

Minutes of a Meeting of the Policy, Resources & General Purposes Committee, held at the Town Hall, Rye, on Monday 22 May 2017

- PRESENT** Councillors Mike Boyd (**Committee Chairman** - Deputy Mayor), Jonathan Breeds (Mayor), Cheryl Creaser, Bernardine Fiddimore, Rebekah Gilbert, Jo Kirkham, Andi Rivett (**Committee Vice-Chairman**)
- IN ATTENDANCE** Richard Farhall - Town Clerk; Cllrs Charlie Harkness, Pat Hughes and Andy Stuart; Louisa O'Shaughnessy – HC Manager *[part]*; Jessica Neame – General Assistant *[part]*.
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The meeting commenced at 7.56pm.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence – and the reasons as lodged with the Clerk – were accepted from Cllrs Sam Barnes and Ray Prewer.

2 CODE OF CONDUCT: DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest.

3 MINUTES

RESOLVED To adopt the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2017 (PR05) as a correct record.

4 MATTERS ARISING

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51.2d) HC – Structure (seeking guidance on alternatives from Hedleys and SSALC. Outstanding.

5.5 Grant application (ascertaining whether the Rye Festival's Constitution provides for RTC representation) Outstanding.

52 Supporting Local Businesses, Recommendation (Holding an annual reception for all Rye businesses – to coincide with Small Business Saturday) Outstanding.

21.1b) Town Hall Budget Monitor, para 2 (briefing on the TH and HC financial reports) To be arranged.

34.1a) Drafting appropriate procedures to facilitate online banking Outstanding.

34.5 Millennium Wall: insurance (all risks) Ascertaining the additional premium Outstanding.

38 Business Planning (Drafting a matrix of the Visioning priorities) Outstanding.

6.1a) Ceremonies – providing the number held so far this year – as well as the previous period. Outstanding.

23.2a) *Heritage Centre: progress report, Resolved 2 (Ascertaining the status of RDC's contract with Brochure Connect)* Outstanding.

23.2a) *Heritage Centre: progress report, Resolved 3 (Asking the Rye Ward Members to chase up the lack of progress in relation to brown 'I' signage)* Outstanding.

25 *BT Payphones, Resolved (To ask BT Payphones to repair the kiosk at the Railway Station)* Outstanding.

27 *Armed Forces, Recommendation (RTC signing the Armed Forces Covenant and self-nominating for the Bronze Award of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme)* Actioned.

35 *Bexhill Governance (Submitting response to consultation)* Response submitted (there will be a second consultation).

44 *Town Hall Access (Asking the Conservation & Design Officer to discuss the installation of a handrail on the main staircase)* Outstanding.

5 FINANCE

5.1 Town Hall

a) Schedule of Authorised Payments and Statement of Income

RESOLVED To receive and adopt the Schedule of Authorised Payments and Statement of Income for February 2017-March 2017.

b) Budget Monitor

Responding to a question put by Cllr Gilbert, the Clerk advised that any forecast HC surplus was not included in the TH Budget Monitor – but was reflected in the (consolidated) Annual Accounts.

RESOLVED To receive and note the actual income and expenditure to 31 March 2017 against budget.

5.2 Heritage Centre

a) Progress report

Louisa O'Shaughnessy (LO) – HC Manager spoke to her (tabled) update (see **APPENDIX**).

Given the limited preparation that had been undertaken for the current season, the budget/targets that she had 'inherited' were unrealistic. During April-May, revenue was down £2,000-£3,000 per month.

The strategy to address this included: decreasing the HC's dependence on foreign language students; increasing the promotion of the Town Model (in particular), audio tour and Old Pier Amusements; providing an improved stock offer for other visitors; adjusting mark ups; making greater use of social media; refreshing the retail area; arranging an evening for local accommodation providers and eateries; greater engagement with local residents and schools; more locally produced merchandise; publishing a promotional leaflet and posters – and reducing the emphasis on the Centre's information service (which does not directly generate revenue).

It would take a while to turn things around and the full benefits were unlikely to be realised significantly until the 2018 season (although improvements should be seen during this summer).

Comments included: a focus on promoting the Town Model as a means of increasing footfall into the HC was logical; LO had formulated a considerable number of promising ideas over a relatively short period of time; it is appreciated that the changes proposed will take some time to implement and bear fruit.

