

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held at the Town Hall, Rye, on Monday 20 December 2010**

- PRESENT** Councillors Granville Bantick, John Breeds (**Mayor**), Lorna Hall (**Deputy Mayor**), Sonia Holmes, Paul Osborne, Frank Palmer, Shaun Rogers, Mary Smith, Sam Souster
- IN ATTENDANCE** Richard Farhall - Town Clerk; Kevin Barry – Town Sergeant; Captain Paul Tyler – Mayor’s Chaplain; 7 members of the public
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*The meeting commenced at 6.30*

**77 PRAYERS**

Prayers were said by the Mayor’s Chaplain, Captain Paul Tyler.

**78 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence – and the reasons logged with the Clerk – were accepted from Councillors Brian Elliott, Bernardine Fiddimore, Jo Kirkham, Ian Potter, David Russell and David Wright.

Apologies were received also from Cllr Keith Glazier.

**79 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

- |                   |                 |                |   |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|---|
| Cllr Shaun Rogers | <i>personal</i> | <b>item 83</b> | Father works for SCCH at the Lion Street site |
| Cllr Mary Smith   | <i>personal</i> | <b>item 83</b> | Member of FE Centre Users Group               |

**80 MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There was none.

*The Mayor adjourned the meeting for the Reports of the County and District Councillors, and Public Question Time. (See Appendix.)*

*The meeting reconvened.*

**81 COUNCIL MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** To adopt the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 25 October 2010 (C7).

**82 COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**a) Planning & Townscape**

**RESOLVED** Adoption of the Minutes of the meetings held on 25 October 2010 (PT12), 8 November 2010 (PT13), 22 November 2010 (PT14) and 14 December 2010 (PT15).

**b) Policy, Resources & General Purposes**

**RESOLVED** Adoption of the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 November

2010 (PR03).

*Cllr Rogers re-stated his personal interest in the item following:*

**83 FUTURE OF THE FE CENTRE/LION STREET SITE  
(a) Re-advertisement of planning application**

**RR/2004/3202/P** Library & Adult Education Centre, Lion Street, Rye  
(Com) Demolition of modern extensions, art block, toilets and  
air raid shelters. Conversion into 2 residential units and  
new building for 2 flats.  
*Applicant: Rye Partnership\* and Sussex Coast College  
Hastings*  
\* Formally withdrawn from the application

Members were invited to note:

- (i) the Council's original response to the Planning Authority:  
*SUPPORT REFUSAL Unacceptable change of use resulting  
in loss of community facilities; overdevelopment – out of character and  
detrimental to the amenities within the Conservation Area; would set a  
precedent for similar undesirable development in the vicinity  
inadequate provision for the parking and turning of vehicles.*
- (ii) the Council's comments on the weaknesses within the current  
s106 Agreement;
- (iii) that the Planning Authority has received a considerable number  
of objections to this application recently – including objections to the  
proposed demolition of the Art Room on the grounds that it is of  
architectural and historical significance; - and to consider whether to  
confirm, amend or add to the Council's previous comments.  
*referred from Planning & Townscape Committee.*

**RESOLVED To suspend Standing Order 28(j) (not speaking more than  
once).**

*The Mayor adjourned the meeting for comments from the Gallery:*

*Mike Eve The Chairman of Governors of Sussex Coast College Hastings  
(SCCH) had stated that the proceeds from the disposal of the Lion Street site  
would be expended for Rye's benefit. It was known that the College had  
received a valuation indicating that the Lion Street site was worth £500,000 –  
but it was not prepared to provide a copy. It had not accepted the joint bid of  
£250,000 from the Fletcher Group and PCC. Considering the FE Centre  
requires c£90,000 of repairs and the rear of the site would need £1.4m to  
implement the Fletcher Group's plan for it, this was a reasonable offer. If RDC  
withdraws planning consent the value of the site will decrease. In relation to  
the 're-advertisement', RDC has approached the Victorian Society and  
English Heritage for opinions.*

*Andy Stuart SCCH's Constitution appears to suggest that the Learning &  
Skills Council (LSC) can 'claim' any monies the College releases from the  
disposal of its assets. He suggested that RTC should be asking SCCH if: (i)  
the LSC has agreed that the College may retain any funds realised from the  
sale of Lion Street; and (ii) the College's bank has stated that it will not 'claw  
back' any of this money. He added that the Art Room (threatened with  
demolition) was Rye's only entirely publicly-owned art studio.*

*Anthony Kimber responded that the Rye Art Gallery had benefited from public  
funding.*

*The meeting reconvened.*

Cllr Hall observed that SCCH's financial affairs were not a valid planning consideration.

