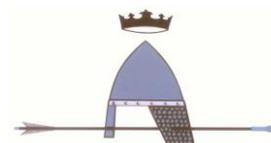




Battle Town Council



MINUTES of the COUNCIL MEETING held at 7.30pm
on Tuesday, 19 February 2013 at
The Almonry, High Street, Battle

PRESENT: Cllr R Bye – Chairman
ALSO: Cllrs J Carter, J Eldridge, Mrs P Fisher, R Harris,
Mrs M Howell, R Jessop, Mrs M Kiloh, Ms M-L Neill,
Ms J Ormonde-Butler, Mrs S Pry and D Wilson.

Public Question Time

On behalf of residents in the Hampden Close area John Townsend presented concerns about the **Battle Schools Greenway project**. In doing so he noted that a recently distributed leaflet suggests support for the project by the Town Council. Mr Townsend's presentation focussed primarily on the lack of consultation with residents but also some of the practical issues which would arise if the project were to go ahead and the absence of any costings. The leaflet had conveyed the clear impression that the proposals, including details of the possible route, had been endorsed by the Council. Responding, Cllrs Jessop and Ms Neill acknowledged that there had been meetings with the sponsors of the scheme but made clear that the limit of the Council's support had been to simply agree in principle the idea of providing a safe cycling route for children, leaving the sponsors to investigate options. The Council's understanding is that the leaflet is intended to be part of the consultation process. The Chairman thanked Mr Townsend for the presentation and confirmed that the concerns raised would be passed on to the project's sponsors. He also alerted Mr Townsend and his colleagues to the fact that the sponsors would be walking the route on the morning of 23 February.

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- 1. Apologies for Absence** – Cllrs C Bishop, J Boryer and M Palmer.
 - 2. Disclosure of Interest** – None.
 - 3. Minutes of the Council Meeting** held on 15 January 2013. Cllr Carter proposed approval of the minutes, seconded by Cllr Harris. This was agreed and they were duly signed.
 - 4. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings**
Subsequent to the previous meeting **Sedlescombe Parish Council** had proposed to organise **local training** with support from SALC. Having circulated details, the Clerk had received expressions of interest from Cllrs Mrs Pry, Jessop and Ms Ormonde-Butler (in preference to the Briefing and Update session at Reigate). Cllr Wilson had also now confirmed his interest. Accordingly, the Clerk has now reserved 4 places for the event which will take place at Sedlescombe Village Hall on 21 March beginning at 6.30pm.
 - 5. Police Matters**
PCSO Daryl Holter was welcomed to the meeting. He briefly reported that the current **Shopwatch scheme** is working well and that the current level of **antisocial behaviour** is low. Anticipating questions about **parking** he confirmed that in regular briefing meetings the PCSOs are always reminded that this is a particular local concern. In response Cllr Eldridge urged that more attention be given to the regular breaches of the 20 minute parking restriction. PCSO Holter agreed to see whether occasional checks could be arranged.
No questions arose from the latest set of **Crime Updates**.

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6. Report from County Councillor

Cllr Field said that the **budget** had now been set with savings of £60m being identified over the next 3 years. Such deep cuts will inevitably mean that some front line services will be reduced. As examples she mentioned care for vulnerable adults and the youth service.

In response to a point made by Cllr Ms Neill, Cllr Field acknowledged that the current state of the **roads** is unsatisfactory though she was able to say that resurfacing of Telham Lane will be carried out shortly. She also confirmed that the temporary signs relating to the recently installed **ramp at the crossing outside the Almonry** would be replaced with permanent signs.

7. Report from District Councillors

Cllr Davies had sent her apologies. Cllr Field spoke about recent **Scrutiny Committee** meetings at which the snagging list relating to the **seafront project** had been on the agenda together with recommendations relating to proposed **permanent pitches for travellers' sites**. The latter had confirmed that both Greenacres and Beeches Brook should remain on the list for public consultation. Cllr Dixon spoke about further cuts being considered. Of particular local concern would be potential savings relating to the provision of **local conveniences** and support for **tourism**. In response to a question from Cllr Jessop, Cllr Dixon said that he was unaware of any current proposal to make further increases in **car parking charges**.

8. Correspondence & Communications

There had been some uncertainty about whether or not Council Members could discuss the setting of the precept without the granting of a dispensation under the new **Code of Conduct**. Since setting the precept clearly affects everybody Councillors would not benefit any more or less than other residents and the need for a **dispensation** had seemed unnecessary. The uncertainty has now been resolved by a clear ministerial statement which says "Councillors do not need to declare their interest as a Council Tax payer and get a dispensation to take part in Council discussions or votes about Council Tax".

Both the **Netherfield Church and Village Hall** have now submitted their usual **grant** requests for £250. **Cllr Jessop proposed that these be approved. This was seconded by Cllr Bye and agreed unanimously.** The Clerk added that a request from the Rother Mediation Service had been received but reminded Members that Council policy is that grants should only be paid to organisations whose activities are focussed solely on matters specific to the town. It was therefore agreed that this application should be declined.

