



BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

TOWN CLERK Glenna Frost, The Town Hall, Clarence Road,
Bognor Regis, West Sussex PO21 1LD
Telephone: 01243 867744
E-mail: bognortc@bognorregis.gov.uk

MINUTES AND REPORT OF THE TOWN MEETING OF THE ELECTORS OF BOGNOR REGIS HELD ON MONDAY 14th MARCH 2022

PRESENT (BRTC)

Cllr. S. Goodheart - Town Mayor (in the chair)
Cllr. J. Brooks
Cllr. Mrs. S. Daniells
Cllr. Miss. C. Needs
Cllr. M. Stanley
Cllr. B. Waterhouse
Cllr. Mrs. J. Warr

(Note: Cllrs. Brooks, Mrs. Daniells, Goodheart, Miss. Needs, Stanley and Mrs. Warr are also Arun District Councillors)

IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs. J. Davis (Assistant Clerk)
Mrs. R. Vervecken (Civic & Office Manager)
Ms. R. White (Bognor Regis Regeneration Board)
6 members of the public

COPIES OF DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE FOR THE PUBLIC

Notice and Agenda for the Meeting
Minutes of the Town Meeting of Electors held on 18th March 2019
Audited Accounts to 31st March 2021
Proposed Expenditure for the year 2022-23
Bognor Pier Company Ltd Accounts to 31st December 2021
Schedule of Councillors' Attendance at Meetings

The Meeting opened at 6.30pm

1. WELCOME BY THE TOWN MAYOR AND INTRODUCTION OF COUNCILLORS PRESENT

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and attention was drawn to the evacuation procedure in the event of a fire. The Town Mayor introduced Councillors to those present. Apologies for absence were noted from Cllrs. Barrett, Batley, Cunard, Smith, Mrs. Staniforth and Woodall. Apologies from Mrs. G. Frost (Town Clerk) and Ms. H. Allen (Bognor Regis BID) were also noted.

2. TO APPROVE AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN MEETING OF ELECTORS HELD ON MONDAY 18th MARCH 2019 AND ANY MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the Town Meeting of Electors held on Monday 18th March 2019 were considered, agreed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor as presiding Chairman. There were no matters arising.

3. TO RECEIVE THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNCIL

The Town Mayor gave his report (appended to Minutes as **Appendix 1**).

4. TO RECEIVE THE ACCOUNTS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL YEAR ENDING 31st MARCH 2021 AND BUDGET FOR 2022-2023

The Town Council's Accounts to year ending 31st March 2021 were duly noted and accepted. The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, Cllr. Waterhouse gave the Chairman's report on the budget (appended to Minutes as **Appendix 2**).

5. TO RECEIVE THE ACCOUNTS OF THE BOGNOR PIER COMPANY LTD. YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2021

The Accounts were duly noted and accepted.

6. TO CONSIDER RESOLUTIONS OF WHICH WRITTEN NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN BY FRIDAY 11th MARCH 2022

No resolutions had been received.

7. TO WELCOME HEATHER ALLEN, BOGNOR REGIS BID CO-ORDINATOR, TO GIVE A PRESENTATION AND TO TAKE QUESTIONS

Apologies had been received from Heather Allen, but handouts of the Annual Report from the Bognor Regis BID AGM on 10th March 2022, had been provided in her absence, for information.

8. TO WELCOME REBECCA WHITE, BOGNOR REGIS REGENERATION BOARD EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TO GIVE A PRESENTATION AND TO TAKE QUESTIONS

The Town Mayor welcomed the Executive Director of the Bognor Regis Regeneration Board (BRRB), Ms. Rebecca White, to the meeting.

Ms. White thanked those present for the invitation to attend the meeting and explained that she had given a presentation at the Bognor Regis Town Council meeting on the 7th March, but for the benefit of the members of the public, would repeat some of the update given previously to Councillors.

For background, BRRB was formed in 2007 by Arun District Council as an open forum by part of the Regeneration Sub-Committee, with the Board evolving massively over this time, particularly since 2019. Rebecca White joined the Board in 2020, having previously held roles such as Town Clerk at Selsey Parish Council. Feedback on the role of the Regeneration Board had been gathered shortly after her appointment, with the point stressed that the Board is not a development club or political party, but instead a not-for-profit company ltd by guarantee, with the core value to make Bognor Regis a great place to live, work, study and enjoy.

