

Minutes of a Meeting of the Policy, Resources & General Purposes Committee, held at the Town Hall, Rye, on Monday 31 January 2011

PRESENT Councillors John Breeds (Mayor), Bernardine Fiddimore, Lorna Hall (Deputy Mayor), Sonia Holmes, Jo Kirkham, Frank Palmer, Ian Potter (**Committee Chairman**), Shaun Rogers, David Russell, Sam Souster

IN ATTENDANCE Richard Farhall - Town Clerk; Peter Cosstick – Heritage Centre Manager; Andy Hemsley – *Rye Observer*; 8 members of the public

The meeting commenced at 6.45pm

44 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence – and the reasons (lodged with the Clerk) - were accepted from Cllrs Paul Osborne (Committee Vice Chairman) and David Wright.

DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Cllr John Breeds	<i>prejudicial</i>	item 45	Shareholder in a business with premises in The Mint
Cllr Sonia Holmes	<i>personal</i>	items 53	RDC Member
Cllr Ian Potter	<i>personal</i>	item 45	Minority shareholder in a business with premises in The Mint
	<i>personal</i>	item 55(b)	Father is a member of the Sussex County FA
Cllr Shaun Rogers	<i>personal</i>	item 57	Employed by ESFRS

45 CCTV: THE MINT

The intention had been to ask Members to form a view on a proposal to install, for up to 3 months, CCTV cameras in The Mint (and associated advisory signage elsewhere in the town) in response to complaints about late night anti-social behaviour; however, neither RDC nor the Police could attend the meeting and they had asked that consideration of this item be deferred.

RESOLVED To defer consideration of this item, as requested.

RESOLVED For the benefit of a member of the public present, to bring forward consideration of item 55.

**55 GRANT APPLICATIONS
(a) Ring-fencing grants**

The Chairman invited the meeting to consider whether future applicants for grant funding should, if successful, have their grant ring-fenced for a period of 12 months. This would assist RTC's budgeting and ensure monies were not sitting in the Council's reserves unused for lengthy periods.

RESOLVED That any grants agreed by the Council be ring-fenced for a period of up to 12 months – after which time the Council will ask the applicant to provide a progress report. Clerk

(b) Rye United FC

At the last meeting Members considered a request from Rye United FC for a contribution of £2,000 towards the provision of hard standing and a walkway from the club house to meet FA/DDA requirements. The Committee deferred further consideration pending the receipt of additional information.

The Clerk reported that:

- (i) RDC had advised that the Community Projects Grant it had awarded to Rye United FC was ring-fenced until September 2011;
- (ii) Rye Cricket Club had advised that it had no objection to the walk way – so long as it was located outside the Cricket Field boundary;
- (iii) Rye United FC had confirmed that this would be the case.

It was noted that Club had struggled to recover from last year's arson attack on its pavilion and that Southern Water had kindly provided it with temporary accommodation to enable the Club to continue to play at its home ground.

RECOMMENDATION That the £2,000 grant requested by Rye United FC be approved.

46 MINUTES

RESOLVED To adopt the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2010 (PR03) as an accurate record of the proceedings.

47 MATTERS ARISING

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4 Matters Arising, Rye Cemetery, Resolution (asking Amber Rudd MP if she would consider pursuing a suitable amendment to the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1997 to permit the re-use of grave space) Actioned – response awaited.

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5.6 Internal Controls (Members assisting with internal controls) Not yet introduced.

48 FINANCE

48.1 Town Hall

a) Schedules of Authorised Payments and Statements of Income

RESOLVED That the Schedule of Authorised Payments and Statements of Income for October-December 2010 be received and adopted.

b) Budget Monitor

The Clerk advised that because both the Town Hall and Heritage Centre budget reports routinely presented to the Committee were generated by QuickBooks on an accruals basis, the totals would not match exactly the Draft 2011-12 Budgets which were prepared on

a Receipts & Payments basis. Additionally, the HC Draft Budget 2011/12 included VAT – and so much accurately reflected cash flow.

RESOLVED That the Statement of actual income and expenditure to 30 December 2010 against that budgeted, be received and noted.

48.2 Heritage Centre

a) Progress report

The report of the Heritage Centre Manager, Peter Cosstick (PC) included reference to:

- Ghost Tour revenue exceeding its annual target
- On 31 January the Town Model had exceeded its annual revenue target
- Salary costs had decreased over the year as a result of fine tuning and reduced winter opening hours. There were now 3 members of staff but an additional person would be required for 6-months from April.
- As at yesterday the new web site was now live (but some pages were still under construction). The successful web designer had submitted a price 75% cheaper than the others who had quoted.
- Year 2 performance should be considered against the fact that, in Year 1, the HC benefited from £10,000 grant funding from RDC and his 'buy in'.
- The only revenue stream below target was the Audio Tour
- Since its introduction 170 people had taken the Ghost Tour – and some of these would have stayed in the town

b) Payments and income

RESOLVED To receive and adopt Income by Customer and Expenses by Supplier Summaries, 1 October 2010- 31 December 2010.

c) Budget Monitor

RESOLVED To receive and note the actual income and expenditure against budget – and previous year comparison – to 31 December 2010.

