



Battle Town Council

Minutes of the COUNCIL MEETING held on TUESDAY, 20th APRIL 2021 via Zoom at 7.30pm

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

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

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME 7.30pm to 7.45pm

A member of the public stated that the previous minutes did not accurately represent his report and requested that future reports at PQT are accurate or not recorded at all. He raised three questions to which the Clerk answered to the best of her knowledge at the meeting: the cost implications for the conditions applied to planning consent for the Almonry are not yet confirmed as a meeting with the Conservation Officer is to be held this week; the figures quoted for repayment of the Public Works Loan Board were taken from the website, although rates have now altered; the implications of planning permission for RR/2021/337L and 346P not being granted prior to 26th April are unknown at this time.

1. Apologies for absence – Cllrs C Hartley and C Would.

2. Disclosure of interest – Cllrs Gyngell and Davies reported a personal interest in items 15 as members of Battle Festival. Cllrs Russell and Favell reported a personal interest in item 10 d) as neighbours to one of the sites. Cllr Cook reported a personal interest in item 8 as a member of St Mary's Church.

3. Minutes of the Council meeting held on 23rd March 2021 were agreed and duly electronically signed by Cllr Favell.

4. Report from the Clerk

- The results of research of costs and availability of **suitable meeting room venues** had been circulated to Members. To allow booking for Council meetings from 7th May, Members discussed the benefits of both the Memorial Hall and Emmanuel Centre and agreed that the latter should be used due to cost, accessibility and parking availability.
- Due to lack of support, the **cycle skills training** did not take place but will be rearranged for the summer school holidays.
- Several items of **stored furniture and the safe** have been sold via Marketplace in readiness for the Almonry project to commence. The Captain's Chair has been delivered to the Auction Rooms and will be available for sale at the next sale.

5. Reports from County Councillor and District Councillors

County

Cllr Field confirmed that the **audit** is progressing well, at a fee of over £100k. She reported that East Sussex has the **lowest Coronavirus numbers** in England at 7/100,000; with Rother being the lowest in the County at 1/100,000.

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District

Cllr Dixon reported that two Cabinet meetings had been held. Discussions included the purchase of **property for temporary housing**; proposals to ensure **financial stability**; awarding of a contract for an **advertising campaign** to Sussex Modern; and the Government's **Business Restart Grant**. Cllrs Field and Cook had distributed leaflets around the Battle Parish promoting the Business Restart Grant. He confirmed that **planning permission** had been granted for the **Blackfriars** development and for **kennels at Netherfield**. The **Annual Meeting** has been brought forward to 4th May and the Cabinet meeting cancelled.

Cllr Cook reported on the distribution of posters to support **Shop / Eat / Support Local** to assist with the recovery of businesses in the town.

6. Correspondence and communications received post agenda publication

A request from the **Battle Museum of Local History** to install a **letterbox**, preferably an external box. This will reduce disruption to Officers and assist during the Almonry refurbishment. Members agreed to this request subject to Conservation Officer's advice.

7. To receive draft minutes and consider any recommendations from Committee meetings:

- a) Minutes of the **Finance & General Purposes** meeting on 23rd March were presented by Cllr Favell and noted. **Members agreed unanimously to the recommendations for movement of Ear Marked Reserves / General Reserves:**
 - 325 Almonry repair: £21,000 to a new Almonry PWLB repayment EMR. Additionally, the unused project budget 4800 for this year to be added to this new EMR.
 - 410 junior football pitch to 440 Recreation Ground facilities as the pitch has been levelled but may require drainage work;
 - 453 Members' travel to General Reserves as there is no travelling currently required;
 - 455 Members' allowances to General Reserves as any new Councillors will be co-opted and not elected, so not entitled to the allowance;
 - 400 Twin Town/Tapestry to General Reserves as this has not been progressed.
- b) Minutes of the **Environment** meeting on 6th April 2021 were presented by Cllr Cook and noted. She highlighted the positive decisions to contract the: replacement skateramp; new toddler and disabled swings to be positioned close to the castle play equipment; and outside gym equipment. A recommendation to designate the recreation grounds and other areas as Town and Village Greens was made and is an item for discussion at this meeting.
- c) Minutes of the **Planning & Transport** meeting on 13th April 2021 were reported by Cllr Gyngell and noted.