Following further research, over half a billion pounds had been invested in the Town since 2007, such as at Enterprise Bognor Regis, the University of Chichester, The Regis School and Butlin's. The Town Centre, by her own admission, had not received this same level of investment. BRRB is working hard to change that and ensure more investment is poured into the Town by working in partnership with key bodies. The District Council have provided encouragement that they are invested in regeneration in the Town, by their commitment in delivering the 'Levelling Up' fund, which will bring £13 million worth of improvements to The Regis Centre. Rebecca emphasised that progress is therefore being made but understood levels of frustration at the pace.

The Regeneration Board are not a public facing group and therefore rely on Councillors, as public figures, to relay any new initiatives or problems presented by residents. The Board works closely with Bognor Regis BID, with Councillors and BID representatives' being members of the Town Centre Focus Group, to avoid duplication of work. The Focus Group have drawn up priorities for the Town, through consultative work.

Those present received copies of the strategic priorities identified to date, and were asked for any comments, including a 'top 5' priorities list from each attendee. The District Council are reviewing their Masterplan, and Rebecca White highlighted the importance of getting the strategic priorities list as finalised as possible, to ensure its initiatives have a chance of being integrated into ADC's Masterplan. Any comments are to be emailed to the Bognor Regis BID Office.

The Town Mayor invited members of the public and Councillors to ask the Executive Director of the Bognor Regis Regeneration Board questions.

A summary of the questions/statements to Ms. White included:

Q: Aside from the same people who attend the Focus Group Meetings regularly, there are a lot of other good ideas within the community. Will there be an opportunity to feed some of these ideas into the current process?

A: In answer to the question, Rebecca White explained that any strategies within the current list, were formed using various responses including from the BID's High Street Task Force and the outcomes of consultations with Councillors over the last 10 years, which are no less valid now. Rebecca further

explained there was no reason why individual stakeholders couldn't hold open meetings, feeding any ideas back to be included within the priorities list, providing these were feasible and realistic. Although accessibility and youth provision are not currently part of the strategic priorities list, there are overarching issues, which could open this up for discussion.

Q: The ideas circulated are not dissimilar from the 1990 Bognor Regis Community Forum's report. 'Bognor Regis Ltd' was an idea that came from this and the name later acquired by the Town Council, however this acquisition was never put to good use.

A: Rebecca White confirmed the BRRB would be happy to work with a community led Task Force, to help match up resources, ideas and ensure no duplications when proposing priorities for the Town, moving forward. She further stated the importance of the community having their say but stressed any ideas to come from these discussions need to be brought to fruition, without the need for constant restarting of the process, which can lead to 'consultation fatigue' and disengage the public.

Q: Concern that hotels are being turned into blocks of flats, with The Royal Hotel specifically a popular tourist hotel, having previously hosted visitors of the Bognor Birdman, which was an international event, as well as dinner dances. The Jeneses Centre had been purchased, for use by the community, which now includes a well-used boxing club. This is an example of expanding Bognor Regis and far more creative than simply turning hotels into flats.

A: The Royal Hotel was given permission to be converted into flats and this was a financially viable option. Rebecca agreed imagination was needed for future development but reminded those present that the BRRB were not the planning authority, and they are not always given the option to submit a response to these applications. She explained the Board are working on a development policy, so the public and District Council can be clear on what types of development the BRRB would like to see.

Q: Regeneration should be about the community and not the Town itself. The Town Council have some very productive Councillors and others who are not so forthcoming at attending meetings and trying to implement change and progression. If the community are behind these ideas, they can be the driving force. Sussex Enterprise Units were supposed to help local businesses make a start on the business ladder, to ascertain how successful they could be, with the intention of then moving into longer term units. Disappointed to note this scheme didn't seem to be working, with the same businesses staying in the units for years, holding up the process of enabling support for new businesses to come through and creating a stagnant system. The current lease on Grandad's Front Room comes to an end in 2023, and they may investigate moving away from the Town Centre, due to lack of availability of larger units. People come into the Town Centre to visit local businesses, such as Grandad's Front Room, who provide the Town Centre with personality and something different and it would be a shame if they had to move to the outskirts of Town.

