

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held at the Town Hall, Rye, on Monday 29 October 2018**

**PRESENT** Councillors Sam Barnes, Mike Boyd (**Mayor**), John Breeds, Jonathan Breeds, Cheryl Creaser, Bernardine Fiddimore, Pat Hughes, Jo Kirkham, Shaun Rogers, Andy Stuart

**IN ATTENDANCE** Richard Farhall - Town Clerk; Paul Goring – Town Sergeant; Jessica Neame – General Assistant; Rother District Councillors Lord Amphill and Gennette Stevens; John Minter – *Rye News*; 2 members of the public

*The meeting commenced at 6.30pm.*

**82 PRAYERS**

In the absence of the Mayor’s Chaplain, prayers were said by the Town Sergeant.

**83 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence – and the reasons as lodged with the Clerk – were accepted from Cllrs Justin Erswell, Rebekah Gilbert (**Deputy Mayor**), Charlie Harkness, Ian Potter, Ray Prewer and Andi Rivett.

The Clerk advised that Cllr Glazier and the HCM were unable to be present.

**84 CODE OF CONDUCT**

There were no disclosures of interest nor requests for dispensation.

**85 MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor reported that, since the last Council meeting, the Mayoral engagements he had attended included: Speakers Day in Hastings, a WWI Centenary hosted by the Lord Lieutenant of Kent at Canterbury Cricket Ground – and the re-opening (this morning) of Rye DIY.

The Mayor added that he was aware that previous Mayors had declined invitations to attend (re)openings of commercial premises – for fear of this being misinterpreted as constituting formal endorsement of the business – however, he is of the view that it is important to encourage local commerce – and he hoped colleagues concurred.

*The Mayor adjourned the meeting for the reports of the County and District Councillors and Public Question Time (see APPENDICES A-B).*

6.44 Cllr Rogers arrived.

**86 COUNCIL MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** To approve the draft Minutes of the meetings held on 3 September 2018 (C6) and 24 September 2018 (C8).

**87 COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**RESOLVED 1** To receive the Minutes of the meetings of the Deputy Town Clerk Designate Committee held on 29 August 2018 (DTCD03) and 18 September 2018 (DTCD04).

**RESOLVED 2 To receive the Minutes of the meetings of the Planning & Townscape Committee held on 3 September 2018 (PT05), 18 September 2018 (PT06), 1 October 2018 (PT07) and 15 October 2018 (PT08).**

**88 HERITAGE CENTRE**

**a) Progress Report**

The Clerk advised that the Heritage Centre Manager, Louisa O'Shaughnessy had been unable to complete her report before going off sick that morning – and her report would follow.

He reminded Members that the General Assistant was undertaking a Strategic Review of the HC and she had invited them to contribute their thoughts.

**b) Payments and Income**

**RESOLVED To receive and adopt Income by Customer Summaries and Expenses by Supplier Summaries for August 2018 to September 2018.**

**c) Budget Monitor**

**RESOLVED To receive and note the actual income and expenditure against budget to 30 September 2018.**

**89 FINANCE**

**89.1 Town Hall**

**a) Schedule of Authorised Payments and Statement of Income**

Cllr Rogers observed that rent arrears payments for September and October appeared not to have been received. The Clerk confirmed that the Council had resolved previously that these should be at least 100pcm – and that he had contacted the tenant with a view to the repayment plan being brought up to date.

**RESOLVED To receive and adopt the Schedule of Authorised Payments and Statement of Income for August 2018 to September 2018.**

**b) Budget Monitor**

The Clerk advised that the 'rogue' VAT Income amount of £408.32 still needed to be removed – and the £1,300 Insurance underspend was the result of negotiation and entering into a 3-year agreement.

**RESOLVED To receive and note the actual income and expenditure against budget to 31 July 2018.**

**89.2 Account Balances**

**RESOLVED To receive the Statement of Account Balances as at 30 September 2018.**

**89.3 Earmarked Reserves**

Following Cllr Erswell's suggestion at the last meeting, the Clerk had vired £500 from the Web Site Earmarked Reserve to the Winter Maintenance Earmarked Reserve.

**RESOLVED To receive a Statement of Earmarked Reserves as at 30 September 2018.**

Responding to a question from Cllr Rogers, the Clerk confirmed that replacing the Town Steward's vehicle was being explored.

#### **89.4 Grant Application**

Members were invited to consider an application from Encompass Care (Rye) CIC for £1,000 towards the eventual purchase of a minibus.

Speaking from the Gallery, the applicant, Irna Mortlock reported that she had been given some good advice from the RDCT Co-ordinator. Encompass had recently received a grant of £2,000 from the Rye Community Shop to put towards either the purchase of a minibus to collect clients or hiring taxis/paying volunteer drivers' travel expenses in the short-term. Encompass is seeking quotes from local transport providers. Currently, clients are drawn from Peasmarsch (2), Iden (2), Northiam (1) and Camber (2).

