Battle Town Council

Minutes of the COUNCIL MEETING held on TUESDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER at
The Almonry, High Street, Battle at 7.30pm


In Attendance: County Cllr K Field, District Cllr K Dixon, C Harris (Town Clerk) and three members of the public.

Public Question Time
Mr Marks suggested that, in line with Rother District Council policy, reports to be discussed at meetings be in the public domain. The Clerk confirmed that all relevant documents will be available on the Council’s website with the agenda.
He asked that, as a previous member and a current advisor to the Battle Civic Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (BCPNPSG), he be permitted to remain for the confidential item 20. This was agreed.

1. Apologies for absence – Cllrs B Brown, C Davies, J Gyngell.

2. Disclosure of interest – Cllrs M Holmes, A Russell and D Wheeler declared an interest in confidential item 20 as current or previous members of the BCPNPSG.

3. Minutes of the Council meeting held on 20 August 2019 were agreed, subject to an amendment of proposal at item 6, para 2 “Cllr A Brown proposed that all intended public communication on Council matters is first reviewed for accuracy by the Town Clerk and for information purposes.” and duly signed by Cllr Favell.

4. Clerk’s report
- The opening of the recreation ground had been a success, despite the poor weather conditions. Photographs and an article have been submitted to the Observer promoting the great facilities now on offer.
- Members were reminded that the first Awareness Campaign will be held on the Abbey Green on Friday 20 September and that more volunteers are welcome. This has been highlighted on the website, social media and the local newspaper.
- Confirmation had been received from Tiger Tees Ltd and Jempsons that they would cover the cost for the replacement festive lights in Market Square that will complement the new scheme throughout the High Street area.

5. Reports from County Councillor and District Councillors
County
Cllr Field confirmed that, although there remains a shortfall in funds, it is hoped that a one-off grant towards adult social care from Government of £10m will be received. This will enable the troubled families scheme to continue.

District
Cllr Field congratulated the Council on the brilliant new facilities on the recreation ground to date. She reported that Costa Coffee has been granted full and listed planning permission for the ex NatWest building and it was hoped that this would be open in November with a reinstated ATM.
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which will not be subject to business rates. Cllr Field confirmed that £40k has been granted from reserves to Rother Voluntary Action for a community capability scheme.

Cllr Dixon reported that: an appeal against the refusal for two houses at George Mews had been successful; Cabinet had approved a £3m spend on temporary accommodation to address the increase in homelessness; fears that the amendment by ESCC to the Civil Parking Enforcement proposals for one hour parking bays in the High Street conflicts with car parks; Battle is no longer on front page of 1066 Country website.

6. Correspondence and communications received post agenda publication
Due to an error, the notification for consultation on the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement and changes to parking restrictions had not been circulated to town and parish councils. The closing date for this is 27 September. Members discussed the proposals and agreed that the maximum on street parking restriction should be reduced from one hour to thirty minutes. Concerns were raised at issues in areas such as Wellington Gardens, Saxonwood Road and Caldbec Hill which will not be addressed by these changes. Cllr Field confirmed that the existing changes are minimal but will be reviewed annually.

An invitation to attend a conference arranged by Action in Rural Sussex on 6 November in Hailsham. There are three workshops available: Learning lessons from renovations and new builds; identifying and securing funding; building management: maximising energy efficiency. The cost is £25 and Cllr Favell agreed to attend the workshop for identifying and securing funding.

7. Draft minutes and agree any recommendations from Committee meetings:
• A verbal report on the Planning & Transport meeting on 13 August 2019 highlighted a delay on the bay marking to the overflow car park due to mechanical failure, confirmation that planning training is being arranged for October, the Design Code produced by AECOM had been adopted and agreement to name the roundabout as Ten Sixty Six. Members agreed the recommendation to transfer responsibility of bus shelters from Environment Committee to P&T.
• The draft minutes of External Relations & Town Development on 3 September 2019 were presented by Cllr Would and noted. Members discussed the proposal for a joint working agreement with St Valery sur Somme which could include possible grant opportunities for twin towns. It was highlighted that a Town Forum would improve communication and cohesion throughout the town. Members agreed:
  o the Declaration for Joint Working with St Valery sur Somme, as attached (annex a).
  o that Cllr Favell coordinate the first Town Forum and that a further Member be sought via email.
• Cllr Favell gave a verbal report on the Finance & General Purposes meeting held prior to Full Council to discuss action on the Almonry project. Notes from the Almonry Development Working Group meetings and documents from the Conservation Architect had been circulated to all Members, as attached (annexes b1 – b5). Members unanimously agreed that:
  o the urgent works highlighted in the survey report and as recommended by F&GP, detailed in the draft minutes attached, should be carried out by suitably qualified contractors;
  o the aims and objectives be adopted, as attached (annex b6).

Recommendations were discussed and agreed unanimously:
I. the Almonry project is moved forward, as planned, to invite tenders for the repair, refurbishment and reinstatement of the South Wing of the Almonry;
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II. Council will continue to seek and apply for grant funding and will place any unspent budget for the PWLB repayments into the Almonry EMR, pending a final decision on the way forward;

III. with reference to the preliminary pre-tender project programme, reassess the financial implications at stages 13, 20 and 26, with a view to:
   a. continue with the project, as planned, to invite tenders for the repair, refurbishment and reinstatement of the South Wing of the Almonry if not,
   b. revise the Council’s ambitions if still not viable,
   c. consider whether the Almonry is suitable as the Council office

IV. up to £15k is made available from general reserves for the professional fees required to tender stage with the caveat that this be replaced if the project goes forward.

