Battle Town Council

Minutes of the COUNCIL MEETING held on TUESDAY, 15 OCTOBER at
The Almonry, High Street, Battle at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs G Favell (Chairman), B Brown, V Cook, C Davies, J Gyngell, M Holmes, M Kiloh, A Russell, H Sharman, L Samms and D Wheeler.

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

Public Question Time

Mrs Burton, Project Manager for the Battle Health Pathway Project wished to clarify the stance of the group in relation to item 10.2 and emphasised that the project continues to be community supported with over £21,000 raised to date with the Health Pathway Group including one Council representative. She highlighted that the tender had been obtained with 5 options in acknowledgement that only those sections covered by funds raised would be built.

It was recommended that Council consider evidence based facts in relation to the Almonry project, not feelings and emotion. In relation to item 10.1, it was suggested that a Business Plan to highlight the return on the investment is required.

The Chairman confirmed that a Business Plan is in progress.

Concern was raised at item 9 in view of the lack of knowledge many residents appear to have in relation to the Almonry project. Thanks were expressed to Cllr Brown for a recent public meeting that had highlighted the project. The Clerk was asked to respond to the question of what expenditure has justified the significant rise in precept over the past 10 years.

The Clerk confirmed that efforts to increase communication is constantly reviewed, including a monthly Awareness Campaign that is undertaken in different areas of the town.


2. Disclosure of interest – Cllrs M Holmes, A Russell and D Wheeler declared an interest in item 8 as current or previous members of the BCPNPSG. Cllrs V Cook, G Favell and D Wheeler declared a potential interest in item 10.1.

3. Minutes of the Council meeting, including confidential item, held on 20 August 2019 were agreed and duly signed by Cllr Favell.

Cllr Favell reminded all Members of Standing Order 11.2 “Councillors and staff shall not disclose confidential or sensitive information which for special reasons would not be in the public interest.”

4. Report from the Clerk
   - A message of thanks for the new facilities at the recreation ground from a previous Town Councillor, on behalf of his 9yr old grandson.
   - Details of Rother District Council Community Infrastructure Levy funds raised and spent had been circulated to Members for information, as attached.
   - As previously agreed, Cllr Favell is leading on the coordination of the inaugural Town Forum to be held on Wednesday 6 November. Cllr Brown agreed to represent the Council, in accordance with the Terms of Reference.
   - Rother District Council had confirmed that an additional grass cut at the Netherfield play area would be undertaken and the contractor reminded to ensure the area is cut at a sufficient rate.
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that does not require collecting. They will monitor the situation and Cllr Holmes agreed to notify the Clerk if this is not adhered to.

5. Reports from County Councillor and District Councillors

County
Cllr Field(KF) reported that: there has been no agreement in relation to the Pension Fund and advisors have been asked to investigate options; a Climate Emergency has been agreed with a target date of 2050, not 2030 as other authorities, and no environmental impact had been agreed; agreement that the Government be asked to allow asylum seekers to work in light of the health and financial benefits; road closure signs with insufficient information or remaining on site after work completed is causing frustration.

District
Cllr Dixon advised that: there are no funds available with investment income not achieved and an indication of a substantial deficit; a Climate Change task and finish group has been set up; the Coombe Valley Countryside Park Community Interest Company has been given £61k to be recovered from S106 funds; the setting up of an Anti-Poverty task and finish group has been deferred.

In response to questions, Cllr Dixon confirmed that any shortfall will be taken from reserves and that the Audit has now been completed.

Cllr Cook reported on the planning application for a spine road at Blackfriars. She confirmed that this was considered as on outline for up to 220 homes with cycle pathways and good pedestrian access.

Cllr Dixon highlighted the need for Town Council planning application objections to be detailed and that attendance by town and parish councils is being considered.

6. Correspondence and communications received post agenda publication

A request for any comments on plans to install Modubel Belisha Beacons at the A2100 Lower Lake crossing had been received from East Sussex Highways. The Clerk was asked to confirm this news is well received and to request that the remarking of both the crossing and the nearby mini-roundabout at Powdermill Lane be undertaken as a priority safety issue.