The Mayor flagged up the (Hastings based) Rye Bay Coffee Company as a potential supplier.

b) Payments and Income

RESOLVED To receive and adopt the Income by Customer Summaries and Expenses by Supplier Summaries for February 2017-March 2017.

c) Budget Monitor

Cllr Gilbert suggested that there might be savings to be made in respect of the HC's systems, utilities and business rates.

LO advised that Jessica Neame was looking into utility charges – including telephony. The Clerk added that an 80-90% saving on business rates would be achieved if the HC became a charitable entity.

RESOLVED 1 To ask the Clerk to continue to explore charitable status. Clerk

RESOLVED 2 To receive and note the actual income and expenditure to 31 March 2017 against budget.

The HCM and General Assistant left the meeting.

5.3 Account Balances

RESOLVED To receive the Statement of Account Balances as at 31 March 2017.

5.4 Earmarked Reserves

Responding to a question put by Cllr Gilbert, the Clerk advised that the largest item of expense within the Robes & Regalia budget was the Deputy Town Crier's uniform. He would provide a budget breakdown. Clerk

RESOLVED To receive the Statement of Earmarked Reserves as at 31 March 2017.

5.5 Future Funding Requirements

Members considered the Clerk's briefing note, flagging up actual/potential pressures on RTC's fund balances – which may have an impact on the preparation of the 2018-19 budgets.

The Mayor suggested that parishioners are now able to see the tangible results of RTC's more pro-active approach – and it would, therefore, be easier to justify a precept increase for 2018-19. Running down RTC's reserves was not sustainable.

Responding to Cllr Creaser's query, the Clerk advised that it was lawful for RTC to hold fundraising events for specific projects/purposes (such as restoration of the Landgate); however, it was important to factor in any staff time when determining whether an event was likely to be financially worthwhile.

The Mayor observed that there may be additional demands on Rye Relief in Need's funds in the near future.

RESOLVED 1 To accept Cllr Creaser's offer to draft some ideas to raise funds for RRIN. Cllr Creaser

RESOLVED 2 To adopt the Clerk's suggestion that future PRGP meetings be presented with a cash flow forecast, broken down by month. Clerk

6 WORK PROGRAMME

The Clerk advised that, since the Work Programme had been published: *Acoustics (Chamber)* The equipment would be installed on 5 June.

Antechamber window This had been installed but would need painting once the putty had hardened.

TH office reorganisation The replacement telephone system and network cabling was due to be installed early-mid June.

RESOLVED To receive the Work Programme (as at 20.3.17).

7 PUBLIC SEAT, TOP OF UDIMORE ROAD

Cllr Kirkham reported that the public seat at the top of Udimore Road, close to the beacon, is in need of repair/replacement. The bench was funded by the Cadborough Jubilee Social Club in 1980 and was installed by RDC. The body responsible for the maintenance cannot be determined. It was well used and provided a good view to the south.

RESOLVED To accept Cllr Rivett's offer to examine the works required and to liaise with the Town Steward. Cllr Rivett

8 PROVISION OF DISCOUNTED ACCOMMODATION

The Clerk advised that:

(a) A works specification had been drawn up and the jobs had been apportioned between the Town Steward Team and an external contractor (three of which would be submitting quotes).

(b) A housing lawyer had been approached for an opinion on the tenancy eligibility criteria and proposal to ring fence 10% of the rent paid. Her reply was awaited.

9 ASSISTANT TOWN STEWARD APPOINTMENT

The Clerk advised that the Town Steward Team was working well together and receiving positive feedback. The purchase of a petrol mower had improved the appearance of a number of grassed areas and RTC was looking to formally adopt them (in addition to the corner of Rye Hill-Military Road).

**10 TRANSFER OF ASSETS:
LAND OCCUPIED BY FERRY ROAD NURSERY &
7 WISH WARD – LAND ADJACENT**

It was expected that the purchase of both of these parcels of land would complete in 2-3 weeks.

11 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

There was no need to resolve to exclude the public and press in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 (1)(2).

Cllr Harkness left the Chamber.

12 PENSION SCHEME

Members were unable to reach a decision on a request to back date a scheme joining date.

RESOLVED To refer the matter to full Council.

The meeting ended at 8.08pm.

Date Chairman