Comments included: All current clients live outside the Rye Parish – therefore RTC could find itself using money raised from Rye Council Tax Payers to subsidise residents from other parishes; RTC provides RDCT – which operates throughout Rye & District – with an annual grant; the RDCT grant is specifically to cover the funding shortfall when Rye residents use their free bus pass 9-9.30am; RDCT does not have a suitable vehicle available at the times required by Encompass; RDCT has a number of existing commitments – one of which (a priority) is taking people to/from medical appointments; RTC could, instead, give Encompass a grant towards paying its rent at TG Community Centre – that way the money would 'stay in Rye – and support a community facility that, one day, might fall to RTC to run; it would not be appropriate to make a grant for another purpose with so many Members absent from this meeting; future Encompass clients might be Rye residents; if RTC awarded Encompass a grant it might help it gain grants from surrounding parish councils; Rye is a market town and Encompass is based in the town; Encompass 'inherited' its current client from ARRCC; there is a need for the work undertaken by Encompass; giving Encompass a grant would not benefit directly Rye residents – and this could create an undesirable precedent.

Members were minded to make an award but were undecided on the amount and purpose.

**RESOLVED To invite the applicant to amend and resubmit the application for consideration at the next meeting. Clerk**

#### **89.5 Making Tax Digital**

**RESOLVED To note that: a) From April 2019, VAT returns must be submitted to HMRC directly from accounting software; b) RTC currently manually combines TH and HC VAT data – and then completes the HMRC VAT return form online; c) Prior to April 2019, RTC will need to merge its TH and HC accounting software (whilst operating separate cost centres) – and that the cost of achieving this has yet to be determined.**

### **90 WORK PROGRAMMES/UPDATES**

#### **(a) Clerk**

**RESOLVED To receive and note a summary of the status of key tasks/projects as at 23.10.18.**

#### **(b) General Assistant**

Jessica Neame suggested that preparing for Making Tax Digital presented an opportunity to explore further streamlining bookkeeping and payroll. Although the Town Hall has been without one of its staff members for 4 months some progress is being made in respect of longer term projects.

Cllr Creaser thanked the General Assistant for her hard work and continuing efforts to achieve efficiency savings.

**RESOLVED To receive and note an update on the post holder's work programme.**

**91 HIGHWAYS FORUM**

The Clerk advised that Inspector Dan Russell is supportive of the possibility of RTC purchasing a Speed Indicator Device – and/or a speed gun (so long as it was a Police-approved model and users were trained by them).

On behalf of the Forum, Cllr Hughes set out its three recommendations in relation to speeding:

*1) the acquisition of a portable SID which can be sited in roads where speeding is particularly worrying and rotated to maintain maximum impact.*

*2) extending the local road safety promotion begun by ESCC along New/Fishmarket Roads to use the 'Lamp posts mean 30' posters (as recommended by Highways England) and to rotate with currently used posters to improve effectiveness.*

*3) to put in white picket 'gates' (again recommended by Highways England as effective at marking the boundary between the open road and an urban/residential area), firstly in New Road and New Winchelsea Road, and subsequently in Military Road.*

Cllr Hughes reminded Members that RTC had asked the Forum to consider tackling speeding when some residents of South Undercliff approached it seeking the Council's backing for a '20 is Plenty' initiative throughout the town. There had been a meeting also with New Road residents, RTC, Cllr Glazier and Highways England to consider how to encourage drivers to comply with the 30mph restriction. A scheme to introduce 20mph zones in Manchester was abandoned at the half-way point when it was discovered that the zones installed were achieving a 0.7mph reduction in average speeds only. However, Transport for London found that the use of SIDs in Kensington & Chelsea resulted in an average speed reduction of 1.4mph – and were cheaper.

SIDs are most effective if they are relocated every 1-2 weeks – and the portable versions have the advantage of being capable of being 'redeployed' quickly to address emerging issues.

The Forum takes the view that, of its three recommendations, the first should be prioritised – the gateways proposal (considered by Highways England to be the most effective means of reducing traffic speed) requires more research.

The display of speed awareness posters is also reasonably effective (and cheap) but, ideally, the 'message' needs to be changed periodically.

Cllr Jonathan Breeds recalled that a previous Council meeting had been well-attended by South Undercliff and New Residents.

Responding to a question put by Cllr Creaser, the Clerk advised that the only realistic source for external funding was the Safer Rother Partnership.

**RESOLVED To ask the Safer Rother Partnership if it would consider contributing towards the purchase of a portable SID – and then to consider the matter further.**

**Clerk**

**92 FORMER NAT WEST BANK**

Cllr Jonathan Breeds reported that when he realised that it was not known what was to become of the two War memorial plaques within the former Rye Nat West he asked the office to make enquiries. Fortunately, a positive response (distributed) had been received from the NatWest-RBS Archivist, explaining that they were safe and, in

line with current policy, had been transferred to the Hastings Nat West for installation (pending).

