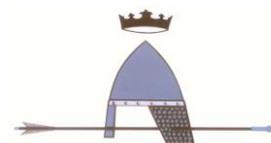




Battle Town Council



MINUTES of the COUNCIL MEETING held at 7.30pm
on Tuesday, 20 November 2012 at
The Almonry, High Street, Battle

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

Public Question Time

No members of the public were present

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Ms Ormonde-Butler to her first meeting.

1. **Apologies for Absence** – Cllrs J Boryer, J Eldridge and Mrs T Farr.
2. **Disclosure of Interest** – None.
3. **Minutes of the Council Meeting** held on 16 October 2012. Cllr Wilson proposed approval of the minutes, seconded by Cllr Mrs Fisher. This was agreed and they were duly signed.

4. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

The Clerk confirmed that Mike Dawes had agreed to act as unofficial **Town Crier** as and when requested.

The latest **superfast broadband** news is that discussions are now beginning with private companies such as BT Openreach to establish which areas they propose to cover on a commercial basis. The County Council will then determine where the public money needs to be directed in order to provide faster broadband across the whole county. As previously reported it is expected that a contract to deliver the service will be awarded in the spring.

Cllr Wilson has been in touch with **Tracey Johnson** who has confirmed her willingness to attend the next meeting of the Communications Committee to discuss ideas for **greater involvement with young people**.

5. Police Matters

The Chairman **welcomed PCSO Lucy Elliott** who has joined from the Bexhill Neighbourhood Policing team and will be covering the Battle and Netherfield areas. There were no matters arising from the **weekly Crime Updates** but PCSO Elliott reported that a number of **speeding tickets** had been issued mainly in North Trade Road but also in Upper Lake. **Parking tickets** had been issued relating to offences in the High Street and Upper Lake. Members were reassured by this report and confirmed that they wished the focus to remain on speeding and illegal parking issues.

6. Report from County Councillor

Cllr Field had sent her apologies and a brief written report in which she confirmed that the main issue remains the need to find **£60m revenue cuts** over the next 3 years and the plan to budget for £70m to give the Council a cushion. So far the most worrying effect is the proposed **cuts to Adult Social Care** which will have a real effect on service users who, by definition, are not the most robust members of society.

Battle Town Council

7. Report from District Councillors

Cllr Davies had sent her apologies.

Cllr Dixon spoke about changes between the 2007 and 2012 **Code of Conduct**. He confirmed that under the new Standards regime the District Council will continue to have responsibility for dealing with complaints against Town and Parish Councils. Regarding differences between the old and new Codes:

- The new Code is based on 7 principles of public service. These replace the previous 10, those that have been dropped being personal judgement, respect for others and the duty to uphold the law and stewardship. Honesty and integrity which previously had been one principle is now split into 2 separate principles;
- The most significant change has been to introduce the concept of disclosable pecuniary interests. It is now a criminal offence to fail to notify the Monitoring Officer of a disclosable pecuniary interest, to take part in discussions or votes at meetings, or to take a decision where you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, without reasonable excuse. It is also an offence to give false information;
- The new Code also requires that such interests held by a spouse or partner must also be disclosed;
- Regarding personal interests arising from the appointment of a Member to another body, provided no pecuniary interest arises, that Member may take part in discussions but not vote;
- Regarding dispensations, where appropriate Rother's Monitoring Officer now has delegation to grant these and not the Standards Committee as previously.

Turning to the complaints procedure itself these must be made, in the first instance, to the Monitoring Officer who will then review the complaint with one of the Independent Members of the Standards Committee. That consultation will lead to a decision as to whether or not the complaint merits formal investigation. If it does, an Investigating Officer will be appointed whose research may require information from the Clerk. If the outcome of the investigation is that there is evidence of failure to comply with the Code the matter will be referred to a formal hearing.

Cllr Dixon said that at a recent Cabinet meeting various **internal procedural changes** had been agreed together with a scheme for dealing with requests to register assets of community value.

Regarding **floral decorations in Bexhill** the District Council is likely to change the Council Tax arrangements so that these are charged as special expenses to residents of Bexhill only. This may be the beginning of further discussions about circumstances in which the special expenses rules should apply across the district.

8. Correspondence & Communications

A **request from the District Council** to assist identifying **those sleeping rough** in the district. The Council is asked to provide details of anyone who has slept rough on 15 December.

The Clerk reported a request from the **Battle Museum** to use **the Almonry for temporary storage of artefacts in the event of an emergency** such as a fire. Whilst this was agreed in principle it was felt that such use should be kept to a minimum and for no longer than a period of 14 days.

9. Minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 24 October and 7 November were reported by Cllr Jessop and noted. He added that at a recent meeting of the Chamber of Commerce their members had been pleased to note the Council's

Battle Town Council

objections to the various applications in relation to the proposed betting shop at 55 High Street.