48.3 Account Balances

RESOLVED That the Statement of Account Balances as at 31 December 2010 be received and noted.

48.4 Earmarked Reserves

It was noted that there was a long-standing provision of £1,500 for supporting detached youth work. It was agreed generally that it would be appropriate to consider releasing this if RTC received a suitable application involving younger people.

RESOLVED That the Statement of Earmarked Reserves as at 31 December 2010 be received and noted.

48.5 Draft Budgets 2011-12
a) Rye Heritage Centre

RECOMMENDATION That the Draft Heritage Centre Budget 2011-12 be adopted.

- b) Town Hall**
- (i) Human Resources Working Group's recommended amendments to the Draft Town Hall Budget 2011-12.**
 - (ii) Draft Town Hall Budget 2011-12 and precept 2011-12**

The Clerk summarised the papers provided to Members:

When the HR WG met to consider agenda item 61 the opportunity was taken to consider the impact of RPI and CPI on the remuneration of local government workers whose pay was linked to the NJC National Pay Spine. It was noted that in local government a pay freeze had begun a year earlier than that announced for the rest of the public sector and that unions had put in a claim of at least £250 per FT employee for 2011-12. However, there was an expectation that this would not be successful. If this was the case, the value of the pay of a FT local government worker earning £21,000pa in March 2007 will have declined by 11.5% against RPI and 9.1% against CPI.

Note The Bank of England Governor had announced recently that, over the last 5 years, actual pay in both the private and public sectors had risen by 7.6%. For local government workers the rise was 3.8%.

The HR WG had noted that because cost of living pay rises negotiated nationally were typically below both RPI and CPI, a number of principal authorities – particularly in the South-East – had opted out in favour of local pay bargaining. However, it was noted there were a number of advantages to having cost of living increases assessed externally.

The HR WG concluded that if RTC was minded to address this issue the simplest course of action would be to increase the pay of those staff linked to the NJC Pay Spine by one increment point. Estimated cost: £2,090. The WG considered also that the cost of any increase benefiting HC staff should be borne by the TH.

It was noted also that, at some point between 1 April 2011 and 1 April 2012 it was likely that staff who were members of the Local Government Pension Scheme will be required to increase their contributions by c3%, which would save RTC c£1,200pa.

The Draft TH Budget 2011-12 had been prepared on the basis that Members would favour a 'standstill' – ie 0% increase – budget. However, because Rye's 2011-12 tax base was larger than the 2010-11 base a frozen precept would actually translate into a small reduction for local tax papers.

RESOLVED 1 To make the deletions/reductions following to the Draft TH Budget 2010-11:

Town Hall Repairs & Renewals	£1,000
Contingency	£850
Finger posts	£250

Miscellaneous	(reduction)	<u>£200</u>
Total suggested reduction		£2,300

RESOLVED 2 To provide £2,300 within the Budget to cover the estimated cost of moving staff whose remuneration is linked to the NJC Pay Spine up one increment point.

RECOMMENDATION Adoption of the Draft Town Hall Budget, 2011-12, as amended.

49 TOWN CLERK ACTIVITY SUMMARY

RESOLVED To receive and note the Clerk's Activity Summaries for October-December 2010.

50 WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED To receive and note the Work Programme as at 24 January 2011.

51 ADVERSE WEATHER

With particular reference to the period of snowfall prior to Christmas: Members were asked to consider the Council's and community's response to adverse weather and agree a course of action.

The discussion ensuing included the points following: other parishes had experienced similar problems with lack of gritting before Christmas; the problem in Rye had been particularly acute where there was a combination of steep hills (including Rye Hill, Lion Street and Market Road) and normally heavy footfall or vehicle movements; a number of residents were known to have offered to help spread grit but the safety and liability aspects would need to be considered carefully; salt provided may be used on private property or taken for re-sale; lockable grit bins might be a solution; volunteers could be sought at the ATM; there are – or have been – very few bins in Rye; at the end of the day ESCC was the Highways Authority and the body responsible for ensuring roads and pavements are passable; in some parts of Continental Europe, businesses are responsible for ensuring land fronting their premises are kept clear of snow/ice.

