

# TELSCOMBE TOWN COUNCIL



Minutes of a meeting of **Telscombe Town Council** held at 7.30pm on **Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2023** in the Council Chamber at Telscombe Civic Centre.

**Councillors Present:-** Cllrs Clarkson, Gallagher, Lawrie, O'Connor *Mayor*, Robinson & Watts

**Also present:** No members of the public  
Stella Newman, Town Clerk & RFO (*minutes*)

## **2195. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no members of the public present.

## **2196. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllrs Judd, Page, Perotta and Sharkey on health grounds and these reasons were accepted. Cllr McGuckian also sent apologies.

## **2197. TO RECEIVE MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN RELATION TO MATTERS ON THE AGENDA**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **2198. TO APPROVE & SIGN MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 15<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2023**

It was proposed by Cllr Watts, seconded by Cllr Robinson and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023 were a true record of the proceedings and were signed as correct by the Mayor, Cllr O'Connor.

## **2199. TO AGREE MINUTES FROM THE FOLLOWING COMMITTEES AND ADOPT RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **(a) Amenities & Civic Centre – 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023**

Cllr Robinson proposed that the minutes of the meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2023 be accepted and the recommendations adopted, seconded by Cllr Clarkson and **RESOLVED** that the minutes be accepted and recommendations adopted.

### **(b) Planning & Highways – 6<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman, Cllr Gallagher, proposed that the minutes of the meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2023 be accepted and the recommendations adopted, seconded by Cllr Watts and **RESOLVED** that the minutes be accepted and recommendations adopted.

## **2200. TO NOTE ACTION LIST AND AGREE ANY FURTHER ACTIONS REQUIRED**

The action list was noted as follows and it was **agreed** that no further actions were required:-

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## 2200. To Note Action List And Agree Any Further Actions Required (Contd)

Date of Meeting	Issue Detail	Action Owner	Update	Due Date
21.12.22	Min 2049, p 3800 - To consider putting in expression of interest (EOI) for CIL grant to LDC for possible café in Chatsworth Park	SN	As agreed, application for £150k to be submitted when EOI opens. <i>1.12.23 CIL EOI submitted.</i>	Complete
17.5.23	Min 2115, p 3876 – To agree Bank Mandate /Signatories to Council's Bank Account	SN	Signatories to be set up with bank.	Dec 2023
17.5.23	Min 2116, p 3876 – To agree Bank Mandate /Signatories to Mayor's charity fund Account	SN	Signatories to be set up with bank.	Dec 2023
19.7.23	Min 2132, p 3921 – To decide way forward regarding remaining 2 Cllr vacancies	SN	As agreed, the 2 vacancies will be advertised every 6 months, with the next advert due out in January 2024	Jan 2024
19.7.23	Min 2142, p 3923 – To consider purchasing an Adobe Acrobat Pro acct	SN	Account to be purchased – <i>advice being sought from Northstar re best price &amp; assistance re installation</i>	Jan 2024
15.11.23	Min 2174, p 3997 – To review Havens Community Hub's hire of the Civic Centre	SN	A meeting has been set up between Havens & TTC staff, along with Cllrs O'Connor & Judd for January 2024	Jan 2024
15.11.23	Min 2178, p 3999 -To consider draft budget figures for 2024/25 financial year	SN	A further budget working group meeting took place on 7.12.23 & figures have been revised.	See new agenda item
15.11.23	Min 2180, p 3999 -To agree change of meetings dates from Jan '24 and dates set for May 2024-25	SN	The dates were agreed & have been put on the website.	Complete
15.11.23	Min 2181, p 3999 – To adopt reviewed Grievance Policy	SN	Revised policy adopted & has been put on the website.	Complete
15.11.23	Min 2182, p 3999 – To adopt reviewed disciplinary policy	SN/ DJ	Meeting to be arranged between Cllr Judd and Town Clerk to devise appropriate wording.	Jan 2024
15.11.23	Min 2183, p 4000 – To adopt reviewed Document Retention policy	SN	Revised policy adopted & has been put on the website.	Complete

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## 2200. To Note Action List and Agree Any Further Actions Required (Contd)

