

Battle Town Council

**MINUTES of the COUNCIL MEETING held at 7.30pm
on Tuesday, 17 September 2013 at
The Almonry, High Street, Battle**

Present: Cllr R Bye – Chairman
Also: Cllrs C Bishop, J Boryer, J Eldridge, P Fisher, D Furness,
J Gyngell, R Jessop, J Ormonde-Butler and D Wilson.

Public Question Time

No members of the public were present.

1. Apologies for Absence – Cllrs J Carter, M Howell, M Kiloh, M Palmer and S Pry.

2. Disclosure of Interest – None.

3. Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 20 August 2013. Cllr Wilson proposed approval of the minutes, seconded by Cllr Furness. This was agreed and they were duly signed.

4. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

Cllr Furness reported that the **Chief Inspector or Neighbourhood Police Inspector would attend quarterly meetings of Council**, commencing in October, with a PCSO or PC attending the meetings between.

The grant offer for Battle gateways had been accepted with thanks. Cllr Jessop had received some concerns about the Whatlington entrance to town not being included but he had responded that did not mean that it would not happen in due course. At the recent SLR meeting, Mr Banks from East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Highways had mentioned a contact having indicated that they might be willing to contribute to a third gateway. **The Clerk would contact Highways** to see if this might be taken forward and Cllr Field thought that the party might like to be approached.

Cllr Furness reported on the proposed Arts Festival for summer 2014 with possible venues and asked for **Council's approval in principle, to support an Arts Festival and for a representative to join a small working group to develop the concept and assist in the delivery of an Arts Festival.** Re funding, he hoped it could become self funding but was also looking for funding possibilities. Cllr Jessop mentioned the Community Fund, a purpose of which was to support community functions, PCSO Drewitt advised of the Police Property Acts funds available for application. Cllr Furness explained that the Guardian newspaper would support and advertise the Festival. The Clerk mentioned importance of choosing a well researched date to maximise support and attendance. **The Chairman summarised the proposal and all agreed to support it as above in bold. Cllr Furness was nominated as the Council's representative.**

5. Police Matters

PCSO Drewitt confirmed that they were currently short of staff. Many parking tickets were being issued near to the Abbey and in the loading bay but it didn't appear to make any difference to illegal parking there. Councillors had **not received the weekly Crime Updates** recently. PCSO Drewitt explained that this task was allocated to a Duty Officer, by which Battle was not covered and it was possibly now only being done if Town Sergeant for Battle was on duty. **He would feed this back.** He reported a major drugs arrest made recently in North Trade Road. He appreciated that trouble may have moved elsewhere for the time being rather than disappearing completely but that since then, crime rates had been low. The Clerk had **asked for the Cemetery to be checked**

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periodically as there were reports of individuals being there without clear purpose. It was on the vehicle patrol list, being visited 2/3 times each evening unless incidents prevented it. Cllr noted that the cemetery gates had historically been locked overnight. The Chairman suggested writing to the owners of Sexton Cottage to ask if they consider locking them later in the evening. Cllr Wilson asked and the **Police agreed to add to their patrol, the area behind the classrooms at Battle & Langton School.**

6. Report from County Councillor

Cllr Field reported a review of the budget and services for the elderly, with the possibly using outside providers. The Battle Partnership might have funds left over for the Battle Gateways project.

7. Report from District Councillors

Apologies from Cllr Davis.

Cllr Dixon advised that Rother District Council (RDC) could consider funding for capital projects but not for revenue. He suggested Battle Marketing Group could be contacted about the Arts Festival. He reported that the new joint waste contract would roll out from April 2014. If residents wished to retain garden waste bins it would cost £25. Both RDC and Wealden DC would be charging. Cardboard would not be collected with green waste but with normal recycling and which would be free of charge. A plastics collection would start. Green waste could be composted at home or taken to the public recycling facility.