A: Rebecca White agreed with the call for more of these units and of the sentiments expressed. She further added that business talent, such as

graduates coming from the University of Chichester, should be encouraged to stay and start their businesses here in Bognor Regis.

Q: Grandad's Front Room were included in the Federation of Small Businesses' 'Top 100 Small Businesses', the only business in West Sussex to have made the list. The passion some members of the community have for the Town should allow these individuals to be included in discussions, when reviewing the Town's future.

A: It was clarified that the BRRB are not a delivery organisation and Rebecca White suggested a discussion be held between Danny Dawes and the Town Clerk, to ascertain whether the Town Council could look to facilitate a forum for interested parties to join, like the Selsey Works Forum, enabled by Selsey Parish Council.

Q: The planning policy in the Town Centre over the years, has eroded the capabilities of smaller businesses to compete with their national chain counterparts. Increases in the number of HMOs in the Town Centre are taking people to the outskirts of the wards for their shopping, with a better balance needed.

A: Ms. White confirmed that Town Centres will contract, as online shopping becomes more favorable with consumers. The pandemic has only accelerated the process further. She commented that Bognor Regis Town Centre has not fared as negatively as other Towns, in terms of footfall and cited the Town Centre could be a focus area for the Masterplan. Liaisons will be held with the Town Clerk and Bognor Regis BID to discuss the possible formation of a 'community forum' and Rebecca confirmed she will also report to the Board feedback on the enterprise units, whilst continuing to formulate a list of realistic strategic priorities.

Q: There is seemingly not much being achieved by the Board, who appeared as a 'closed shop'. The social media accounts of the Board are not kept up to date and this doesn't imply there is much to provide an update on.

A: Rebecca agreed that social media accounts could be used more effectively but argued that these would not be platforms used to make public their priorities. It was disputed that the Board are a 'closed shop', with details such as accounts and minutes of meetings being readily available to the public. Rebecca White reminded Councilors present that they are always welcome to attend Board meetings.

Q: The Board has not always been transparent enough historically but had been far more positive recently. It has long been the Town Council's aim to improve accessibility of the Town, including beach access - are the Board supportive of this issue? There is a great need to look at Bognor Regis' Local Plan, which is vulnerable in its current state, when compared to the Masterplan, which seemed to be the priority.

A: Regarding accessibility and beach access, the BRRB are open to engaging in terms of priority for this aspect. When looking at policies, it was acknowledged that these were far more challenging to change.

Q: With the current level of consultation taking place with the surrounding parishes on this list of priorities, will consultation include schools? There are many different views on best outcomes for the area, and with many of these views being politically led, it is impossible to please everyone but plans need to begin to be implemented at some point.

A: Rebecca White confirmed consultation had begun with secondary schools in the area and liaisons have taken place with Bersted Parish Council, surrounding their vision for the Masterplan. As much as she would like to be able to consult with all the neighbouring parishes, it was emphasised that with only one member of staff working four days a week, this was far too time consuming. Cllr. Greenway offered to relay the desire for local Parish consultation and will ask for questions and ideas on the priorities to be emailed to Rebecca White for consolidation. Rebecca thanked Cllr. Greenway and reminded those present that the BID are currently surveying businesses in Bognor Regis, and so these did not need to be approached separately.

There being no other questions for the Executive Director of the Bognor Regis Regeneration Board, the Town Mayor thanked Rebecca White for attending. Ms. White declared that she would like to stay until the end of the Meeting

9. OPEN FORUM WITH QUESTIONS TO COUNCILLORS/ATTENDEES

The Town Mayor invited members of the public and Councillors to put any questions to the Council.

A member of the public drew attention to the accounts of the Town Council, received under Agenda item 4, and queried why the Bognor Pier Company Ltd. had seen such a substantial drop in turnover from 2020 to 2021.

It was also queried as to why the Town Council held such a large amount of money in Earmarked Reserves (£624,000) and General Reserves (£353,000). The individual asked why this could not be used to fund regeneration projects within the Town Centre, in partnership with the BID, BRRB, ADC etc.