The usual **invitation** to participate in the **Good Friday Marbles competition** had been received. Cllrs Bye and Ms Ormonde-Butler agreed to coordinate men's and ladies' teams respectively.

English Heritage have announced that the **battlefield area** will be "out of bounds" this year in order that it can fully recover from last year's extreme weather conditions and the damage caused during the re-enactment in October. There will therefore be no re-enactment or bonfire event on the battlefield this year. However, English Heritage are planning a wide range of events in substitution.

9. Minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 30 January and 13 February were reported by Cllr Jessop and noted. He drew particular attention to the action being taken to chase up long outstanding enforcement cases.

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10. Minutes of the Communications Committee meeting held on 29 January. In the absence of the Chairman these were simply noted.

11. Minutes of the Estates Committee meeting held on 29 January were reported by Cllr Ms Neill and noted. She confirmed that arrangements will be made for the Committee to meet again on either 25 or 26 March to discuss the **development of a strategy**, to which all other Council Members are invited. She also said that, immediately preceding the next Estates Committee meeting a **footpath familiarisation walk** will take place primarily to inspect the impending changes in the **Coarsebarn Farm area**.

Cllr Ms Neill then reported that discussions had led to a revised quote for the purchase of the **Telham swing**. **She proposed that this now be acquired at a cost of £2497.90. This was seconded by Cllr Mrs Kiloh and agreed unanimously.**

12. Devolution

The Chairman confirmed that a meeting had taken place with the MP at which he had made various suggestions as to the basis on which devolution discussions with the District Council might be resurrected. These have been put to the District Council and a reply is awaited. The MP had also taken on board the difficulties being experienced by the Town Council in taking advantage of the Governments' Localism Agenda which he will raise with the Secretary of State. He will also endeavour to establish whether or not the Government is contemplating capping local council precepts.

13. Clerk's Retirement

Cllr Bye confirmed that the Clerk had given notice that he would be retiring at the end of July and suggested that a sub-group be set up to handle the process of recruiting a replacement. Advice from SALC had been received regarding the appropriate salary. After some discussion about detailed arrangements **Cllr Bye proposed that:**

- **The Chairman, Vice Chairman, Cllr Harris and Cllr Ms Neill form the sub-group;**
- **A salary in the range £28,636 - £31,754 be offered;**
- **The sub-group should undertake the recruitment process and provide updates to future Council meetings including a final report to accompany the recommendation of the preferred candidate. If necessary, in order to meet the timetable, an extra meeting should be arranged for this final stage.**

This was seconded by Cllr Jessop and agreed unanimously.

14. Almonry Repairs

The contractors carrying out the current phase of work appear to be doing an excellent job and the Clerk had discussed with them the possibility of a **continuation contract** to cover a further phase of work covering items highlighted in the April 2010 survey carried out by architectural consultants engaged by the Council. The contractor had agreed to do this, understanding that payment for a further phase of work would need to be deferred until the next financial year. Cllr Eldridge had looked at the proposals and suggested that one item relating to a crack in the boundary wall in the garden is not urgent. He felt that the sum which would be saved could be better used to undertake some internal repairs to the building, particularly the panelling. The Clerk felt that such work would be of a more specialist nature in respect of which a professional specification should be obtained. It was therefore agreed that the focus should remain on external repairs and **Cllr Bye proposed that the contractors be invited to undertake external works of repair at a maximum cost of £5000. This was seconded by Cllr Wilson and agreed unanimously.**

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Cllr Mrs Fisher expressed her concern about the way in which **hot water** had been provided during a recent coffee morning. Cllr Jessop will provide details of a hydroboil system which would overcome this problem.

15. Trustee to Battle Charities

Following the resignation of Cllr Mrs Farr a replacement Trustee is required. Members accepted Cllr Harris' offer to undertake this.

16. Community Awards

The latest newsletter had invited public nominations for this year's Community Awards and Council Members were invited to consider their own proposals.

17. List of Payments and Receipts was noted.

18. Reports from Representatives of the Council

- Cllr Mrs Fisher - reported that the **Museum** is keen to recruit more volunteers;
- Cllr Mrs Howell - said that no matters of particular interest had arisen at the latest **Muddy Boots** meeting;
- Cllr Jessop - had circulated his list of attendances during the last month. These included 2 meetings of the **Chamber** during which a decision had been taken not to repeat the Business Fair but to support the proposed Battle Rocks event at the recreation ground on 9/10 August. The Chamber had also received a full report from English Heritage about this year's events at Battle Abbey. Mention was also made about the proposal to locate a Battle Art Academy on the floor above Costa Coffee which should be open by April. The other matter covered in Cllr Jessop's report was the draft **East Sussex Flood Management Strategy** which will be discussed at the next Planning Committee meeting;

19. Mayor's Engagements

Cllr Bye had attended the **Bonfire Boyes** presentation of grants to local groups.

20. Matters for Information/Future Items for Agenda

21. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, 19 March 2013

The meeting closed at 9.05pm

CLLR R BYE
Chairman