There had been some reductions in charges in long stay car parks in Battle. Details could be found in Rother District Council's (RDC) report on Services re car parks. Charges had been introduced in Little Common car park. Battle Town Councillors felt that these changes would not help residents who come into town for a short time. Further reductions for them were needed as the town's businesses depended upon them. Tourist visitors would probably come anyway. Cllr Fisher asked if RDC would consider an hour's free parking. Cllrs Dixon and Field were supportive of this for some areas had campaigned for it.

Cllr Wilson advised that the bin emptied by RDC near the ticket machine at the Mount Street car park needed to be changed for one with a lid. Cllr Dixon would look into this.

8. Car Park Issues and Charges

Cllr Bishop reported that Battle was paying high levels of parking charges levied by RDC. RDC collected proportionally ten times more from Battle and Rye than from Bexhill which needed rebalancing. A one hour free stay would affect trade positively. In July 2013, the High Court had declared that the legislation under which Barnet Council had increased the charges, the 1984 Road Traffic Regulation Act, "is not a fiscal measure and does not authorise the authority to use its powers to charge local residents for parking in order to raise surplus revenue for other transport purposes".

Cllr Dixon noted that Battle's English Heritage's car park was cheaper. There was competition for long stay car parking in Battle but not for short stay. RDC's street cleaning costs were said to be roughly equal to how much the car parks made. Town Councillors responded that then revenue should be distributed more fairly. Cllr Dixon wasn't arguing whether the situation was fair. He and Cllr Field had been campaigning for the first hour free parking but it had not been accepted by RDC on grounds that it could not be monitored easily.

Camber Council also felt parking charge regime was wrong, with reinvestment of revenue not going into parking. It was asked why RDC and Wealden DC had not decriminalised on and off street parking.

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Parking spaces on the High Street, the best, were free. ESCC Highways and Police were in charge of parking bays and did not have enough staff resources to police them adequately, so they were not working. Battle needed the free one hour and to resolve the inequity of on street parking.

Cllr Jessop emphasised that it was important not to lose Battle's early morning street clean and that that Battle Chamber of Commerce's proposal was that Mount Street car park should be for short stay and Market Square for longer term parking.

Cllr Dixon said that the problem was that 3 agencies were involved: ESCC for yellow lines, Police policing the regime and RDC dealing with off street parking. He suggested that one agency should deal with all to make a joined up regime.

Regarding how to move forward, Cllr Bishop said that BTC was waiting for a formal proposal from the Battle Chamber of Commerce, to align proposals and meet with Rye Chamber and Council. He and the Chairman Cllr Bye would then meet the Rye Chamber and Town Council to combine support with the Rother Councillors to take matters forward, seeking RDC Cllr's support.

Cllr Jessop asked if BTC would support the idea which the Chamber had suggested of short stay at Mount Street and long stay at Market Road. Some members felt it should be the other way round.

Cllr Field was asked why the Market car park charges had been altered. She explained that there had been more complaints received about long stay car parks with confusingly different amounts of money being charged.

Cllr Eldridge said that the car park at bottom end of the Mount Street, owned by BTC and known as overflow car park, was often half full overnight. This area needed to be freed up.

Cllr Dixon added that the shortage of parking in Battle pointed toward the need for provision of competition parking, for example, at Upper Stumblets. There was some concern about that location, though the principle of looking at areas for this could be considered. Cllr Dixon said that market forces would prove that charges would have to reduce if there was another operator of a car park in Battle with reduced charges and RDC did not have a monopoly on short term parking.

The Chairman noted all that had been discussed and proposed that BTC should meet with the President of the Battle Chamber next to further matters. All were agreed.

9. Correspondence & Communications

The Chairman advised Council of **Cllr M-L Neill's resignation as a Battle Town Councillor** and thanked her for her service which would be a loss to the Council. The new vacancy was being advertised.

The Clerk had received confirmation from RDC that an election for the existing vacancy was not required and this would now be advertised in the Observer, notice board and website.

10. Minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 28 August and 11 September were reported by Cllr Jessop and noted.

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11. Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes (F&GP) Committee meeting held on 3 September were reported by the Chairman, Cllr Bye and noted.