He also asked the Town Council for support in increasing the footfall within the Town Centre, with the organisation of extra events to support and revitalise local businesses, particularly now the effects of Covid are beginning to settle. With adult weekends at Butlin's recently starting again, this has proved that events, even hosted by a single venue, can do wonders for raising the footfall in the Town Centre.

Another member of the public commented on the poor footfall figure of the 'East End' of Bognor Regis, stating that it is not as well looked after as the rest of the Town Centre. With several attempts made to ADC to fix broken curbs, and clean up chewing gum on the streets etc, unfortunately, nothing has been done to rectify the issues, which are making the 'East End' an undesirable location for shoppers. It was questioned whether, with such high

reserves in situ, the Town Council may investigate helping fund the clean-up of this previously well-respected area of the Town.

Other areas raised, which currently give a poor impression of the Town were Station Road, including the Euronics frontage, visibly empty shops which those present were in agreement should be covered, or used for artwork, as is the case in the Arcade.

There was also concern that not enough people are reporting when an area is covered in graffiti or in disrepair, and with the Queen's Platinum Jubilee coming up, now would be the perfect opportunity to ensure the Town is in a presentable state.

This was also the case for litter, particularly outside the Railway Station, with Biffa seemingly not undertaking their regular cleans. A Councillor explained the 'Things You Can See' campaign, which encouraged everyone to clean, de-weed and litter pick outside their own premises. The sense of community and pride this would bring could be astonishing and would make such a difference to the presentation of the Town.

Those present spoke of the desire to have a facility whereby all the issues discussed could be reported, within a central database. With six dual-hatted Councillors in attendance, it was suggested these Councillors raise these issues with ADC, and look to ascertain the current cleaning regimes, from the regulatory, frequency and baseline so everyone is clear on the levels of cleanliness that should be being achieved. A BRTC and ADC Councillor present confirmed she would email the District Council to ask for more action to be taken on litter.

It was accepted that the Safer Arun Partnership website provided a useful tool for reporting litter, with a 'report it button' and mention was made that a poster could be made for displaying in shop windows, to advertise the best port of contact for reporting such problems. It was explained that the ADC Cleansing team do provide feedback on any reports made, through their Facebook page.

With no other questions being put forward, the Town Mayor thanked all those present for attending.

The Meeting closed at 8.24pm

Annual Report of the Town Council

Good evening everyone and thank you for joining us for Bognor Regis Town Council's Annual Town Meeting of Electors. We are delighted to be here at the Jeneses Centre and to be able to address you all face to face again, after an uncertain couple of years.

Those of you familiar with our Annual Elector's Meetings will know what to expect from this evening, but for those of you who are perhaps attending for the first time, we look forward to hearing your views and contributions over the course of the evening and hope that you find this evening both informative and interesting and of course, this is your meeting, so we welcome your input as the opportunities arise.

What a very strange year it's been. We are of course thankful that our country, and the world, seems to be recovering from the onslaught of Covid-19, that has plagued our lives for the past two years. I for one have been in awe of the outstanding efforts of our NHS and key workers who have kept our community going. From the bands of volunteers at the various vaccination centres, to those delivering food to the most vulnerable and to the emergency services who have worked tirelessly to keep us all safe, I think I speak on behalf of all my fellow Councillors and staff here at Bognor Regis Town Council when I say thank you, your efforts in our local community and nationally, have got us to the point where we can be here today, in person.

It would not feel right to continue tonight's welcome, without mentioning the horrific events unfolding in Ukraine. What civilians, the Ukrainian army, and the many heroic volunteers are having to endure in their own country is beyond comprehension and whilst we are lucky enough to have the freedom to be here tonight, we must think of and send all our love and prayers to the people of Ukraine. Their suffering is unimaginable. We send them all our love, strength and hope for an end to this outrageous war.

It has been an absolute honour to have served as your Mayor over the past year, and although Covid put a halt to many events early on in my tenure, I've thoroughly enjoyed getting out and about in Bognor Regis, at the events I have been lucky enough to attend.