8. Resignation
The resignation of Cllr Andrew Brown was noted. Members wished to express their thanks for his work on behalf of the Council and were delighted to know that he had agreed to continue on the Battle Civil Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

Members agreed:
- Cllr D Wheeler as Vice Chairman the P&T Committee;
- Cllr V Cook as representative to Rother Association of Local Councils;
- Cllr G Favell as deputy representative to Battle Cricket Club;
- Cllr B Brown as deputy representative to Rother Voluntary Action group.

The Clerk confirmed that the legal process for the Councillor vacancy has begun.

9. Battle Civic Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
   a. The draft minutes of 28 August 2019 were noted, as attached.
   b. Cllr Russell reported that a meeting with the Consultant has been arranged for 25 September to raise concerns at the delay in the agreed work. It was felt that, at this stage, there would be no advantage in changing consultant. Cllr Would confirmed that she will be assisting with youth engagement for the Plan.

10. Rother District Council’s review of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2019
This was noted.

11. St Michaels Hospice
Members agreed that a children’s activity book and a copy of the spy trail should be donated for the Xmas Tree activities at Christmas Markets in Sedlescombe (23 November) and Cooden (30 November).

12. Sussex Association of Local Councils discussion with Giles York, Ch Constable of Sussex Police
Members were asked to consider matters of a strategic nature or unresolved topics that may be submitted for the next meeting.

13. Use of pavilion for buggy park
Due to insufficient space at the Guide Hall, a parent and toddler group had requested use of the pavilion to store buggies during inclement weather. Members agreed, as a gesture of goodwill, to allow this while the existing facility is on site.
14. VE Day event (8 May 2020)
District Cllr Cook reported that a Community Grant to a maximum of £500 for match funding towards commemorative or celebratory events. Members agreed that a residents’ all inclusive, fun sports event could be held on the recreation ground. This could include a match between Town and District Councils. Cllr Favell agreed to circulate a proposal for consideration.

15. Community Infrastructure Levy
The Council noted an application for funds towards the Battle Health Pathway project had been successful to the amount of £75,000. This will be publicised as a further good news story.

16. Finance matters
- The income and expenditure report for July 2019, as attached, had been circulated. Members noted income £11,106.17 and expenditure £20,420.84; both net of account transfers.
- The options for a card payment facility had been researched. Members agreed the recommendation to purchase an iZettle card reader at an approximate cost of £59. This has no initial set up charge and will incur a 1.75% transaction fee. A smart phone will be required and it was felt that this would allow for an out of hours emergency contact number to be available. The purchase of these items was agreed from Office equipment (4075).
- As agreed at the previous meeting, two financial institutions offering short term bonds had been identified: Hodge Bank and TSB, both at 1%: the former for a 100 day notice; the latter instant access. As the Active Saver account, at 0.3%, had not fallen below £340,000 for some time, it was agreed unanimously that the Clerk should arrange for £85,000 be deposited into each of these accounts plus a further appropriate account.

17. To receive reports from representatives of the Council and other reports
Cllrs Holmes and Sharman reported on their first Netherfield Forum. The main issues were the poor level of grass cutting at the play and recreation areas at Darvel Down; poor hedge cutting regime and the number of potholes in the surrounding highways. Cllr Sharman will raise the hedge cutting and potholes at the forthcoming Strengthening Local Relationships meeting. Cllr Holmes advised that Optivo had indicated a cost of £25-£30 per cut, including the collection of arisings. This would cost in the region of £400-£450pa. The Clerk was asked to investigate the current Rother District Council contract and bring to the next meeting.

Cllr Favell - had circulated her report, as attached. She highlighted the South & South East in Bloom success and thanked all those involved.

Cllr Russell - had circulated his report as attached. The ownership of the large town plaques was discussed and it was felt that there was no current ownership or protection of these.

Cllr Cook - Battle Health Pathway meeting. Notes will be circulated to Environment Committee;
- Opening of the recreation ground facilities.

Cllr Wheeler - Battle Civic Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meeting and social gathering;
- Opening of the recreation ground facilities.
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Cllr Sharman - Opening of the recreation ground facilities;
- reported that Beautiful Battle will be selecting the colours and plants for next year. It was suggested that red, white and blue would be appropriate for the VE Day commemoration.

Cllr Would - Battle Health Pathway meeting;
- Had received positive support for the Youth Forum from Battle Abbey School;
- Had been asked by the BCPNPSG to assist with youth contributions.

Cllr Samms - had installed the photograph canvasses in the previous Steamer Trader premises which has received much interest. She confirmed that descriptions are in progress;
- Conservation Group meeting that had produced exciting ideas. Notes to be circulated.

Cllr Kiloh - Almonry Development Working Group meetings;
- Opening of the recreation ground facilities.

18. Future agenda items / matters to note
   • To ratify amendment to Code of Conduct and Communications Policy

Cllr Favell reported on an invitation to submit nominations for the East Sussex County Council Chairman’s Volunteers Tea in November. Members were asked to submit suggestions by the following day.

In response to a question, the Clerk confirmed that she and the Chairman had attended the personal meeting held for Watch Oak residents; although some attendees were known to be from other wards. Members anticipated that a full report would be made to the next meeting.

19. Date of next meeting: Tuesday, 15 October 2019

21.20pm Visitors (other than Mr B Marks) left the meeting.

20. Confidential item – Complaint
A full response had been circulated to Members for discussion. The Clerk was asked to obtain the advice of a legal representative prior to issuing the response to the complainant.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.50pm

Cllr G Favell
CHAIRMAN