It was noted that RDC was re-drafting the s106 Agreement.

**RESOLVED To confirm RTC's previous reasons for refusing the planning application but to add:  
The Council disapproves, especially, of the proposal to demolish the Art Block – the architectural and historical significance of which appears to have been 'downplayed' at the time of the original application. It is considered to be a unique community asset and the removal of this highly-valued amenity would be to the disbenefit of the Conservation Area and the residents of Rye and the surrounding parishes. The Town Council is in sympathy with the considerable body of local opinion opposed to this planning application.**

**Clerk**

*Note Cllr Holmes abstained from voting.*

**(b) Update**

It was noted that at the Public Services Committee meeting held on 13 December 2010:

- (i) The Committee recommended that the Council should write to Sussex Coast College Hastings asking it to confirm that it will apply any monies realised from the disposal of the Lion Street site for the direct benefit of Rye;
- (ii) Members were advised that SCCH had not accepted the offer to purchase site submitted by the Fletcher Group and PCC – and that the site had been placed with Dyer Commercial.

In relation to (i), it was noted that, depending on the response from SCCH, RTC could follow up with an enquiry concerning the role of the LSC.

**Clerk**

**84 PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

The meeting was asked to consider whether to:

- (a) Confirm that the Planning & Townscape Committee has the delegated authority to determine the Council's position on all Rye planning applications and County consultations; *or*
- (b) Ask the Planning & Townscape Committee to consider and recommend the Council's response to every Rye planning application to be considered by Rother District Council's Planning Committee – and every County planning consultation; *or*
- (c) Resolve that the Council's response to every Rye planning application to be considered by Rother District Council's Planning Committee, and every County planning consultation, should be considered and determined by the full Council only; *or*
- (d) Amend the existing procedures in relation to how the Council deals with planning applications and County planning consultations in some other way.

Cllr Osborne proposed adoption of (a) - with the Clerk and P&T Committee Chairman considering whether an application needed to go directly to Council. The Clerk advised that it was unlawful to delegate decision making to a single Member. If Cllr Osborne's proposal was accepted the authority would need to be delegated to the Clerk (who would then liaise with the P&T Committee Chairman).

The discussion ensuing included the comments following: RTC should deal with important planning applications separately; the P&T Committee should specifically invite views from local groups and others, should publicise meetings in advance and

invite Rye's RDC Planning Officer to the meeting; the P&T Committee should continue to deal with non-contentious applications; Members need training in order to consider planning applications in an informed way; unlike RDC Planning Committee meetings the public is able to address RTC's P&T Committee; consideration of the recent Tesco application highlighted the difficulty of a relatively low P&T Committee membership; major applications/consultations are infrequent – and it would be helpful if RDC and ESCC gave more notice; it can be frustrating if Members say they do not have the time to join the P&T Committee (because meetings are held fortnightly) but then contribute regularly from the Gallery.

Cllr Souster offered to join the P&T Committee.

**RESOLVED** *(on the Mayor's casting vote):*

**(a) To confirm that the Planning & Townscape Committee has the delegated authority to determine the Council's position on all Rye planning applications and County planning consultations – unless the Clerk, in consultation with the Committee Chairman, decides that an application/consultation should be considered by the full Council directly;**

**(b) that all Members be offered suitable training in order to help them consider the Council's response to planning applications/consultations.**

Clerk

**85 TOWN SERGEANT HAT**

It was noted that:

**(a) the Council did not have a suitable hat to fit the newly-appointed Town Sergeant;**

**(b) following the purchase of Past Mayors Badges the balance of the Robes & Regalia Earmarked Reserve was zero;**

**(c) the balance of the Robes & Regalia revenue budget 2010-11 was £82.25;**

**(d) a quote had been received from Michaels to supply a hat to match that of the Second Mace Bearer for £285 + VAT**

**RESOLVED 1 To explore whether one of the existing Sergeant's hats could be adjusted to achieve the size required.**

Clerk

**RESOLVED If adjustment proved not to be an option: to purchase a hat from Michael's and reduce the Mayoral Allowance by £142 for each of the next 2 years.**

Clerk

**86 URGENT ITEMS**

There were no urgent items to consider.