Cllr Bishop reported that he had **reviewed the current IT equipment** with the Clerk and Assistant Clerk. The Clerk was **concerned that the existing system was grossly inadequate, causing significant working time to be lost and was not adequately protected.** She frequently used her personal computer for necessary tasks, such as opening standard documents and generally compensating for the inadequate office computer system. Cllr Bishop confirmed that it was over 7 years old with an out of date operating system and he was quite shocked by it. Antivirus software was inadequate, the system kept crashing and was not adequately backed up. He recommended that 2 new systems with Windows 8 should be purchased. Cllr Eldridge suggested that £2000 didn't seem enough but Cllr Bishop confirmed that he had made initial investigations and felt this would be sufficient just for the first and immediate need of updating the system with more needed in due course.

Cllr Bishop suggested that PDF format could be used for circulating documents to Council members and on the website as all systems ought to be able to open them.

The Chairman noted that F&GP Committee had asked Council to approve the recommendation to purchase the IT equipment at the cost of £2000 as minuted in the last meeting of F&GP. Cllr Kiloh proposed this, seconded by Cllr Jessop and all agreed.

Chairman reported the **poor service recently received from Barclays Bank** and he, the Clerk and Assistant Clerk had met the Business Manager to resolve matters. After six weeks of successive problems, cheques were finally able to be sent out to make outstanding payments. It would be kept under careful review.

Cllr Bye reported that the old **water pipe at the Cemetery** kept breaking and needed repairing. The Clerk had **recommended that the pipe should be replaced immediately so that the work could be planned sensitively,** so as not to disrupt funeral arrangements. Cllr Jessop reported was in process of seeking contractors' quotes with moling equipment, in two sections, both along driveway where the problem was and to service where new tractor store would be. The Clerk had a quotation from the contractor who had carried out the past repairs. Cllr Jessop confirmed that graves would not be disturbed.

Cllrs Jessop and Cllr Kiloh discussed basic **specifications for new tractor store and quotes for each would go back to Clerk.**

The Chairman advised that **F&GP Committee had agreed that the Town Council insurance policy should be renewed,** which the Clerk had confirmed was lower in cost than last year's.

The Chairman confirmed that the **Street Collection Permit policy had been confirmed and adopted.**

12. List of Payments and Receipts was noted.

13. Reports from Representatives of the Council

Cllr Jessop	-	Strengthening Local Relationships meeting;
	-	Chamber of Commerce meeting;
Cllr Furness	-	Safer Rother Partnership and Sussex Police
Cllr Boryer	-	Meetings with Beautiful Battle and Battle in Bloom.

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Cllr Fisher

- Councillors' Battle Town Council Estate walk

14. Mayor's Engagements

The Mayor had attended the Town Twinning Association reception hosted by the Town Council; Camera Club Awards; Battle Bonfire Boys 10km run presentations; Memorial Hall Committee meeting; meeting with Clerks and Barclays Bank Account Manager and Battle of Britain Anniversary Service.

15. Matters for Information/Future Items for Agenda

South & South East in Bloom - The Chairman asked the Clerk to confirm the **Awards made: The Almonry Garden - Gold; Battle Town - Silver Gilt; Battle Cemetery - Silver Gilt and Saxon Court - Outstanding Champion of Champions in Your Neighbourhood Category** Thanks were due for all their hard work to the Beautiful Battle volunteers and the Town Council's Groundsmen and Councillors.

Cllr Fisher wished to record thanks to both the Chairman and Vice Chairman for addressing the Twinning Association guests in French at the aforementioned reception.

It was reported that a **shop by the Abbey Green had been painted purple**. Cllr Dixon suggested putting in **complaint to Enforcement Team at RDC** as regulations in Conservation Area had been breached.

The Chairman restated the previously agreed Town Council's office opening hours of 9am - 1pm and in order to provide some time to undertake work uninterrupted, he **proposed that a notice could be put in the Battle Observer stating the hours and all agreed**. The Clerk would arrange this.

Council members wished to send good wishes and a card to Cllr Carter.

16. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, 15 October 2013

The meeting closed at 9.05pm

Cllr Bye
Chairman