7. Draft minutes and agree any recommendations from Committee meetings:

• The draft minutes from the Finance & General Purposes meeting on 1 October 2019 were presented by Cllr Favell and noted. It was accepted that some actions are being progressed out of preferred order but they will be completed within the timescale agreed. It was confirmed that draft reassessment criteria had been circulated to the Almonry Development Working Group for discussion at their forthcoming meeting. The Clerk reported that, in accordance with the agreement to communicate more frequently, a section from the Minutes was posted to the Council’s website providing an update on the actions for the Almonry development project. It included that, subject to approval by Council, a consultation on what residents feel should be the future of the Almonry will be undertaken at the end of the reassessment process. She suggested that this could be in the form of a report, as stated at the previous Parish Assembly, to include confirmed costs and options available. This could be included in the Annual Report to enable comments at the Parish Assembly in 2020.

• The minutes of the Planning & Transport meeting on 10 September were presented by Cllr Gyngell and noted. She reported that at the meeting on 8 October 2019 several members of the public had attended to oppose application RR/2019/2126/P at Hughes’ Field and the Committee
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had sent a detailed objection to RDC. The proposal at 12 Isherwood RR/2019/666/P had also been objected to as overdevelopment. Members were reminded that the Steps to Ramp project at Mountjoy/Bowmans Drive had initially been a Battle Local Action Plan scheme. Unfortunately, this is no longer being progressed by that group. To ascertain the feasibility a topographical survey of the area is required. One quote had been received at £650 with others awaited. Members unanimously agreed that the Clerk be granted delegated authority to contract a topographical survey for the Steps to Ramp project at a cost of £650 from the Community Infrastructure Levy Ear Marked Reserve (430).

8. Battle Civic Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
   a. The draft minutes of 25 September 2019 were noted, as attached. Cllr Russell reported that a meeting with the consultant, Donna Moles had resulted in an agreed timetable to submission of Regulation 15.
   b. Members agreed to the request from BCPNPSG to hold an additional Full Council meeting to approve Regulation 14 submission on Tuesday 29 October 2019. This will be held in confidential session.
   One member of the public left the meeting.
   c. Cllr Russell confirmed that a Locality Grant had paid the Consultant to Regulation 14. Further funding is required to take the Neighbourhood Plan to completion. If this is not obtained there would be financial implications to the Council. Members agreed unanimously that Cllr Russell and the Clerk should submit a grant application for consultant’s fees

9. To ratify decision to include “that all intended public communication on Council matters is first reviewed for accuracy by the Town Clerk and for information purposes” in Council’s Code of Conduct and Communications Policy to be revised with all policies by Finance & General Purposes Committee in November

The Chairman noted that this amendment was to ensure accuracy and for Officer information. Cllr Brown detailed his opposition for the proposal as a form of censorship and stated that he will not submit communication to the Town Clerk. He confirmed that he will legally challenge this proposal if adopted.

For Cllrs: Cook; Davies; Favell; Gyngell; Kiloh; Samms; Sharman; Wheeler.
Against Cllrs: Brown; Russell.
Abstention Cllr Holmes

The ratification is confirmed by majority.

10. Proposals received from Cllr Brown

Background information relating to both proposals had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting, as attached.

• Cllr Brown proposed that, in view of the change in circumstances and the passage of time since the Council resolved to raise a loan of £600,000 to fund the Almonry Project, that resolution should now be formally rescinded.

Members fully discussed the advantages of retaining and considered the reasons for rescinding the agreement to raise a loan of £600,000 to fund the Almonry project. Cllr Brown confirmed that he would assist in the formation of the Business Plan. It was agreed that Cllr Kiloh should pursue further grants with Heritage Lottery as appropriate.

For Cllr Brown
Against Cllrs Cook; Davies; Favell; Holmes; Kiloh; Russell; Samms; Sharman; Wheeler.
Abstention Cllr Gyngell

The proposal was refused by a majority.
Two members of the public left the meeting.

- Cllr Brown proposed that, in view of the need for clarification for project promoters, Councillors and Officers and the residents of Battle, it is proposed that policy be clearly defined relating to funding of projects promoted by other organisations. The Policy will be that in the event of any project being promoted by any non-Battle Town Council instigated group where Grant Funding is the primary intended source of funding and full Grant Funding is not achieved, Battle Town Council will not make up any shortfall without full and detailed consultation with the residents of Battle. Such consultation to include a fully audited Business Plan including the full extent of any potential financial liability to be incurred by the Council.

