

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held via Zoom on
Monday 7 September 2020**

PRESENT Councillors David Ampthill, David Bookless, Michael Boyd, Jonathan Breeds, Cheryl Creaser, Rebekah Gilbert (**Mayor**), Jo Kirkham, Ian Potter, Andi Rivett (**Deputy Mayor**), Shaun Rogers, Andy Stuart

IN ATTENDANCE Richard Farhall - Town Clerk; Jessica Neame – Deputy Town Clerk; The Reverend Canon David Frost – Mayor’s Chaplain; Rother District Cllrs Gennette Stevens and Howard Norton; East Sussex County Cllr Keith Glazier; 3 members of the public

The meeting commenced at 6.31pm.

11 PRAYERS

Prayers were said by the Mayor’s Chaplain, The Reverend Canon David Frost.

12 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence – and the reasons as lodged with the Clerk – were accepted from Cllrs Jonathan Breeds, Hoggart, Hughes, Stuart and Wood.

13 CODE OF CONDUCT

There were no disclosures of interest – nor requests for dispensation.

14 MINUTES

RESOLVED To approve, as an accurate record, the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 24 August 2020 (C1).

The Mayor adjourned the meeting for the Reports of the District & County Councillors - and questions/contributions from members of the public (see APPENDIX).

The meeting reconvened.

**15 COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIP
OUTSIDE REPRESENTATION**

RESOLVED To continue with the current (2019-20) membership and appointments until 10 May 2021 (the next scheduled Committee Formation meeting).

16 RYE HERITAGE CENTRE

Members were invited to consider, formally, the CIO’s proposed alterations.

Anthony Kimber advised that most of the proposed work would be to partitions that had been in place around 17 years and the historic fabric of the building would not be affected. The CIO would ‘make good’ and redecorate. In addition to improving the operation of the business the work would also go some way towards addressing the recommendations arising from the 2004 Access Audit. The CIO would source the

necessary funding. He added that there was no intention of filling the Centre with static exhibits – with digital displays being preferred.

RESOLVED 1 To support the proposal in principle.

RESOLVED 2 To ask the Clerk to establish if Listed Building Consent would be required. Clerk

17 JOHN RYAN

The meeting was asked to consider, formally, Jim Sparrow’s proposed Captain Pugwash sculpture.

The Clerk reported that all those Members who had responded to his informal consultation had supported the proposal in principle – but there was some disagreement on location (the Gun Garden posing a vandalism risk). He added that there had been two anonymous pledges of £500 each towards the project cost.

Jim Sparrow advised that he had secured the support of both Priscilla and Isabel Ryan before approaching RTC. He had suggested the Gun Garden because it seemed to fit the Pugwash time period and the setting is appropriate. However, he is happy to consider alternative sites.

Isabel Ryan had observed increased footfall in the direction of the Gun Garden – presumably a proportion of these would be those looking to see if the Ypres Tower was open. A Pugwash sculpture depicting him lighting a cannon would be appropriate. Priscilla had been very keen on the idea. The Ryan family has agreed to contribute £1,000.

Comments from Members included:

- Siting the sculpture in the Gun Garden should increase the footfall through the town and help businesses – as well as the RIP and St Marys.
- Because of the risk of the cannons ending up on the A259, their cases contain concrete and are anchored.

Mr Sparrow advised that brass (if used) is heavy and, in any case, the sculpture would be anchored with steel rods.

RESOLVED To support the proposal in principle and to ask the Clerk to work up a more detailed proposal with Mr Sparrow. Clerk

The meeting ended at 7.37pm

Date Chairman

ADJOURNMENT**a) Reports of the Rye District Councillors****Cllr Howard Norton**

- During the pandemic he had come to appreciate the role played by local government.
- He was proud to a member of the Rother Alliance (RDC controlling group). Its priorities are: the creation of a Town Council for Bexhill; the provision of more social housing; responding to the climate emergency.
- Local government is going through a turbulent time – it has had to find new ways of working (notably online), is under huge financial pressure, is faced with the threat of mergers – and the possible loss of its planning function.
- RDC has decided to replace its two Executive Officers with one CEO.
- He had helped to publicise the (COVID-related) grants available to businesses.
- He was concerned that, during the 'lockdown', some people had taken advantage of RDC's 'weakened' position – including a large enforcement backlog – to abuse the planning system.
- There had been no need to distribute food parcels in Winchelsea but there had been a significant emotional and psychological impact on parishioners. Many residents of Winchelsea are older people and some will be experiencing fear and anxiety.
- Community activities have been suspended and this increases any sense of social isolation.
- Noisy motorbikes may have contributed to people moving away from Winchelsea.

