSTC/23.11.2022 – 000138 Equality and Diversity training
PKF Littlejohn	Audit	£ 960.00	£ 160.00	External audit fees
Splash Plumbing Ltd	Repairs and Replacement	£ 332.40	£ 39.40	New fan for boiler
Viking Direct	Repairs and Replacement	£ 107.60	£ 17.93	Office stationery and equipment
Paul Debreczeny	Events	£ 432.85		Reimbursement of Remembrance items and mileage
Poppy Appeal	Events	£ 250.00		Wreath donations for Remembrance Sunday parades
Fitzpatrick Woolmer	Noticeboards	£ 11,436.00	£ 1,906.00	Noticeboard supply and installation x 5
Rialtas Business Solutions	IT Costs	£ 270.00	£ 54.00	Annual support and maintenance for finance package
Julie Miller	Reserves - audio equipment	£ 190.95		Reimbursement of additional audio equipment for recording meetings

h) To approve Direct Debits and Standing Orders

Waveney IT	IT Costs	£ 119.93	Monthly mailbox subscription Microsoft
Maltby Property Management	Rent	£ 1,333.33	Rent for premises

i) To approve Staff Costs.

Various	Staff Costs	£ 11,939.34	November salary, PAYE, NI and Pension Contributions
---------	-------------	-------------	---

00443. GRANTS AND DONATIONS

- To note policy for grants outside of policy to follow at a future meeting – noted.
- To note next round of grants closes 30th November – noted.

00444. NEW PREMISES

- To note facility management contracts to be considered at next meeting – noted.

00445. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

- To note further receipt of £17,662.02 – noted.

00446. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES

- Climate, Nature, and Environment Committee request for climate project officer presented in item 6.
It was agreed earlier in the meeting that the reserves will be reallocated for this role in 2023/24,

00447. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- To note NALC advice on ex-officio roles in committees.
It was noted that NALC advice is that this is not a legal issue per se, but a governance issue.

Initial.....

“A councillor may be nominated and appointed to a committee because he has a special interest, or expertise to offer, in respect of the work of the committee. A council may want the Chairman or the Vice-Chairman of the council to be members of every committee by virtue of their office (i.e., ex-officio) rather than by nomination. A council must use standing orders to regulate the rights and restrictions, if any, that apply to ex-officio members of a committee. For example, standing orders should confirm whether the Chairman or the Vice-Chairman of the council are full voting members of every committee of the council. Alternatively, standing orders may limit the ex-officio members’ rights to being summoned to attend committee meetings, receiving agendas and background papers to meetings, and speaking but not voting.”

It was **RESOLVED** to review the ex-officio status at the next standing order review.

- b) To note updates on partnership funding agreements as per correspondence from Rother District Council.

It was agreed earlier in the meeting to not fund these agreements but refer groups to apply using the council’s approved grants and donations policy.

- c) To note policy review, check in to be conducted at next meeting – noted,

00448. CORRESPONDENCE AND MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

There are none.

00449. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- a) To note questions from last meeting.

Cllr Harding asked when the NALC advice will be received regarding ex-officio status on committees.	This is on the agenda.
---	------------------------

- b) To receive questions from councillors and any future agenda items.
There were none.
- c) To consider any new risks for future mitigation
There are none.

00450. OVERVIEW OF ANNUAL INTERNAL CONTROL TASKS OF THE COUNCIL

January	Submit Precept to Rother District Council
February	Review Standing Orders/Financial Regs and policies for Full Council AGM, obtain three quotes for insurance policy renewal
March	Review annual financial risk assessment
April	Complete year end accounts and AGAR, produce annual report, insurance policy renews,
May	AGM – adoption of policies, internal audit, review asset register
June	Approval of AGAR, review internal controls, complete internal audit
July	Electors rights period, Annual VAT return
August	RFO to begin budget drafting
September	Committees prepare budget forecasts, F&GP review salary budgets
October	Committees prepare budget forecasts
November	F&GP review committee forecasts and prepare budget for full council review
December	Full council approve annual budget

00451. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 21ST DECEMBER 2022

Pursuant to section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings Act) 1960, because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and the press may be asked to leave the meeting during consideration of item 452

00452. STAFFING MATTERS

- a) To receive updates on recruitment and staffing.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the appointment of the second customer services assistant in 2022/23 using the unspent staffing budget from this budget year.

Meeting closed at 21:40pm

Signed.....

Date.....

Initial.....