RESOLVED To establish a Working Group – comprising Cllrs Bantick, Fiddimore, Rogers and Souster – to consider how the Council address the issues associated with adverse weather conditions. Clerk

Speaking from the Gallery, John Izod suggested that REACT might be an appropriate body to consider this matter – particularly as members of its Steering Group possessed relevant skills and experience.

52 ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The meeting was asked to consider the arrangements for the Annual Town Meeting scheduled for Wednesday 9 March, 7pm, Rye College.

It as agreed generally to retain last year's format – but with some variations (*set out below*).

RESOLVED 1 To restrict the pre-meeting refreshments to hot drinks and biscuits.

RESOLVED 2 To dispense with entertainment for this year.

After a number of proposals and votes:

RESOLVED 3 To invite Rother Neighbourhood Watch Association to set up a static display and the Leader and CEO of ESCC to present on the implications of its reduced Central Government grant funding – with their RDC counterparts being approached in the event of them being unavailable. Clerk

Cllr Holmes re-stated her personal interest in the item following.

53 ANIMAL WARDENS

Cllr Fiddimore asked the Committee to consider making representations to RDC in relation to its 'stray dogs' contract with Animal Wardens (AW), which was up for renewal in April. AW had just been the subject of an investigative TV programme, *Inside Out* and she was aware that data was being gathered by *Panorama*.

A number of local authorities had terminated their contract with AW or were considering doing so. Cllr Fiddimore had collected a considerable amount of documentation detailing AW's failings – which included: not providing Rother (and Hastings BC) with the required 24-hour service; AW Wardens asking those finding dogs to look after them until the morning shift starts; not answering the telephone; not returning messages; quoting incorrect fees for those wishing to 'claim back' their dog; not updating its web site (supposed to take place every 12 hours with details of missing/found dogs); not maintaining records; insisting payments be made by debit/credit card over the phone; the AW contract does not appear to match the original specification sent to prospective tenderers. The service provided by AW was inadequate.

Cllr Fiddimore had contacted RDC which had said that it had not received any 'evidenced' complaints. It was possible that RDC would extend AW's contract by 2 years (rather than re-tender).

Cllr Russell suggested that any evidence of failings needed to be passed to RDC.

RESOLVED To write to RDC, making known RTC's concerns about suggestions that Animal Wardens is failing to provide a satisfactory level of service. Clerk

54 CHAMBER ACOUSTICS

Members noted that the Council is continuing to receive complaints that it can be difficult for members of the public to hear clearly Council/Committee debate.

The Clerk had taken the liberty of removing the table placed normally in front of the Public Gallery – so that Members were sitting in a 'horseshoe' configuration. The consensus from the members of the public present was that this had made it easier for them to follow the debates. It was noted that this seating arrangement was impractical if 14 or more Members were present, plus the Clerk – and that in such circumstances the Mayor and Clerk (and possibly the Deputy Mayor) would need to sit on the dais.

RESOLVED To trial the 'horseshoe' seating configuration and remind Members that they need to speak clearly. Clerk

56 **QUALITY COUNCIL STATUS**

RESOLVED To note that the Council's Quality Council re-accreditation application had been successful and to forego a formal presentation of the certificate.

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

57 **EAST SUSSEX FIRE AND RESCUE**

Members were asked to consider:

(a) whether to support, in principle, further collaboration – or merger – with West Sussex Fire & Rescue and decide whether to participate in the formal consultation;

(b) the extent (if any) to which the Council wished to be consulted on the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service's medium term plans.

RESOLVED To participate in these ESFRS's consultations.

Clerk

58 **GREAT POPPY PARTY WEEKEND**

The Committee was invited to consider a request from the Royal British Legion for the Council to organise a 90th birthday Great Poppy Party, 10-12 June 2011.

RESOLVED To support, instead, the brass band concert organised by the local RBL branch for that weekend.

59 **RED TELEPHONE KIOSK, UDIMORE ROAD**

The Clerk advised that the 'adoption' contract had not yet been signed and he asked the Members to confirm the Council's wish to adopt the kiosk.

RESOLVED To confirm that the Council wishes to adopt the red kiosk in Udimore Road.

Clerk

60 **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

RESOLVED To exclude the public and press from agenda item 61 on the grounds that it reacted to the employment of a member of staff.

61 **TOWN HALL KEEPER**

Members considered a request from the post holder that he be permitted a further, final postponement of his retirement date to January 2012.

In determining this request Members took into account a range of considerations – including the postholder's ability to undertake the duties associated with the post, the organisation's needs and the upcoming abolition – except in special circumstances – of Default Retirement Dates.

RESOLVED That the postholder's request to work until January 2012 be approved.

The meeting ended at 8.46.

Date Chairman