Date of Meeting	Issue Detail	Action Owner	Update	Due Date
15.11.23	Min 2184, p 4000 – To adopt reviewed Email & Internet usage policy	SN	Revised policy adopted & has been put on the website. Wording for signature block needs to be formulated and agreed via email, then taken back to a Council meeting for approval.	Complete Jan 2024
15.11.23	Min 2185, p 4000 – To adopt reviewed Honorary Freedom of Town Policy	SN	Revised policy adopted & has been put on the website.	Complete
15.11.23	Min 2186, p 4000 – To adopt reviewed Data Protection policy	SN	Revised policy adopted & has been put on the website.	Complete
15.11.23	Min 2187, p 4000 – To agree which employees to allow to join the Local Government Pension Scheme	SN	As agreed, the pension administrators have been advised that TTC will allow all employees to join the LGPS.	Complete
15.11.23	Min 2189, p 4001 – Consider quote for Cyber Ins.	SN	Insurance still to be put in place – <i>revised quote awaited</i>	Jan 2024
15.11.23	Min 2192, Urgent Matters, p 4002	SN	a) Award for retired TRA committee members added to this agenda as agreed b) Put up temporary signs re rabbit poaching	See new agenda item Complete

## 2201. TO APPROVE PAYMENTS AND RECEIPTS FOR NOVEMBER 2023

Payments for November 2023 totalling £27,886.06 and receipts of £7,958.75 were proposed as correct by Cllr Robinson, seconded by Cllr Gallagher and unanimously **RESOLVED** that they be approved and were signed by the Mayor, Cllr O'Connor.

## 2202. TO AGREE INCOME & EXPENDITURE TO 20<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2023

The Town Clerk/RFO's report detailing any significant differences between budget and actual spend figures, along with the full income and expenditure lists which also showed the budget and actual spend figures were noted. It was proposed by Cllr Clarkson, seconded by Cllr Gallagher and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the actual total figures at 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023 of income of £331,892 and expenditure of £178,909 were correct.

## 2203. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was unanimously **RESOLVED** to exclude the Press and Public from the meeting during consideration of agenda items 10, 11 and 12 pursuant to section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reasons of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.



**2204. TO APPROVE TENDER FOR GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT 1, CHATSWORTH PARK AND PLAYGROUNDS, FOR A THREE YEAR TERM COMMENCING APRIL 2024**

In accordance with Financial Regulations, the sealed tenders had been opened at the same time by the Town Clerk and Cllr Robinson as Chair of the Amenities & Civic Centre Committee. The costs were subsequently discussed at the budget working group meeting that took place after the tenders had been opened.

It was noted that 3 tenders and been returned ranging from £13,609.23 to £39,968 plus VAT. A spreadsheet detailing a full breakdown of costs from each contractor had been circulated with the report sent with the agenda. Each tender was considered in detail including the budget implications, following which it was proposed by Cllr Lawrie, seconded by Cllr Clarkson and unanimously **RESOLVED** to accept and offer Contract 1 to Countrymans Contractors for a 3 year term commencing 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 in the sum of £13,609.23 plus VAT per annum and that the Town Clerk sign the Contract and apply the Council's seal.

**2205. TO APPROVE TENDER FOR GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT 2, HEDGE AND TREE CUTTING, FOR A THREE YEAR TERM COMMENCING APRIL 2024**

In accordance with Financial Regulations, the sealed tenders had been opened at the same time by the Town Clerk and Cllr Robinson as Chair of the Amenities & Civic Centre Committee. The costs were subsequently discussed at the budget working group meeting that took place after the tenders had been opened.

It was noted that 4 tenders and been returned ranging from £4,360 to £14,360 plus VAT. A spreadsheet of the full breakdown of costs supplied by each contractor had been circulated with the report sent with the agenda. The tenders were considered in detail including the financial implications, following which it was proposed by Cllr Clarkson, seconded by Cllr Lawrie and unanimously **RESOLVED** to accept and offer Contract 2 to Countrywide Grounds Maintenance for a 3 year term commencing 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 in the sum of £4,360 plus VAT per annum and that the Town Clerk sign the Contract and apply the Council's seal.