8. Repairs to St Mary's Churchyard pathway

Cllr Cook declared an interest in this item.

Members were reminded that maintenance of a closed Churchyard is the responsibility of the Town Council. The main pathway between the eastern and western entrances has deteriorated and requires urgent repair. Three quotes had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting. Work to other pathways is less crucial at this time. The lowest of these is a local business that had provided evidence of similar work to residential driveways. **Members agreed unanimously that KM Building & Landscapes be contracted to carry out this work at a cost of £11,800.**

The Environment Committee had agreed that St Mary's Church should be asked to contribute to the expenditure required for the substantial repairs to the pathway. A response has not yet been received. Cllr Favell had researched the Historic Churches fund for possible grant funding, but

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repairs to churchyards do not qualify. As no budget had been set aside for this work, **Members agreed unanimously that the cost of repairs, less any contribution from St Mary's Church is taken from General Reserves.**

9. Almonry Development Working Group

It was reported that additional information had been provided to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and a decision is expected imminently. Further detail had also been required by HMRC for the Option to Tax. Following advice from the Quantity Surveyor, removals and storage of office furniture has been provisionally booked and a deposit for temporary accommodation at the Old Court House had been paid. The amendment to the Planning Permission is expected shortly and the Architect is meeting with the Conservation Officer to discuss the conditions on previous permissions this week.

10. Battle Civil Parish Neighbourhood Plan

- a) The proposed **response to Independent Examiner** and a revision to the comments to Regulation 16 had been circulated to Members. One amendment to a comment was suggested. Members agreed unanimously to the response and comments to Regulation 16. Once issued to the Independent Examiner the documents will be attached to these minutes.
- b) The response to **Freedom of Information** request was noted. The confidentiality of this document was highlighted.
- c) The **correction to site reference BA31a (from BA32a)** was noted and documents will be amended to reflect this. **27-05-21 agreed amendment to Town and Village Greens**
- d) It was noted that when the Neighbourhood Plan is made, **Local Green Spaces** within the Civil Parish will be afforded protection from future development and should remain as green spaces for public access and enjoyment. However, the NP Steering Group has drawn attention to a Government proposal to amend certain parts of Planning Policy to allow development to be more easily granted planning permission, which might impact Local Green Spaces. The SG therefore recommend that five Green Spaces within the Parish be designated Local Green Spaces for extra protection. **Members agreed unanimously to:**
 - Make a land owner designation application to East Sussex County Council for the recreation ground at North Trade Road (BA GS 07)
 - Make a land owner designation application to East Sussex County Council the for recreation ground at Telham (BA GS 18)
 - To request that Rother District Council make a land owner declaration for Coronation Gardens recreation ground (BA GS 17) and Kingsmead (BA GS 04)
 - To confirm ownership of open space at Darvel Down (NE GS 06) and request that a land owner declaration for the site be made.

11. Annual Report

A full proposal from Cllr Russell, seconded by Cllr Wheeler, for the Annual Report to be approved by Full Council prior to circulation had been circulated to all Members. Cllr Russell congratulated the Deputy Town Clerk/Town Development Officer on the attractive Annual Report recently delivered to all residents. He highlighted the importance of this document, presented on behalf of the Town Council and asked that the final draft be presented to Full Council for comment prior to publication. Cllr Gyngell reported a spelling error that had been included following an editing amendment without her knowledge. **Members agreed unanimously that the External Relations**

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& Town Development Committee produce a time-line to ensure that the Annual Report can be presented to Full Council for approval prior to circulation.

12. Renewal of telephone/broadband contract

The existing contract with TalkTalk Business is due for renewal next month. As there has been no issues with this provider, Members agreed a new 24 month contract at a reduced rate of £28.95pm from £32pm. It was highlighted that fibre optic is currently being installed and this should be investigated as soon as possible.

