



Battle Town Council



MINUTES of the COUNCIL MEETING held at 7.30pm
on Tuesday, 21 February 2012 at
The Almonry, High Street, Battle

PRESENT: Cllr R Harris – Chairman

ALSO: Cllrs R Bye, J Carter, J Eldridge, Mrs T Farr, Mrs P Fisher,
Mrs M Howell, R Jessop, R McDonald, Mrs S Pry and D Wilson.

Public Question Time

John Harmer spoke at length about his frustration at the **lack of path clearance** during the recent **snowy weather**. In his presentation he asked whether the Town Council would be able to contribute greater effort in this respect in the future. Cllr Harris explained the Highway Authority policies which include not only prioritising work to clear the principal elements of the road network but also encourage greater self help by business premises and households. Nevertheless he agreed to raise these concerns with the Highway Authority but made clear that the Town Council's resources could not stretch any further. Cllr Harris also referred to the lack of clearance in the car parks and said that he would be writing to the Leader of the District Council on this subject. Mr Marks, a resident of Bowmans Drive, was grateful that, for the first time, his road had been cleared and wished to record his thanks. Nevertheless he shared the concerns previously expressed by John Harmer pointing out that the weather forecast had given clear notice of the snow which, in his view, should have provided the Highway Authority with notice to put in place the necessary clearance plans.

1. **Apologies for Absence** – Cllrs J Boryer, Mrs M Kiloh, A Mitchell and Ms M-L Neill.
Cllr M Palmer was absent.

2. **Disclosure of Interest** – None.

3. **Minutes of the Council Meeting** held on 17 January 2012. Cllr Carter proposed approval of the minutes, seconded by Cllr Mrs Fisher. This was agreed and they were duly signed.

4. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

Cllr Harris confirmed that the new **satellite information point** for Battle will be located at Yesterdays World. As the Council's representative on the Marketing Group Cllr Palmer will be asked to monitor the performance.

As agreed, a **grant offer** had been made to the **Town Band** on the condition that they discuss future performances in the town. They had accepted this and the Chairman and Clerk will be meeting the Band on 2 March.

Cllr Harris reported that he, Cllr Mrs Pry and the Clerk had followed up the invitation to develop **closer links with Claverham Community College**. A number of ideas had been discussed including the possibility of students designing the newsletter and activities linked to the various "in Bloom" events.

5. Police Matters

PCSO Sam Kemp was welcomed to the meeting. The **PCSOs report for January** and the latest **crime updates** were noted. Expanding on these PCSO Kemp drew attention to the recent arrest of someone attempting to pass **forged £20 notes** and a **distraction**

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burglary at Battle Interiors. The former had been greatly assisted by the Shop Watch system. She acknowledged Cllr Harris' comment that there appears to have been a recent increase in thefts from shops.

Cllr Harris confirmed that at a recent meeting with the **new Chief Inspector** she had restated support for Neighbourhood Policing and made a commitment to providing a regular police presence in the High Street. She had accepted the need to keep up the pressure on those illegally parking in the loading bay. As part of her wish to raise her profile within the community Ch Insp Katy Woolford will attend the Parish Assembly.

6. Report from County Councillor

Referring back to the Public Question Time discussion about **snow clearance** Cllr Field emphasised that it is the responsibility of schools to clear their own premises.

Regarding the **County Council's budget**, cuts of £19m had been made and there will be no increase in Council Tax. There will be a continuing emphasis on improving the social care aspects of Children's Services by processing cases more quickly with a view to early intervention where necessary. £10m has accordingly been allocated.

She confirmed that the **Fire Services merger** involving East and West Sussex and Brighton and Hove is not going ahead.

7. Report from District Councillors

Cllr Dixon had sent his apologies.

Cllr Davies said that **Rother's budget** had been approved and, as with the County Council, there will be no increase in Council Tax. Of particular local interest she confirmed that the Community Grant scheme will continue. Regarding the **satellite information point** she said that there will be a formal launch next month and that appropriate new signage will be provided. Reflecting the previously expressed concerns by the Town Council Cllr Jessop queried what criteria had been set in order to judge the success of the new tourist information regime.

Cllr Davies confirmed that **revised car park charges** had now been agreed. These include substantial increases in the charges for Market Square. Cllr Harris observed that this proposal had only come to light when the Town Council had received recent copies of Rother's Cabinet papers. The Clerk had registered an immediate response objecting to the proposals. In his letter to the Leader about the snow clearance issue Cllr Harris will also deal with this matter.

Cllr Field reported that a value for money review of the **Bexhill seafront project** is being carried out.

8. Correspondence & Communications

The **Rother Parish Remuneration Panel** has completed its annual review and agreed that there should be no increase in current allowances. Whilst Town Council Members are able to claim full reimbursement of travelling and expenses Cllr Harris reminded the meeting that no Members have elected to claim the basic allowance.