10. Minutes of the Finance General Purposes Committee meeting held on 6 November were reported by Cllr Bye and noted. The first matter to arise was that contrary to an earlier understanding the fee for assessing the **insurance valuation** of the **Almonry and Cemetery Chapel** would be £1050 not £550 as reported. This arose because of the special nature of the buildings, particularly the listed status of the Almonry. After some discussion **Cllr Jessop proposed that the fee of £1050 be accepted. This was seconded by Cllr Ms Neill and agreed unanimously.**

The Chairman then drew attention to **the budget** discussion and the proposal to set a **precept** at £193,370. In doing so he highlighted items which had not been included, particularly reserves to cover the cost of significant repairs and renewal of major assets. Cllr Jessop had circulated a further note on this matter and it was generally agreed that the financial implications needed greater scrutiny. Cllr Mrs Kiloh pointed out that F&GP Members had acknowledged the need for such reserves and had highlighted it as something on which to focus during the ongoing preparation of a rolling 3 year plan, rather than next year's budget. However, bearing in mind that Rother do not require details of the precept until the new year, Cllr Jessop was invited to develop his proposal for further consideration, initially at the next Council meeting and then by F&GP at the meeting on 8 January. Cllr Harris pointed out that there might be sufficient funds in the current equipment replacement reserve to allow at least part to be used to create any new earmarked reserves.

Cllr Mrs Fisher asked that any review of the budget should give greater priority to upgrading the kitchen and toilets. Cllr Bishop recorded his concern that the assumed income from cemetery fees, although consistent with previous years, is well in excess of the current year's forecast. In terms of the implications of increases in the precept, and by way of illustration, the Clerk said that, based on the current tax base of 2804 band D equivalent properties, the proposed precept of £193,370 would equate to an increase of about £2 per property (2.8%). This would rise to £4.35 (6.4%) if the precept rises to £200,000.

Cllr Bye proposed the adoption of fees and charges for 2013-14 as recorded in the F&GP minutes. Subject to the application of an administration fee in any case where an unused plot is sold back to the Council, proposed by Cllr Harris, the recommendation was seconded by Cllr Ms Neill and agreed unanimously.

Cllr Bye proposed the recommended grants to Battle Area Community Transport and those sponsoring the Battle Schools Greenway Project. This was seconded by Cllr Mrs Kiloh and agreed unanimously.

Finally, **Cllr Bye drew attention to the various revised policy documents and proposed their adoption. This was seconded by Cllr Jessop and agreed unanimously.**

11. Battle Business Fair

Due to unfortunate and unforeseen circumstances the Council was unable to be represented. Looking ahead, Cllr Harris suggested that in future, since this is primarily a business activity, the Council's support should be by the giving of a grant towards the cost of the event though an advertisement in any brochure promoting the Council's activities might also be justified.

Battle Town Council

12. List of Payments and Receipts was noted.

13. Reports from Representatives of the Council

11 Members of the Council had attended the Remembrance Day Service at St Mary's Church on 11 November.

- Cllr Jessop
- had circulated a note of his activities which had included a meeting of the **Rother Local Strategic Partnership** and the latest meeting of the **Chamber of Commerce**. The latter had recorded its pleasure that English Heritage now seems to be taking a much more proactive role in relation to the general business interests of the town;
- Cllr Wilson
- had attended a **Scouts Executive Committee**;
- Cllr Ms Neill
- had Chaired the latest meeting of the **Battle in Bloom group**;
- Cllr Mrs Kiloh
- had attended 2 meetings of the **Beautiful Battle Committee** as well as the **Battle in Bloom group** meeting. After some discussion at these meetings the town's entry in next year's South & South East in Bloom competition had been confirmed but with Beautiful Battle being able to focus primarily on their horticultural activities. Ideas for changes in the private gardens category of the local Battle in Bloom competition are being considered;
- Cllr Harris
- in recording his attendance at the **Remembrance Day Service** remarked on the good turnout by Council Members;
- Cllr Mrs Fisher
- said that the latest **Battle Abbey Advisory Committee** had focussed mainly on issues relating to Bonfire;
 - the **Museum Trustees** had held a thank you event for the custodians;
 - the most recent **Battle Charities Trustees** meeting had included a farewell to a long standing trustee;
- Cllr Mrs Pry
- had also attended the Battle in Bloom Committee meeting together with the Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance at the White Rock Theatre;
- Cllr Bye
- had also attended the **Battle Abbey Advisory Committee** which had recorded that, although down on previous years, visitor numbers appeared to have bucked the national downward trend;
 - at the meeting of the **Memorial Hall Management Committee** had heard that although bookings are up in October and November they are currently down for December.

14. Mayor's Engagements

On 3 November had judged the Children's Fancy Dress for the Battle Bonfire Boyes as well as the Best Guy. On 10 November had opened the Business Fair and attended the

Battle Town Council

related evening reception. On 11 November attended the Royal British Legion Festival of Remembrance at the White Rock Theatre and on 18 November attended a service at St Mary's Church to greet the new Bishop elect of Chichester.

15. Matters for Information/Future Items for Agenda

Cllr Carter tabled a **Forestry Commission** note about the spread of **Ash Dieback disease**. He cautioned against overreaction and said that he is keeping in touch with further information from the Forestry Commission as it is promulgated.

16. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, 18 December 2012

The meeting closed at 8.50pm

CLLR R BYE
Chairman