Cllr Kirkham advised that she had managed to rescue a 1750 blunderbuss from the (now closed) Rye LloydsTSB – and it is now displayed in the Ypres Tower.

**93 EXERCISE REFINE**

Colonel Kimber spoke to his brief report on the recent emergency response exercise at TRADEBE.

**94 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

The Clerk advised that he currently had nothing further he wished to add to the staffing information already in Members' possession. Unless Members had questions item 95 could be deferred to a future meeting.

**RESOLVED Not to exclude the public and press from the item following in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 (1)(2).**

**95 STAFFING**

**RESOLVED To defer this item.**

**Clerk**

*The meeting ended at 7.30pm*

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

**ADJOURNMENT****85a) County Councillor's Report**

There was no report.

**59b) Reports of the Rother District Councillors****Cllr Amphill**

Cllr Amphill delivered his report (**APPENDIX A**).

**Cllr Stevens**

Cllr Stevens reported that she had recently:

- Offered advice to two young households who wished to remain in Rye.
- Visited the Ferry Road Nursery with Amber Rudd in order to meet with staff and children – and learn more about its expansion plans.
- Became a member of RDC's new Tourism Working Group.
- Sat in on one of Amber Rudd's surgeries held in the Rye Kino.

**Cllr Fiddimore** *Does Cllr Amphill have more information about the possible introduction of kerbside food waste collection next year?*

**Cllr Amphill** No, this suggestion has still to be fully assessed.

Cllr Fiddimore suggested that rural areas were likely to have problems with foxes, badgers, rats etc trying to extract food waste from outside containers.

The Clerk highlighted RDC's Housing & Homelessness Review consultation.

**Cllr Jonathan Breeds** *What are the implications, for Rother, of the Chancellor's announcement that business rates for small retailers will be cut by a third?*

**Cllr Amphill** It is not yet clear whether RDC will lose the funding or it will be 'made up' by Central Government. RDC needs to maximise its revenue – hence its investment in commercial property.

**Cllr Creaser** *What were the outcomes of Cllr Stevens' meeting with the two young households she mentioned in her report?*

**Cllr Stevens** They were signposted to help and support.

**Cllr Creaser** *Why did Cllr Stevens decide to visit the Ferry Road Nursery?*

**Cllr Stevens** To view how it operated and learn about its extension plans. There is a possibility that ESCC may contribute to the funding required.

**Cllr Creaser** *Could Cllr Stevens raise the possibility of support for the visitor information services provided at the Heritage Centre within the Tourism WG?*

**Cllr Stevens** Yes.

**85c) Public Question Time**

Colonel Kimber took the opportunity to thank RDC's Planning Strategy Officers for their help with the RNP.

There were no other questions/contributions.

**85b) Report of Rye Ward member, Cllr Lord Amphill**

Works are progressing on the **Landgate** and Mr Bailey has just certified the first payment to the contractor. He is about to meet Heritage England so that they may sign off the agreed additional items. In connection with the Mayor's excellent wish to fly a British Legion flag from the building to mark Armistice Day, Graham Burgess, the Property Investment & Regeneration Manager, sees no problem. The site will not be clear by the end of next week: but there is time to check the state of the flagpole and to arrange delivery of the flag. As yet, no file has surfaced which could guide the restoration of the clock.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee has had a look at RDC's **medium term financial strategy** in the knowledge that Central Government will continue to reduce our funding at a time when there is increasing demand for services. The Council has to produce a balanced budget; and is likely, depending on consultation, to maximise the annual increase in Council Tax within the Government's referendum limit. A 2.99 per cent increase would see our Band D tax rise from £174 to £179 for 2019/20 which would bring in some £200,000 on our current tax base. For comparison, the average Band D Town and Parish Council Tax figure is approximately £60.

The year has seen a significant number of households presenting themselves, up and down the country, as **homeless**. Rother's gross cost of providing emergency and temporary accommodation rose significantly in 2017/18. We have a Housing Task & Finish Group studying measures to improve outcomes in these very difficult circumstances.

In respect of **Waste Collection**, the current contract with Kier, which serves four Districts and Boroughs, terminates next June. From the current Joint Waste Partnership, Rother, Hastings and Wealden will continue working together; and the process is under way to evaluate the tenders which have been received. There should be a conclusion in January with the signing and sealing of a new contract.

**Street and beach cleansing** will be part of the contract for Rother and Wealden: but Hastings will handle their own. Eastbourne will leave the Partnership and form a closer relationship with Lewes District. The period 2013-2019 will have seen huge annual service savings - but a waste collection and recycling outcome which has not been good enough. There will be a different financial basis for the new contract and it will include a fully co-mingled collection system. It is understood that food waste collections may yet become a legal requirement. At all times, there is a difficult balance to be struck between environmental and economic benefits.

That part of the Local Plan known as the **Development & Site Allocations Local Plan**, building upon the planning aims identified in the 2014 Core Strategy, is out for consultation until 7th December. Thereafter, the independent Planning Inspector will determine whether its policies are sound.