Anthony Kimber Rye is fortunate to have a Neighbourhood Plan in place which sets out what can/cannot be done – and can be used as the basis for enforcement decisions. REACT and the RMA have been providing practical support during the (ongoing) pandemic since March. Winchelsea has a high proportion of second homes – which may contribute to transmission risk. There is evidence that younger people are increasingly disregarding social distancing rules.

Cllr Norton thanked all those involved with the RMA. It was quick to get going and is very well-organised – and provides an excellent model to copy. Around 20% of dwellings in Winchelsea are second homes. Residents of Winchelsea Beach have been subjected to large numbers of visitors being re-directed there from Camber, by the Police.

Cllr Creaser was pleased to see Cllr Norton's interest in Rye and hoped that his understanding of the needs of Rye was expanding. She asked that any Rye planning issues drawn to his attention be shared with RTC.

Cllr Norton advised that he had tried to attend RTC meetings but there were often clashes with other meetings. It is not unusual for residents to raise planning matters with Ward Members.

Cllr Creaser expressed her appreciation for Cllr Stevens' work on behalf of Rye.

Cllr Gennette Stevens

Cllr Norton had covered much of what she intended to say.

There is no immediate prospect of development on the Skinners site.

Cllr Ampthill considered that Cllr Norton's report had been somewhat political – all Rother Members are working on behalf of their Wards (regardless of any political affiliation).

What is the rationale for replacing the two highly-experienced Executive Officers when the cost of making one of them redundant will be considerable?

Cllr Norton advised that it would be Tony Leonard who would be stepping down. The Rother Alliance has a strong reform agenda. The CEO appointment will produce savings in the long-run.

Cllr Rogers Why is RDC forcing Rye Hire – which has traded in the town for 26 years – off its site in Cyprus Place? It could accommodate a relatively small number of (council) dwellings. The business had been told that it had to vacate by July 2021 – with no offer of an alternative site. RDC would be depriving Rye & District of a service that it needs. Rye Hire had tried to buy the freehold previously but had been turned down.

Cllr Stevens understood that the lease is up for renewal and the Town Plan provides for the site to be used for housing. She believed that RDC would find it a better site.

Cllr Potter asked Cllr Norton how RDC would be taking forward its proposals for the site.

Cllr Norton advised that both he and Cllr Stevens would make RTC's views known and consider carefully any proposals.

Cllr Boyd suggested RDC had under-estimated the strength of local support for Rye Hire.

Cllr Creaser observed that Rye Hire is an important provider of employment.

Cllr Glazier advised that RDC had decided not to renew Rye Hire's lease.

Anthony Kimber advised that the site had been subject to a great deal of discussion during the development of the RNP. Throughout RDC had stated that Rye Hire had a long lease – and so the development potential need not be considered.

b) Report of the County Councillor

Cllr Glazier thanked RMA, REACT and others for their outstanding response to the pandemic. RMA is a slick operation and an exemplar.

He congratulated Cllrs Gilbert and Rivett on their appointments as Mayor and Deputy Mayor and thanked Cllr Gilbert's predecessor, Cllr Boyd for his contribution whilst in office.

He was disappointed to observe so many people not social distancing or nor wearing face coverings indoors.

The Rother CPE scheme will be laid before Parliament on 8 September and will come into force on 29 September.

SGN had obtained a permit from Highways England to undertake work in Winchelsea Road in October for up to 3 weeks. This would entail a road closure and lengthy

diversion – greatly increasing the time taken to get in and out of Rye on school buses. He had asked SGN to reschedule the work so that it took place during a school holiday. A meeting would be taking place tomorrow.

The manually-operated Camber 're-direction' sign is to be replaced with an electronic one.

Anthony Kimber reported that, at its peak, RMA had 600 volunteers – most of whom were of the 'younger age group'.

On behalf of RTC and the RNPSG, Colonel Kimber advised Cllr Glazier that there is a desire to explore providing affordable housing (up to 20 units) on the former playing field the Tilling Green Community Centre. Now that affordable housing on the former Lower School site has been ruled out, options are reducing rapidly.

Cllr Glazier advised that the area forms part of the lease between the Rye Partnership and ESCC – however, he is happy to discuss the idea.

In response to a question posed by the Mayor, Cllr Glazer advised that Rye Library would open as soon as resources permitted. Currently, staff have been deployed to support the 5 that have been opened. Once he had an indicative date he would let the Clerk know.

c) Public Questions/Contributions

There was none at this stage.