**2206. TO APPROVE TENDER FOR GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT 3, SMALL WORKS GROUNDS MAINTENANCE, FOR A THREE YEAR TERM COMMENCING APRIL 2024**

In accordance with Financial Regulations, the sealed tenders had been opened at the same time by the Town Clerk and Cllr Robinson as Chair of the Amenities & Civic Centre Committee. The costs were subsequently discussed at the budget working group meeting that took place after the tenders had been opened.

It was noted that 5 tenders and been returned ranging from £1,970 to £11,200 net of VAT. A spreadsheet detailing the full breakdown of costs from each contractor had been circulated with the report sent with the agenda. The tenders were considered in detail including the cost implications, following which it was proposed by Cllr Robinson, seconded by Cllr Watts and unanimously **RESOLVED** to accept and offer Contract 3 to Countrywide Grounds Maintenance for a 3 year term commencing 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 in the sum of £1,970 plus VAT and that the Town Clerk sign the Contract and apply the Council's seal.

Councillors thanked the Amenities Officer, Bianca Buss and Town Clerk for their work in drawing up the contracts, as well as the Admin Assistant, Diana Joel, for the detailed spreadsheets.

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The Chamber doors were opened and as there were no members of the public waiting to enter, the meeting continued.

## **2207. TO SUPPORT CITIZENS ADVICE & AGREE CONTRIBUTION/BUDGET FOR 2024/25 FINANCIAL YEAR**

Figures received from the Citizens Advice up to the end of September were noted, along with the Town Clerk's report which gave a history of the contributions previously given by the Council. Following consideration, it was proposed by Cllr Robinson, seconded by Cllr Lawrie and unanimously **RESOLVED** to agree to support the Citizens Advice in the 2024/25 financial year with an amount of £4,240, being a 4% increase, and to pay the money in the new financial year. It was noted that this amount had been budgeted for.

## **2208. TO APPROVE AND SET BUDGET & PRECEPT FOR 2024/25 FINANCIAL YEAR**

Councillors thanked the Town Clerk/RFO for clearly setting out the draft figures and providing explanations for the variations which had made the process easier for the working group when deciding on final sums. The paperwork and spreadsheets detailing the variations and the full budget line figures were considered and it was proposed by Cllr Clarkson, seconded by Cllr Lawrie and unanimously **RESOLVED** to agree the figures put forward and set the budget and precept for the 2024/25 financial year at **£299,937** and for Cllr O'Connor as Mayor and the Town Clerk/RFO to sign the Council Tax Demand form to be submitted to Lewes District Council.

The agreed figure of £299,937, with a slightly increased confirmed tax base of 2,577.5, resulted in the precept increasing by £17,676 (6.3%) and Council Tax increasing for a Band D property by £5.47 (4.9%) to £116.37. The agreed budget and precept figures breakdown is as follows:-

COMMITTEE	EXPENDITURE	LESS INCOME	NET
Policy & Resources	218,250	3,366	214,884
Amenities	62,050	1,450	60,600
Civic Centre	41,210	31,615	9,595
Planning & Highways	19,625	4,767	14,858
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>341,135</b>	<b>41,198</b>	<b><u>299,937</u></b>

It was noted that there are some committed budget figures to be transferred into an earmarked reserve at year end. It was also noted that new earmarked reserves should be set up for a replacement server and solar panel inverters. Re-allocation of the Coastal Erosion earmarked reserve was also considered with a suggested £5,000 each to Civic Centre maintenance and grounds maintenance, along with £10,000 to the community café. The Earmarked Reserves, however, will be considered in more detail and the suggestions put forward to the March full Council meeting and figures for the 2024/25 financial year agreed at that meeting.

## **2209. TO ACKNOWLEDGE AND AGREE THE INTERNAL AUDIT INTERIM REPORT**

The Town Clerk advised that the auditor's report confirmed that we had '*successfully maintained a very strong system of financial control*'. They did, however, have one minor recommendation which is mentioned at the end of item I on page 6 and as a matter arising with a recommendation on page 8. It is regarding investment of funds and recommends that we continue to consider all financial institutions offering deposit accounts to Town Councils. It was unanimously **RESOLVED** to agree the internal auditor's interim report and it was noted that investment of funds was being discussed under the next agenda item.