It has been particularly pleasing to have been invited to the opening of many new and expanding businesses in the Town, including 'Dream Fitness Gym' in Durban Way, 'Cabana Verde' coffee shop in York Road, the re-opening of TAO restaurant, and new premises of 'The Dog and Duck' in the High Street and most recently, 'Bonito' Lounge in London Road, to name a few. This handful of examples of some of the new business opportunities being afforded to Bognor Regis, shows what a progressive and bright future the Town has!

It's extremely exciting to me to witness the amount of regeneration work now getting underway in Bognor Regis, after years of planning. None more so than the project now underway on the Place St Maur, to turn this previously open and bare space into an exciting useable plaza area with modern architecture, water features including shallow pools for water play, an area to host events, coastal planting and new seating. With the transformation due to be completed in the coming months, the Place St Maur will, I'm sure, become a real 'jewel' in the crown of Bognor Regis.

Another exciting project already in the first phase of improvements is the 'levelling up' project at The Regis Centre. The upgrades planned for The Regis Centre will allow for the Alexandra Theatre to put on 'bigger' shows, provide more comfortable facilities, and therefore increase the number of people using both the Centre, which is fantastic for community groups, and the Theatre, all of which means good news for our Town.

With the recent improvements to the seafront bandstand, and works imminent of the Sunken Gardens, it's safe to say the future looks bright for our 'Sunnier Bognor Regis'.

One of the many highlights of my year as Mayor, was getting the opportunity to show off our hometown to the High Sheriff of West Sussex, Mr Neil Hart. I was honoured when he accepted my invitation of a 'quick stop' tour of just some of the best parts of Bognor Regis, made all the more special by his visit coinciding with Armistice Day, which the High Sheriff and Mrs Hart joined me to commemorate outside the Town Hall's War Memorial. As well as visiting Butlin's, our wonderful seafront and Hotham Park, we also visited some buildings of heritage in the Town Centre, as well as important sites such as our newly revamped Railway Station and the historic Picturedrome Cinema. Having local business owners join us along the way made the visit one to remember for me and hopefully, for the High Sheriff too.

It has been extremely humbling to have been given the chance to attend numerous charity events and the opportunity to see where the much-needed funds are being used. Back in the summer, I met some fabulous people at Studio One in Queensway, for a 'head shave' of one brave volunteer, raising money for St Wilfrid's Hospice. It was great to meet Paul, to hear his story and understand why St Wilfrid's Hospice meant so much to him and his family.

In August, I attended a charity walk for 'Forward Facing', a charity that provides activities and events for families suffering long-term illness and bereavement in the Sussex area. Walking from Bognor Regis pier to Brighton pier it was a pleasure to 'rally the troops' and set them on their way.

Other amazing charities I've had the pleasure of learning more about include Dementia UK, who performed a 'charity dip' in Bognor Regis' unforgiving, chilly waters during October and of course, Pam Evans' annual Christmas Lights Switch-On from her front garden in Felpham, which every year gets bigger and better, raising more funds for the amazing work of St Wilfrid's Hospice.

We are extremely lucky to have so many charitable organisations and community minded people here in Bognor Regis. Long may these events and fundraisers continue!

Looking ahead to the warmer months, Bognor Regis Town Council are hoping to bring back our classic events for the 2022 season, after a Covid hiatus. Starting on the 1st May will be the return of our 'Sunday Afternoon Concerts' at Hotham Park, so do bring a picnic and be transported through a variety of music genres. The ever-popular 'Drive through Time' Motor Gala returns in July, and an exciting programme is currently in the works for every parents summer holiday saviour – the 'Funshine Days'. Into the autumn months, please make a note in your diaries of the classic 'Proms in the Park' event on the 10th September and of course, our Christmas Lights Switch-On taking place on 26th November. Please do keep an eye on the Bognor Regis Town Council 'Events' page on our website and do follow us on Facebook!

This year as we all know, marks the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and with that, Bognor Regis Town Council look forward to joining in the celebrations. On the evening of 2nd June we will be lighting our beacon, as part of this historic bank holiday weekend. More than 1,500 beacons will be lit throughout the United Kingdom, Channel Islands, Isle of Man and UK Overseas Territories, and one in each of the capital cities of Commonwealth countries in recognition of The Queen's long and selfless service. As well as the beacon lighting, our award-winning Town Crier, Mrs Jane Smith, will be reading aloud the official Town Crier Proclamation for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations, along with 145 other Criers worldwide. We are extremely proud of Jane's achievements since she was implemented into the Town Crier role in 2017, and the amazing honour of having her 'cry' chosen as the official Town Crier proclamation for such an occasion, is an amazing testament to her.

