

Minutes of a Meeting of the Policy, Resources & General Purposes Committee, held at the Town Hall, Rye, on Monday 14 April 2008

PRESENT Councillors Granville Bantick, John Breeds, Jonathan Breeds, Bernardine Fiddimore, Sonia Holmes (**Committee Chairman**), Paul Osborne (Mayor), Frank Palmer, Ian Potter, David Russell, Sam Souster (Deputy Mayor), David Wright

IN ATTENDANCE Richard Farhall - Town Clerk; Andy Hemsley – *Rye Observer*; 1 member of the public

The meeting commenced at 7.21

84 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were accepted from Cllrs Brian Elliott (**Committee Vice Chairman**) and Jo Kirkham.

85 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Cllr Sam Souster *prejudicial* **item 88.2** Partner a RTS Director

86 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of 14 January 2008 (PR05) were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

87 MATTERS ARISING

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45 Banners across High Street (renewing planning permission) Not yet actioned – need to identify secure/safe fixings and willing property owners. (May be possible to utilise new Christmas lighting brackets.)

60 Rye Cemetery (asking RDC to adopt Hastings BC memorial stones testing model) Not yet actioned.

20.2b) Heritage Centre: VAT (letter of understanding) Not yet actioned.

5.4 Earmarked Reserves, Resolved 2 (confirming requirement for detached youth work reserve) Outstanding.

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74.2a) Heritage Centre Trading Reports (reminding RTS when they should be submitted) Actioned.

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76 Work programme (incorporating 'target completion/review' dates) Actioned.

77 Devolved Services (chasing commencement of joint consultancy work) Actioned – see main agenda item 91.

79 Stray Dogs (highlighting problems to RDC) Actioned – new contractor (on behalf of RDC and HBC), Animal Wardens appointed from 1.4.08. Specification includes provision of a 24-hour call centre, collecting stray dogs, kenneling and re-homing.

Cllr Fiddimore advised that she had put a number of questions to the new contractor but had not yet had a reply.

88 FINANCE

88.1 Town Hall

a) Schedules of Authorised Payments and Statements of Income

RESOLVED That the Schedule of Authorised Payments and Statements of Income for December 2007-February 2008 be received and adopted.

b) Petty Cash

RESOLVED That the Petty Cash Account Statement to 29 February 2008 be received and adopted.

c) Budget Monitor

RESOLVED That the Statement of actual income and expenditure to 29 February 2008 against that budgeted, be received and noted.

Cllr Souster restated his prejudicial interest in the item following and left the Chamber.

88.2 Heritage Centre

- a) RTS Trading Reports
- b) Annual Accounts 2006-07

The Clerk advised that RTS had submitted Trading Reports for December 2007-February 2008 that morning but they had not been tabled because a number of errors had been spotted.

RTS had advised that the (audited) Annual Accounts to March 2007 – which, contractually, should have been supplied by 30 June 2007 – would be available by the end of April (2008).

A number of Members expressed their disappointment that RTS had failed, consistently, to provide the Council with timely trading updates.

Cllr Potter (who was unable to attend the additional Council meeting arranged for 22 April to discuss matters including the future of marketing in the town) observed that the costings associated with RTS's marketing proposal included provision of £10,000 (out of a £50k budget) for 'Administration'.

A brief discussion followed on the events surrounding RDC's decision to reduce its Rye TIC grant from £50k to £30k. It had been suggested at the time that the Council could have found a commercial tenant willing to pay an annual rent of c£20k; however, the Council concluded that it was in the town's best interests to ensure that Rye retained a TIC.

A number of Members considered that the current window display at the Centre were uninviting and a 'backward step'. The Mayor advised that he had 'rescued' the light boxes removed during the recent refurbishment from a skip.

RESOLVED To remind, in the strongest terms, RTS of its contractual obligations – highlighting the exceptionally late publication of the 2006-07 Annual Accounts, consistently late Trading Reports and errors within the Reports just submitted.
Clerk

Cllr Souster returned to the Chamber.

88.3 Account Balances

RESOLVED That the Statement of Account Balances as at 29 February 2008 be received and noted.

88.4 Earmarked Reserves

(In relation to the impending bye-election) It was noted that there was nothing in reserves for election expenses and the provision in the budget for 2008-09 was £750.

RESOLVED That the Statement of Earmarked Reserves as at 29 February 2008 – as amended – be received and noted.

89 TOWN CLERK ACTIVITY SUMMARY

RESOLVED To receive and note the Clerk's Activity Summaries for December 2007-February 2008.

90 WORK PROGRAMME

Cllr Souster highlighted the desirability of completing a Local Action Plan – which would help to identify local needs and inform the Local Development Framework (LDF). The Clerk pointed out that provision towards the cost of engaging a co-ordinator had been made in this year's budget and that, if the Council considered that a role remained for a Town Manager/Co-ordinator, it could explore utilising part of the post's allocated salary.