## **2210. TO REVIEW & AGREE INVESTMENT POLICY AND COUNCIL INVESTMENTS**

Regarding the Council's Investment Policy, it was noted that this had not been amended from last year. Regarding Council investments, it was noted that having previously considered the Council's investment strategy at the Policy & Resources Committee, and taking into account a recommendation from the Auditor in his Interim Report in November 2022, it was agreed at full Council in November 2022 to open a savings account with the Nationwide and to transfer £85,000 into it. At that stage the rate for a 95-day saver account was 1.6%. It was subsequently agreed at the Policy & Resources meeting in March 2023 to postpone opening the account until after the elections in May 2023 due to possible signatory changes.

The Town Clerk had been observing interest rates following the May Council meeting which had been very low over the summer. However, rates had now improved and it was noted that account types and rates with the Nationwide had changed as detailed on the documentation provided. Following consideration and bearing in mind the comments from the Internal Auditor, it was proposed by Cllr Gallagher, seconded by Cllr Robinson and unanimously **RESOLVED** (a) to open a Nationwide Business 95 Day Saver account in the New Year with a current interest rate of 3.8%, and that Councillor signatories forward the Town Clerk the required information so that she can add them to the account and (b) to adopt the Investment Policy.

## **2211. TO APPROVE THE DRAFT WILDFLOWER POLICY**

It was noted that the draft Policy had been agreed at the Planning & Highways meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> November and it was therefore proposed by Cllr Gallagher, seconded by Cllr Watts and unanimously **RESOLVED** to adopt the Wildflower Policy.

## **2212. TO CONSIDER SIGNING UP TO THE CIVILITY AND RESPECT PLEDGE**

The Report from the Town Clerk was considered and the fact that both the National Association of Local Councils and Society of Local Council Clerks support Councils signing up to the Civility and Respect Pledge. Following consideration, it was proposed by Cllr Robinson, seconded by Cllr Clarkson and unanimously **RESOLVED** that Telscombe Town Council signs up to the Civility and Respect Pledge and will support the requirements, including to agree to treat Councillors, all employees, members of the public and representatives of partner organisations and volunteers with civility and respect in their role.

## **2213. TO NOTE UPDATE ON THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AND ADOPT THE STEERING GROUP'S REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Cllr Gallager advised that Michael Payne at Lewes District Council had recently advised that he had applied for the service for an examiner for examination of the Neighbourhood Plan following closure of the Regulation 16 consultation.

Regarding the Steering Group, she advised that they had met for the first time in almost a year, the minutes having been sent with the agenda and papers. Amendments to their Terms of Reference were agreed as shown in the draft that was circulated with the agenda. The amendments had been considered by Peacehaven Town Council at a meeting the previous evening and minor amendments agreed to item 14.1 as follows (the addition of the words in italics and removal of the words crossed through):-





## **2213. To Note Update on the Neighbourhood Plan and Adopt the Steering Group's Revised Terms of Reference**

### **14. Dissolution of the Group**

14.1 The Steering Group will be dissolved on adoption of the Plan *at referendum*, and with the two Town Councils then forming a joint Neighbourhood Plan Oversight ~~Committee~~ *Group* to manage the plan going forward. The Councils will decide upon this joint ~~committees~~ group's terms of reference at that time.

Following consideration of the amendments, it was proposed by Cllr Clarkson, seconded by Cllr Watts and unanimously **RESOLVED** to agree and adopt the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group's Revised Terms of Reference. Cllr Robinson expressed thanks to Cllrs Gallagher and O'Connor as Chair and Vice Chair of the Steering Group and all their work thus far.

## **2214. TO CONSIDER JOINT YOUTH MAYOR**

The Mayor's report regarding the possibility of a joint youth Mayor with Peacehaven was considered and it was proposed by Cllr O'Connor, seconded by Cllr Watts and unanimously **RESOLVED** to undertake initial discussions with Peacehaven Town Council and Peacehaven Community School. It was noted that if it proceeds, there may be financial implications and the possibility of some of the Mayor's allowance from 2023/24 being allocated to an earmarked reserve for a Youth Mayor in 2024/25 was suggested. Earmarked reserves will be agreed at the March Council meeting.