My Mayor's Charities for my term in office have been the very dear to my heart 'Rox Music & Arts Charity' and 'HFT', who support people with learning disabilities, to live the best life possible. Unfortunately, I have not been able to hold as many fundraisers as I would have hoped, to raise money for my charities this year, and with the cancellation of my Civic Service in November, due to Covid, opportunities to receive much needed donations have been limited. I would therefore be extremely grateful if you would like to make a donation, however small, by visiting their respective websites or by getting in touch with me via the Town Council Offices, at the Town Hall. Thank you very much in advance.

Lastly, I would like to thank my fellow Councillors, Town Council staff and the wonderful residents, business owners and charitable organisations here in Bognor Regis, you all make our Town the fantastic place it is and it has been an honour to serve you as Mayor this year.

Thank you all for your time and for coming here tonight, we look forward to hearing from you through the evening.

Policy and Resources Budget Report 2022/2023

I am delighted to present this year's Budget Report to the Annual Electors.

Our current total Precept for the 2022/2023 year was set at £969,817, a 2.26% increase in the Precept, equivalent to a 2.7% increase for a Band D property, or a £3.47 per annum increase, given the reduction in the Tax Base.

The Town Council has also prudently managed to increase our Reserves which provide for "rainy day" events and provide for Economic Development to allow for investments to increase our income when, and if, opportunities arise, which are much needed as Central Government funding continues to decline. The Reserves also exist to provide for capital expenditure, as required, when plant and equipment requires replacement.

One of the most noticeable activities your taxes fund is the Town Force team who maintain the beautiful floral displays across the Town, clear graffiti and keep our Town tidy and attractive, both for us and for visitors to our Town. Town Force also provide income to fund their activities by providing services to nearby parishes and private customers. Without their tireless work the Town would soon become a much less desirable place to live and visit.

We continue to be proud of our partnerships with outside bodies through which we contribute to CCTV, the seafront lights, the 2-hour free parking initiative, and the Business Wardens, all of which are of great benefit to our Town.

The Picturedrome, Bognor Regis's historic cinema, which is owned by the Town Council continues its impressive development under its independent operator's management team. Following on from the completion of the fourth screen and its Café, decorative works and adaptations to improve access from its original entrance are nearing completion and the Cinema remains an outstanding asset to the Town's cultural scene.

An important activity your taxes fund is Grant Aid - this is the mechanism through which Bognor Regis Town Council distributes funding to local organisations to help them carry out their activities to the benefit of residents and local businesses. To illustrate the nature of this support, distribution of funds to applicants as diverse as Citizens Advice, Girlguiding, Making Theatre Gaining Skills, My Sister's House, St Wilfrid's Hospice, Bognor Shopmobility, and many others will be made this year as well as event support for the 2022 Jubilee Street Party on the Prom, and the Southdowns Folk Festival. The Town Council has budgeted £46,000 for this financial year's annual Grant Aid awards with applications invited from July.

In addition to providing financial assistance to outside bodies to hold their events, the Town Council fund our own events to enable local people to attend them free of charge. These include Funshine Days, Proms in the Park, Drive Through Time, and celebrations for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee this June, for which the Town Council have also signed up to the Queen's Green Canopy and will be spending £5,000 on commemorative tree planting. We are also honoured to be organising the National Town Crier's Guild Championship, which will be hosted here in Bognor Regis this summer.

In addition to organising free events, Bognor Regis Town Council also allocate funds to promoting the town as a whole to visitors, to help boost the economy and therefore helping our businesses. One such way in which this is achieved is through the Town Council's annual investment is adorning the Town with Christmas Illuminations. These displays are always so well received, with praise given about the quality of the decorations. The Town Council will, once again, be funding the Christmas Illuminations this festive season with displays that it is hoped will be even more spectacular than ever this year.