There will be a **Localism Conference** organised by **SALC** on **20 April**. This will be a full day event but the programme has not yet been finalised.

9. Minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 8 January, 1 and 15 February were reported by Cllr Jessop and noted.

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10. Minutes of the Estates Committee meeting held on 24 January. In the absence of both the Committee Chairman and Vice Chairman Cllr Harris reported the minutes. These were noted together with the supplementary information that the application to the **Woodlands Trust for a pack of saplings** had been unsuccessful. Cllr Mrs Fisher said that a further application could be made later in the year but, in the meantime, Cllr Carter offered to provide some saplings.

11. Vacancy

A single application to fill the vacancy in the Marley Ward had been received. Whilst the applicant's knowledge and experience was acknowledged reservations were expressed about his availability bearing in mind his substantial business commitments. After some discussion it was agreed that the Clerk should pursue this issue with the applicant.

12. Devolution Issues

Reporting on the recent **Rother Localism Workshop** Cllr Mrs Fisher was pleased to say that the Town Council appears to be well ahead in terms of taking advantage of the new regime as compared to other parishes.

Anticipating the meeting with **Rother's Devolution of Services Working Group** Cllr Harris had circulated a paper proposing that the Town Council should restrict its interest, at this stage, to those services which do not require specialist staff. Equally, as previously agreed, services should not be taken on without appropriate funding arrangements. This approach should apply equally to the transfer of any assets. Those with no direct public benefit should remain with Rother.

As agreed at the previous meeting arrangements are in hand for a further discussion to take place with the District Council about the option of **purchasing the car parks**.

13. Diamond Jubilee

There had been no public reaction to the announcement that the Town Council would not be organising a single **Big Lunch** event but the recent Newsletter had included encouragement for residents to come together for their own street parties etc.

Cllr Mrs Fisher reminded the meeting that the Council had presented school children with **commemorative mugs** for the Silver Jubilee and proposed that something similar should be done this year. Examples of china and earthenware mugs were circulated and the general proposition was endorsed. **Cllr Mrs Fisher therefore formally proposed that 600 personalised china mugs be purchased at an estimated cost of £1500. This was seconded by Cllr Harris and agreed unanimously.**

Cllr Mrs Fisher asked about the progress with **Battle's Big Event**. Cllr Jessop reassured her that all is progressing well with detailed arrangements for the opening and closing ceremonies already finalised. A coordinator has been appointed to ensure that the programme is put together.

14. Quality Council

The Council is required to submit its application for reaccreditation by 3 June. In doing so it will have to include something about a training strategy for Councillors. Members endorsed Cllr Harris' suggestion that the idea of a 15 minute training session after each meeting should be resurrected.

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15. Community Awards

Members were reminded that decisions about Community Awards should ideally be made at the March meeting. The usual invitation to the public to make nominations will be put in the local paper.

16. List of Payments and Receipts was noted.

17. Reports from Representatives of the Council

- Cllr Eldridge - had assisted the Clerk in producing a **schedule of repair works for the Almonry**;
- Cllr McDonald - had attended a meeting of the **Big Event** group;
- Cllr Jessop - had circulated his usual activities report. This included a reference to concern expressed at the **Chamber** meeting that the Marketing Group had not fully supported Battle. In seeking to clarify this, the Clerk said that he assumed that this is the same point as raised at the latest Marketing Group meeting and focussed on the lack of promotion of the Chamber in the Battle Guide. The response had been that the Guide is aimed at encouraging visitors rather than promoting individual organisations.
- Cllr Mrs Howell - had attended a recent **Muddy Boots** meeting. Cllr Harris thanked her for attending at such short notice. He recognised that this is primarily an information gathering forum rather than one at which the Town Council can contribute. Cllr Mrs Howell will represent the Council at the next meeting with a view to recommending whether or not a permanent appointment should be made at the Council's AGM in May;
- Cllr Mrs Fisher - had attended the **Rother Localism Workshop**;
- Cllr Mrs Pry - had attended the **Battle in Bloom** group meeting;
- Cllr Bye - had attended the recent **Memorial Hall Committee** meeting;
- Cllr Harris - as already reported, had met with **Ch Insp Katy Woolford**;
- had Chaired the **Battle in Bloom Committee** meeting at which it had been agreed that the cemetery should be entered in a new category of the South East in Bloom competition. The meeting had also emphasised the importance in promoting its own In Bloom competition. Various opportunities for this are being pursued including the use of the display cabinet in the library for 3 weeks end March-early April. The Committee had agreed that a prize for the Best New Entry might encourage more interest;
- had attended the **Localism Seminar**;

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- had represented the Council at the **Bonfire Boyes** presentation of funds collected. Over £5800 had been distributed to at least 15 groups.

18. Matters for Information/Future Items for Agenda – None.

19. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, 20 March 2012

The meeting closed at 9.00pm.

CLLR R HARRIS
Chairman