## **2215. UPDATE RE CAFÉ CONCESSION CIL BID, TO NOTE PROGRESS WITH CAFÉ TO DATE, CONSIDER DRAFT LAYOUT DRAWINGS AND TO AGREE TO ISSUE SURVEY TO TELSCOMBE TOWN RESIDENTS**

The report from Cllr Clarkson, along with his recent presentation to the Working Group and 3 draft layout drawings provided by Stickland Wright architects were noted. Cllr Clarkson confirmed that an Expression of Interest (EOI) for a CIL grant of £150,000 had been submitted to Lewes District Council following the recent opening of the EOI window. It had previously been agreed at a full Council meeting in December last year to submit an EOI once the window was open. He also confirmed that following agreement at the last Amenities & Civic Centre Committee, formal quotes were being sought for electricity and water connections. There was discussion regarding the requirement to hold a wider public consultation regarding the plans to create a café and it was proposed by Cllr Clarkson, seconded by Cllr Lawrie and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the Chatsworth Park Café Working Group formulate a consultation document for Telscombe Town Council electors regarding the plans to create a café in view of the cost implications to the town's Council tax payers.

## **2216. TO AGREE TO PRESENT RETIRING TELSCOMBE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION (TRA) COMMITTEE MEMBERS WITH AN AWARD FROM THE COUNCIL**

Following discussion, it was proposed by Cllr O'Connor, seconded by Cllr Gallagher and unanimously **RESOLVED** to present the retiring TRA Committee Chairman and Secretary with an award from the Council as recognition of their long service to the TRA, with the cost of £36.62 net of VAT to come from the Mayor's allowance.

## **2217. REPORTS FROM:-**

The Mayor:- Cllr O'Connor advised that he had attended 11 functions since the last meeting, but had unfortunately had to miss 3 due to Covid. The functions were as follows:- Peacehaven, Newhaven

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## 2217. REPORTS FROM (Contd):-

Community and Family Support Works carol concerts; Friends of Sussex Hospices fair; Peacehaven Players pantomime; Rotary Club party for the elderly; Vespers at Arundel Cathedral and the Peacehaven Mayor's Christmas party.

District Councillors:- Cllr Robinson advised that Lewes District Council (LDC) had given grants of £2,000 each to 10 local foodbanks. She also said that LDC are in the process of budget setting.

Cllr O'Connor advised that LDC are currently consulting on CIL and the Local Plan and that webinar presentations are available regarding the Local Plan.

East Sussex County Councillor:- Cllr Robinson advised that ESCC are also budget setting; there is a £23m overspend on children's services and a £1m overspend on adult social care. There is also a consultation on bus service improvements that ends in January.

Cllr O'Connor advised that it was thanks to lobbying from Cllr Robinson and information provided from Mr Horner of the TRA that assisted ESCC with carrying out recent improvements to kerbs etc at local bus stops. It was agreed to include an article in the next edition of our newsletter.

### Representatives on outside bodies:-

Telscombe Residents' Association – Cllr Lawrie advised that she and Cllr Robinson had attended the last TRA meeting following the resignation of the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. It has been a positive meeting and a new Chair, Secretary and Treasurer has been appointed and will remain in place until the next AGM.

Cllr Gallagher advised that Peacehaven Town Council had recently agreed to add Ovesco and Greenhavens as outside bodies and wondered if Telscombe Town Council would consider doing the same. It was agreed to add this as an agenda item for the next meeting.

## 2218. URGENT MATTERS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN FOR NOTING OR INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA

Cllr O'Connor advised that he had been approached by Develop Outdoors regarding possible installation of a more permanent structure in Chatsworth Park for their Forest School. It was agreed that full details would need to be submitted to us for consideration.

Cllr O'Connor also advised that he had been approached by Anne Bickmore of the ABC Fund asking if we could have a colour run a part of our summer fayre. It was agreed to include this for discussion at the next Events Working Group meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.50 pm.

Signed, Mayor.....

*Date of next Council meeting – 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023*