*The meeting ended at 8.20.*

Date ..... Chairman .....

### REPORT OF THE COUNTY COUNCILLOR

The Clerk advised that Cllr Glazier had suggested that any questions for him could be passed to him via the Clerk.

### REPORT OF THE ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

#### Cllr Sonia Holmes

*Review* RDC was continuing to review its services - and the way they were delivered - in order to identify possible savings.

*FE Centre* The Planning Committee had deferred consideration of the 're-advertised' planning application again – to 20 January. The 106 Agreement was still being re-drafted.

*Full Council meeting (20 Dec)* Agenda items included reviews of RDC's Youth Strategy and Members' Allowances (not likely to be increased) and the Draft Revenue Budget 2011-12. Cllr Osborne added that more detail would be available at the Cabinet meeting on 22 December and that RDC's Government Settlement Grant reduction was one of the largest in the country – 16.8% in 2011-12.

Cllr Smith *What is the latest on the Bexhill sea front improvement scheme and, in hindsight, was it wise to have embarked on it?*

*Cllr Holmes* There had been a number of revised shelter designs and she was unsure of the current forecast cost of the scheme because of its complexity.

Mike Eve flagged up the dangers presented by the town's side roads and pavements not being gritted. Cllrs Holmes and Osborne advised that these were the responsibility of the Highways Authority (ESCC). The Clerk added that ESCC was about to locate a 1 tonne 'hippo' bag of rock salt in the Cinque Ports Street car park – which could be used by residents or traders on the public highway only. John Howlett stated that RTC should take charge of gritting and expressed the hope that the Council would not (later) decide to spend £200 on a new Town Sergeant's hat when this could have been used for clearing pavements of snow and ice.

Mike Eve advised that he had read about councils sharing services and wondered if RDC could share with Hastings BC. Cllr Holmes advised that RDC intended to share services with Wealden DC and HBC – and that more detail would be revealed at the next Cabinet meeting.

### PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

*Recent/Current period of snow* Keith Taylor had observed a number of vehicles sliding down Lion Street.

Cllr Osborne advised that he had just seen an update issued by ESCC. Over the last week ESCC had spread 1,200 tonnes of salt, 3,000 tonnes were about to be received and a further 5,000 tonnes were on order. ESCC had 25 snow ploughs/gritting vehicles. Udimore Road, Rye Hill, the A28 and A268 had been badly affected last Friday. Gritters cannot reach problem areas if roads are obstructed by stuck/abandoned vehicles.

Cllr Souster observed that, that morning, there were places in the Citadel where it was difficult to remain upright.

Clarification followed on the myth that anyone clearing snow from the front of their property could be sued if a pedestrian fell over. As a general rule, those clearing snow would not be at risk of a legal claim for personal injury so long as their action did not make the situation worse – ie by throwing warm water over the snow, which subsequently froze. It was agreed generally that it would be helpful for this information to be publicised more widely.

The Mayor's Chaplain advised that three green grit bins had appeared on Tilling Green Estate but they were locked. The Clerk advised that these were likely to have been provided by AmicusHorizon for use by their tenants. He would endeavour to ascertain how the salt could be accessed.

**Clerk**

*Chamber acoustics* John Izod asked if the Council could look again at the problems faced by those attending meetings with hearing impairments – for example, some form of amplification or changing Councillors' seating positions so that none has their back to the Gallery. Cllr Smith to ask Jane Fraser-Hay (who has some suggestions) to contact the Clerk. The Clerk to place the matter on the next PRGP agenda.

**Cllr Smith, Clerk**