

Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held at the Town Hall, Rye, on Monday 13 November 2017

PRESENT Councillors Sam Barnes, Mike Boyd (**Deputy Mayor**), John Breeds, Jonathan Breeds (**Mayor**), Cheryl Creaser, Justin Erswell, Bernardine Fiddimore, Rebekah Gilbert, Pat Hughes, Andy Stuart

IN ATTENDANCE Richard Farhall - Town Clerk; Louisa O’Shaughnessy – HC Manager; John Minter – *Rye News*; 3 members of the public

The meeting commenced at 6.50pm.

83 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence – and the reasons as lodged with the Clerk – were accepted from Cllrs Charlie Harkness, Jo Kirkham, Ian Potter, Ray Prewer, Andi Rivett and Shaun Rogers.

It was noted that Rother Cllrs Lord Amphill and Gennette Stevens were unable to attend.

84 CODE OF CONDUCT

There were no disclosures of interest.

85 CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT (CPE)

RESOLVED To note Cllr Amphill’s response to the Clerk’s email of 31 October 2017 (APPENDIX A).

86 GRANT APPLICATION

Members were invited to reconsider an application from the Rye Christmas Festival for a grant of £5,000 towards the installation of lights to support this year’s Festival.

The Clerk advised that Neil Cunliffe had request a second quote but it had yet to be received.

It was noted that RTC’s financial position is ‘tight’.

RESOLVED (unanimous) **To award a grant of £2,500*** **Clerk**
 *£2,000 from the Rye Christmas Festival revenue budget provision and £500 from the revenue Grants budget.

87 COUNCIL MINUTES

The Clerk advised that the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2017 (C9) had yet to be drafted.

RESOLVED To defer this item until the next meeting.

88 DRAFT BUDGETS 2018-19

Members considered the *non-confidential** elements of:

- (a) The Heritage Centre Revised 2017-18 Budget (**APPENDIX F**) and Draft 2018-19 Budget (**APPENDIX H**).
- (b) The Town Hall Draft 2018-19 Budget (**APPENDIX C**) - as well as the Earmarked Reserves Forecast/Proposed Virements (**APPENDIX D**) and the Town Clerk’s Notes (**APPENDIX B**) and HC Manager’s Budget Notes (**APPENDICES E and G**).

The Town Clerk apologised for the volume of documentation; however, given the Council's forecast financial situation it was considered necessary. He added that the forecast earmarked reserve balances referred to in the notes to the Draft TH budget do not reflect his suggested virements (**APPENDIX D**).

Heritage Centre

The HCM added that she could provide more detail if required (there are further spreadsheets supporting the Revised 2017-18 and Draft 2018-19 HC Budgets). Her notes explained the reasons for the forecast c£34,000 HC deficit for the current financial year.

Comments included:

- If the HC had been outsourced this year it could possibly have generated more income.
- RTC was lucky to have the current HCM – she had made considerable efforts to put the HC on a more sustainable footing and RTC should continue to support her plans to improve the Centre's performance.
- RTC had noted previously the reasons for the HC's slow start to the season and that it was likely to report a deficit in 2017-18 – and had agreed that it would be unreasonable not to support the HCM for another season.
- The HC has a committed team in place.
- Now is not the time to explore other options for the HC.
- The previous HCM had contributed unpaid hours and his limited remuneration did not reflect the true worth of the post.
- Both the Revised 2017-18 and the Draft 2018-19 Budgets appear to be based on realistic assessments.
- The De La Warr Pavilion is subsidised by the public sector.
- The HC has two roles: the provision of information and the provision of a visitor attraction.
- It could be argued that the proposal to raise Model admission charges was overdue.
- Those making a group Model booking are now required to pay a deposit.
- Given pressures on education budgets, it would be desirable to offer local schools reduced rates on Model admissions.

Responding to Cllr Stuart's concern that reducing the HC's winter opening hours further next year might damage Rye's visitor economy, the HCM advised that, in the winter, it is not unusual for costs to outweigh receipts. Providing a 'year round' information centre would be costly. Closing for most of the winter is forecast to save c£4,000. However, it would be approached flexibly so that the HC would be open for key events (such as Rye Bonfire, the Christmas Festival, Christmas Eve - and for group Model bookings).

RESOLVED To adopt the Draft HC Budget 2018-19 and to provide the HCM with the support necessary.

Town Hall

The Clerk advised that the forecast TH deficit was the consequence of expenditure that had not been provided for within the 2017-18 revenue budget – including the purchase of RDC land - and higher than anticipated legal fees.

TH expenditure will exceed the General Reserve and so it is necessary to replenish it by viring funds from the Earmarked Reserves.

The Draft 2018-19 TH Budget provides for known upcoming expenditure – and minimises the need to deplete further the General Reserve.

Comments included:

- Last year RTC raised the precept by a small amount (3p per week).

- All of the unplanned expenditure could be justified – either in terms of service improvements (such as the Town Steward Team) or gaining assets.
- In recent years RTC has become more pro-active.
- The Clerk’s assessment of RTC’s resourcing requirements appears to be both thorough and fair.
- By safeguarding community assets and services RTC is investing in the Parish.
- Most residents are likely to support the proposed 29p per week Band D Council Tax increase.
- RTC has shown what can be achieved with limited support from the principal authorities.
- RDC got into difficulties when the Excessive Council Tax Referendum Regulations were introduced because, historically, it had minimised Council Tax increases.
- RTC reduced the funding available for tourist information – and this resulted in the loss of the TSE centre in Lion Street. The HC has stepped in.

Responding to a question put by Cllr Erswell, the Clerk suggested that the Strand House legal advice provision should remain – even though progress was slow the prospective purchaser remained interested.

RESOLVED To adopt the Draft TH 2018-19 Budget in principle but to defer its final adoption – and the precept proposed – until the 4 December 2017 meeting in case Members have any further observations they wish to make to the Clerk.
Clerk

89 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED In accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 (1)(2), to exclude the public and press from the item following on the grounds that it may entail consideration of the terms and conditions of individual members of staff.

90 DRAFT BUDGETS 2018-19

RESOLVED To receive the Clerk’s staffing update.

The meeting ended at 7.51pm

Date Chairman