It was agreed that this did not have an impact on current liabilities. Following discussion that a figure should be included, Cllr Davies proposed a policy that “in the event of any project being promoted by any non-Battle Town Council instigated group where Grant Funding is the primary intended source of funding and full Grant Funding is not achieved, Battle Town Council will not make up any shortfall above £25,000 without full and detailed consultation with the residents of Battle. Such consultation to include a fully audited Business Plan including the full extent of any potential financial liability to be incurred by the Council.”

With two abstentions and one against, the proposal was agreed.

11. East Sussex County Council’s grass cutting 2020-21
The Clerk confirmed that the options given are as in the previous two years:
- Two cuts over the course of a year at no cost to the Town Council. Urban grass will be managed for safety purposes only;
- Additional 4 cuts at a cost of £2,707;
- The Town Council to take on responsibility for all urban grass cutting, with a duty for providing a minimum of two. ESCC will contribute £1,354.

Members were reminded that Rother District Council had paid for the additional four cuts for the previous 2 years but there is no indication that this will continue. The Clerk confirmed that the Council do not have the equipment or staff to carry out these works in-house. In relation to contractors, ESCC had issued notes on ensuring competent contractors are used. A decision is required by 31 December. The Clerk reported that Battle Wildlife Meadow Group had also raised concerns at the number of verges currently being left by ESCC as wildlife meadows. They had requested more cohesive working with the Councils to ensure the main gateways are managed correctly to encourage residents’ participation. Members agreed in principle to the additional cost for six cuts by ESCC contractors.

Cllrs Dixon and Field left the meeting.

12. VE Day event
A draft proposal for events on the recreations ground had been circulated. Members agreed a Working Group to take this forward, to include a grant application to RDC: Cllrs Cook, Favell, Samms and Sharman.

Two members of the public left the meeting.

13. Finance matters
The list of payments and receipts for August 2019, as attached, had been circulated. Members noted income £31,212.83 and expenditure £42,212.83; both net of account transfers.

14. Reports from representatives of the Council and other reports
Cllr Samms - Dean’s inauguration;
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- **Battle Conservation Group** at which the criteria for UNESCO status was discussed and Stephen Gray has been welcomed to the group;
- The ex-Steamer Trading window display has received positive feedback;

Cllr Gyngell - **Battle Festival** events

Cllr Davies - **Battle Twinning Association**;
- **Dean’s inauguration**;

Cllr Brown - **Senlac Allotment Association**. The minutes will be presented to the Environment Committee. Thanks had been expressed to Cllr Favell for her assistance over the previous years;

Cllr Russell - had circulated his report, as attached;
- further **BCPNPSG** meeting to discuss local heritage assets;

Cllr Wheeler - **BCPNPSG** meetings;
- a successful **Council Awareness Campaign** day;

Cllr Favell - had circulated her report, as attached;
- is recording the responses to Battle in 3 words questionnaire for ER&TD. Many relate to congestion, parking and an excess of coffee shops;

Cllr Holmes - had carried out a further **Netherfield Forum** meeting at which the grass cutting had again been raised;

Cllr Cook - the very positive **Council Awareness Campaign** day;
- will be taking part in the Choral Society’s event as part of Battle Festival;

Cllr Sharman - the interesting **Council Awareness Campaign** day;
- two meetings with **Beautiful Battle**, including the choosing of bulbs for next year;
- **Dean’s inauguration**;
- second **Netherfield Forum**;
- a meeting with the Chairmen of Council and Beautiful Battle to discuss the **Almonry garden**, in particular the Apothecary section;

Cllr Kiloh - the **Council Awareness Campaign** day at which it was noted that there was an equal number of residents and visitors asking questions and taking information. It highlighted the need for an appropriate tourist information point.

Cllr Brown(BB) reported on the open meeting held for Watch Oak residents, although some of the approx. 40 attendees had been from other wards. He advised that the main topics had been the Almonry project and the Council Tax increases. BB confirmed that he would hold further meetings to learn views of residents. It was suggested that it would be more beneficial to hold non-agenda meetings to ensure residents’ own concerns and issues are raised.

*Two members of the public left the meeting.*
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15. Future agenda items / matters to note
Cllr Holmes reported that he has some music available that may be suitable for the VE Day event.

Cllr Cook asked that a declaration of Climate Emergency be considered at a future meeting.

16. Date of next meeting: Tuesday, 19 November 2019

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.35pm

CLLR G FAVELL
CHAIRMAN