

Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held at the Town Hall, Rye, on Monday 19 February 2018

PRESENT Councillors Sam Barnes, Mike Boyd (**Deputy Mayor**), John Breeds, Jonathan Breeds (**Mayor**), Cheryl Creaser, Justin Erswell, Bernardine Fiddimore, Rebekah Gilbert, Charlie Harkness, Pat Hughes, Jo Kirkham, Andi Rivett, Shaun Rogers, Andy Stuart

IN ATTENDANCE Richard Farhall - Town Clerk; Colonel Anthony Kimber – RNPSG Vice-Chairman; 1 member of the public.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm.

114 APOLOGIES

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

115 CODE OF CONDUCT

There were no disclosures or interest nor requests for dispensation.

116 RYE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN: REGULATION 14 PRE SUBMISSION

Members were asked to consider inviting the Rye Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to carry out a pre-submission consultation on the Rye Neighbourhood Plan and supporting documents, in accordance with Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations 2012.

The RNPSG Vice-Chairman, Colonel Kimber outlined the documentation which would support the consultation – adding:

- Although it continues to favour the Valley Park ‘top site’ (having submitted two planning applications – the first unsuccessful and the subject of an appeal), BP is considering two alternative ‘mixed use’ sites.
- Unlike other Plans that focus primarily on housing, the Rye NP is wide-ranging.
- Version 10 of the RNP conforms with both national and local planning policy.
- The Reg 14 consultation is not the end of the process: once the responses have been collated and assessed they go to RDC. There is then another consultation before the amended Plan goes to an external examiner. If s/he considers the Plan to be ‘sound’ it then goes to referendum.
- In Sedlescombe, two years elapsed between the Reg 14 consultation and the referendum.

Cllr Stuart considered that the proposed 6-week consultation period would not give the Rye Conservation Society sufficient time to consult with its members before drafting the Society’s response. Because it had taken so long to reach this point he suggested that a 12-week consultation period would be more appropriate.

Colonel Kimber advised that interested parties had been contributing to the evolving RNP, with one exception – the Rye Conservation Society. If RTC wishes to see the referendum held by May 2019 it cannot extend consultation periods over and above the statutory minimums.

Cllr Creaser considered that, since work on the RNP commenced, all interested parties had been kept updated. Cllr Fiddimore agreed that there had been ample opportunities to comment thus far.

Cllr Stuart advised that the Conservation Society had submitted comments on a number of occasions. Given that the latest version of the Plan is the 10th, it would make sense to give organisations and individuals a little extra time to comment.

RESOLVED To proceed to the Reg 14 pre-submission consultation.

117 STATION APPROACH

The meeting considered the Highway Forum's request that the Council asks the Highways Authority to carry out a feasibility study (cost: £500) to identify ways to improve the safety of pedestrians trying to cross the carriageway without having a clear view of oncoming traffic.

The Clerk advised that the Highways Fund balance was £6,753.

Cllr Boyd suggested that the recent extension to Jempsons had highlighted the danger of pedestrians crossing Station Approach at that point. The Highways Authority remains to be convinced that there is a problem that needs to be addressed and has advised that it could commission a feasibility study to identify possible solutions.

Cllr Gilbert advised that she had raised this matter with Cllr Glazier twice but had been told that ESCC has no funding available. Cllr Hughes reported that concerns had been raised with the relevant Highways Officer, Brian Banks. He had confirmed that the Authority has limited funding and advised that it would need to see a feasibility study – outlining possible 'solutions' – before considering making a contribution.

The Clerk reminded Members that an eligible project could attract 50% match funding from ESCC under its Community Match scheme.

Cllr Fiddimore observed that safety in Station Approach is unlikely to ascend ESCC's list of priorities unless, regrettably, a pedestrian suffers an injury.

118 LANDGATE TOWER

Council was invited to consider an invitation from Brenda Mason to contribute c£7,000 towards c£70,000 of urgent repairs.

Comments included:

- RTC/Rye should not have to contribute – the Tower is owned by RDC and has spent £8.5m on Bexhill sea front – and spends £0.5m pa subsidising the De La Warr Pavilion.
- The £70,000 is an estimate – the final figure could be £100,000. If so, RDC could ask for an additional contribution from RTC.
- RDC has made it clear that it is not inclined to progress work to the Landgate without local support and input – hence the setting up of a working group comprising RDC, RTC, Rye Museum, the Friends of the Landgate and the Conservation Society.
- RDC's proposal to commit c£70,000 represents a major step forward - until recently RDC had maintained that no funding was available.
- Could RTC ask the Secretary of State to take direct control of the Landgate?
- The work proposed would address urgent repairs only – the architect commissioned by RDC estimates that stabilising the Tower would cost c£350,000. (If feasible) turning the interior into usable space is likely to cost another £1m.
- Maintaining a Scheduled Monument is very expensive and time consuming – permission is needed for the simplest thing.
- RDC's 'offer' to spend £70,000 on the Tower is unprecedented.
- If parishioners see that serious attempts are being made to care for the Tower they are more likely to consider making private contributions towards future works.
- All the while that Council Tax is rising donations from the public cannot be taken for granted.

- If RTC agrees to underwrite £7,000 of the £70,000 it will demonstrate to parishioners that RTC is committed to ensuring that the Tower is maintained and not allowed to fall into further disrepair.
- The proposal presents a rare opportunity and is likely to help secure funding from other sources.
- If RTC declines to underwrite £7,000, RDC's Cabinet is unlikely to proceed with the proposal and RTC would be at risk of attracting criticism from local stakeholders.
- It is known that Cllr Ampthill is prepared to speak in favour of the proposal at Cabinet.
- RDC has sufficient money to fund the work itself – it is currently establishing a property development company.
- The future of the Tower is considerably more important than the small amenity area in Wish Ward (which RTC purchased for £12,000).
- RDC wishes to dispose of the freehold of the Tower. It is not certain that anyone will be found to take on the liability.
- It is possible that the Tower could end up in private ownership.
- If RTC does agree to contribute/underwrite £7,000 it should have sight of the works specification before the contract is placed.
- RDC should be advised that, if it is determined to dispose of the Tower, RTC expects to see the asset transferred to a not-for-profit organisation.

A proposal that the invitation to contribute £7,000 be declined was lost.

RESOLVED To underwrite a contribution of £7,000 and to invite other local stakeholders to share this undertaking. **Clerk**

119 DISCOUNTED ACCOMMODATION

Members were invited to ratify the amended Discounted Accommodation Allocation policy.

Comments included:

- A convincing case can be made for adding 'education within the parish' to the Local Connection eligibility criteria.
- RTC could then find itself considering applications from those who have lived all their lives in Hastings/St Leonards but travelled to study in Rye.
- A proportion of Rye children do not study in the Parish.
- These considerations can be taken into account by the Panel considering the applications.
- Similar arguments apply in respect of the (existing) 'employment within the Parish' Local Connection criterion.
- The original purpose of the scheme was to prevent a younger Rye household from having to move out of Rye.
- A number of serving Town Councillors do not reside within the Rye Parish boundary.

RESOLVED To add 'education within the Parish' to the Local Connection eligibility criteria. **Clerk**

The meeting ended at 7.32pm

Date Chairman