13. Huw Merriman MP consultation virtual meetings

The invitation to comment on the Government's decision not to extend legislation for virtual meetings had been circulated via email and comments received. Members confirmed full support for the ability to continue virtual meetings. Reasons given were not only Covid related, but also included:

- to enable more people the opportunity to represent their communities because currently commuters, people who work away a lot and parents of young children etc. are unable to become Councillors if they have to attend meetings in person. Council should be encouraging these groups and welcoming their views and experience;
- to afford greater transparency;
- it makes good environmental sense;
- It was noted that the Government has extended its emergency Covid legislation for a further six months and at the very least remote meetings should follow this lead. Also, as there are now lots of different options for meetings, why does the government need to restrict Councils to only one? It was also pointed out that virtual meetings exclude some residents and a solution should be sought if Battle Town Council continues working in this way. It was felt that Council should be able to choose which type (or types) of meeting is best for this parish.
- Rother District Council is installing a hybrid system and it will be interesting to hear how they find it, how they have enabled those without the required technology or skills to join meetings, etc.

Members agreed that the Clerk should respond using these points in support of a continuation to hold virtual meetings.

14. I'm Backing Britain – Great British spring clean

As the official entry may prove time-consuming, it was agreed that Council encourage voluntary spring-cleaning. It was noted that Council has litter-picking equipment available for use by volunteers wishing to take part. Members agreed to carry out litter clearing and to invite residents to join them. The Clerk was asked to circulate suggested dates.

15. Battle Festival

In addition to the Summer Community Day that the Council has awarded a Covid-19 Recovery grant of £500, Battle Festival plans to host a programme of music, music appreciation, and music-making for a two week period. For this, an additional Lottery grant of £10,000 is required. As the Festival has already been the recipient of a Lottery Grant, the Council has been asked to submit the application, at no cost to Council; as with the Big Blue application. It was noted that this would prevent Council from making any further Lottery application for a 12 month period. **Members agreed by a majority to submit an application for £10,000 on behalf of Battle Festival.** The Festival was asked that this be acknowledged in promotional literature.

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16. Words of condolence

A draft statement of condolence following sad death of **His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh** had been circulated: *The residents of Battle Civil Parish wish to express their sadness at the passing of His Royal Highness The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.*

In recognition of the Duke of Edinburgh's tireless work to advance an understanding of the importance of the environment and nature conservation to the survival of our planet, the work that Battle Town Council is undertaking to increase biodiversity within the parish will be dedicated to His Royal Highness' memory. Members agreed that additional words in recognition of his work with youth, particularly the Duke of Edinburgh Award should be added.

17. Finance matters

- a) The provisional list of **income of 35,709.27 and expenditure £70,165.78**, both net of account transfers, for March was noted, as attached.
- b) To consider any **Covid-19 Recovery Grant applications** - None.

18. Reports from representatives of the Council and other reports

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| Cllr Wheeler | - | Battle CP NP SG. |
| Cllr Russell | - | Battle CP NP SG |
| Cllr Kiloh | - | met with the Chairman, the Chief Executive Officer & Leader of Rother District Council to discuss matters of common interest. |
| Cllr Howell | - | Battle CP NP SG. |
| Cllr Gyngell | - | Strengthening Local Relationships; a Blackfriars briefing session arranged by the Battle CP NP SG. |
| Cllr Cook | - | increased the assistance for the Vaccination at Etchingham and Ticehurst; South East Community Rail at which ideas for community use of the Station Masters accommodation is being discussed; CIL Working Group meeting. |
| Cllr Brown | - | Battle CP NP SG. |
| Cllr Favell | - | Report circulated, as attached. |

19. Future agenda items / matters to note

None.

20. Date of next meeting: Annual Meeting, Tuesday, 27th April 2021

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.45pm

CLLR G FAVELL
CHAIRMAN

Minutes approved, subject to, an amendment of the wording at 10 d) from Local Green Spaces to Town and Village Greens, were agreed and electronically signed by *Cllr G Favell*.