RESOLVED That the summary of key tasks/projects as at 7 April 2008 be received and noted.

91 DEVOLVED SERVICES

The Clerk advised that the jointly-funded consultant had completed his initial report and discussed it with Rother's Head of Amenities – who, in turn, would be discussing it with the Head of Finance this week.

Cllr Russell added that the full report had still to be completed.

It was agreed generally that any resultant report could be considered initially by the Devolved Services Working Group.

It was considered desirable to arrange another RDC-RTC liaison meeting.

Clerk

92 STREET TRADING

The Clerk advised that the Head of Environmental Health had asked to be alerted as soon as an unauthorised street vendor appeared in Rye. RDC had a legal strategy in place which could be activated fairly quickly to address the main problem affecting the town last year.

93 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2008

It was agreed generally that the Annual Town Meeting held at the Community Centre on 2 April had been a success, with over 100 people attending.

RESOLVED 1 To write to thank Sweet Williams for the donation of the entrance lobby floral displays ('re-donated' subsequently to the Memorial Care Centre). Clerk

RESOLVED 2 To adopt the 'thoughts for improvement' drafted by Cllr Fiddimore (see Appendix).

94 TRAINING NEEDS

The Committee was invited to consider a request from the Rother Association of Local Councils (RALC) for member councils to consider Councillor/Clerk training needs – with a view to them being met locally and subsidised by RALC.

RESOLVED To suggest:

- (a) Project planning
- (b) Public speaking
- (c) Chairmanship

Clerk

95 GRANTS

a) Rye & District Chamber of Commerce

Members considered a request for a contribution of £250 towards establishing a scheme to reduce the use of plastic carrier bags in the town. The scheme entailed purchasing a quantity of jute bags for businesses to buy at cost and (possibly) give free to high spending customers or recharge at cost price. It was envisaged that the project would quickly become self-sustaining.

A number of Members considered that the application could have been more detailed – it did not, for example, explain how many estimates had been received.

In response to a query concerning the presence of 'ww.rye-tourism.co.uk' (a commercial web site) below the bag design, the Clerk explained that Oliver Campion had funded the origination of the artwork.

It was acknowledged that, at £3 per bag, the initial cost was high; however, subsequent orders would not include start up costs.

Speaking (with the Committee's permission) from the Public Gallery John Izod advised that Oliver Campion contributed much to the town at no personal gain. Andy Hemsley added that a similar scheme had been introduced in Battle but the bags were sold to the public for £1.50.

It was agreed generally that such schemes should be encouraged.

RESOLVED 1 That in future applicants for grant funding be required to complete an appropriate form. Clerk

RESOLVED 2 That the Council in accordance with its powers under sections 137 and 139 of the LGA 1972, should incur the expenditure following which, in the opinion of the Council, is in the interest of the area or its inhabitants and will benefit them in a manner commensurate with the expenditure: contributing £250 toward the initial purchase of a supply of jute bags with a view to encouraging consumers and businesses to reduce their use of plastic carrier bags. Clerk

96 TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2008-09

RESOLVED To adopt the Draft Timetable of Meetings 2008-09. Clerk

97 DRAFT SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

Cllr Holmes reported that she had attended the Rother District Local Strategic Partnership Consultation on the Draft Integrated Sustainable Community Strategy for East Sussex held at Cooden Beach Hotel, Bexhill on 30 January and had highlighted the needs of younger people.

98 ABSENCE SUMMARY

RESOLVED To receive and note the Staff Absence Summary for 2007-08.

The meeting ended at 7.50.

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

PROG

APPENDIX

policy, Resources & General Purposes Committee

Agenda Item 93 – Annual Town Meeting

Assessment of event – thoughts for improvement.

1. Sandwich Board outside venue - Use Town Crier, at high visibility locations, on day of meeting.
2. Larger Venue – Thomas Peacocke Community College?
3. Need a Public Address System. Where possible ask speakers to do 'sound test' prior to the meeting.
4. Speakers to either submit their reports and/or content to Clerk prior to meeting to minimise repetition / maximise impact.
5. Allocate time for public questions from the floor after each speaker.
6. Make sure it is clearly stated that Councillors will be available to answer questions at the round tables after the main meeting.
7. Embolden the part on the agenda which asks for complex questions to be submitted prior to the night.
8. Vary organizations asked to provide an 'information stand' each year.
9. Suggest both heads of Thomas Peacocke to speak about progress at the schools next year.
10. Representation from the TPS Student Council to either do a presentation or have a stand next year. Invite other youth organisations to improve the attendance demographic.
10. To set up a working group to oversee/ plan the Annual Town Meeting, each December, prior to the meeting.