



# **BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL**

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## **MINUTES AND REPORT OF THE TOWN MEETING OF THE ELECTORS OF BOGNOR REGIS HELD ON MONDAY 13<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2023**

### **PRESENT (BRTC)**

Cllr. J. Barrett - Town Mayor (in the chair)  
Cllr. J. Brooks  
Cllr. S. Goodheart  
Cllr. M. Stanley  
Cllr. Mrs. J. Warr  
Cllr. B. Waterhouse  
Cllr. P. Woodall  
(Note: Cllrs. Brooks, Goodheart, Stanley and Mrs. Warr are also Arun District Councillors)

### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Mrs. J. Davis (Assistant Clerk)  
Mrs. R. Vervecken (Civic & Office Manager)  
Dr. A. Chapman (National Piers Society)  
9 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 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022  
Audited Accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022  
Proposed Expenditure for the year 2023-24  
Schedule of Councillors' Attendance at Meetings

### ***The Meeting opened at 7pm***

#### **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. Councillors present introduced themselves. Apologies for absence were noted from Cllr. Miss. C. Needs. Apologies from Mrs. G. Frost (Town Clerk) were also noted.

**2. TO APPROVE AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN MEETING OF ELECTORS HELD ON MONDAY 14<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2022 AND ANY MATTERS ARISING**

The Minutes of the Town Meeting of Electors held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022 were considered, agreed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor as presiding Chairman.

A member of the public requested an answer in relation to the accounts of the Town Council for 2021-2022, specifically why the Bognor Pier Company Ltd. had seen such a substantial drop in turnover, which he had queried at the Annual Town Meeting of Electors on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2022 (Min. 9. refers). The Assistant Clerk responded to say that, in the absence of the Town Clerk, an answer would be sought following her return, and emailed directly to the member of the public.

**3. TO RECEIVE THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNCIL**

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

A member of the public gave a vote of thanks to Cllr. Barrett for his year as Town Mayor.

**4. TO RECEIVE THE ACCOUNTS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL YEAR ENDING 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2022 AND BUDGET FOR 2023-2024**

The Town Council's Accounts to year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 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 CONSIDER RESOLUTIONS OF WHICH WRITTEN NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN BY FRIDAY 10<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2023**

The following **Resolution** had been received:

**5.1. *This Annual Meeting of Electors***

***Urges Arun District Council to treat the proposed improvements to the Regis Centre theatre (which are not regeneration) as the first stage of a regeneration process that will take in the rest of the site. The Hothampton Car Park site and other areas (such as a new Medical Centre, The Pier and the local fishing industry) to achieve cultural, economic and social regeneration;***

***Calls on Arun Council to engage with those who submitted regeneration ideas at Arun's request and others to examine their ideas and sources of inward private and other investment in this process;***

***Calls on Arun Council to undertake the public consultation it promised concerning Bognor's Regeneration;***

***Calls on Bognor Regis Town Council also to adopt this Motion and to undertake a Consultation if Arun does not.***

**Proposed** Mr. Cosgrove **Seconded** Cllr. Brooks.

Mr. Cosgrove spoke for his Motion. In his opinion, the District Council had not delivered true regeneration for the Town, in more than 20 years. He cited historical consultations, including the 2003/2004 Bognor Regis Regeneration Strategy and the 2014 proposals by St. Modwen, who retracted their proposals, after not making any progress with ADC, in delivering their strategy. The Leader of the District Council invited proposals to be considered in 2021, of which a large number were received, but in Mr. Cosgrove's opinion, nothing had been progressed, with many ideas simply dismissed. The Regis Centre 'Levelling Up' fund, was put forward by Mr. Cosgrove as another example of unsubstantial regeneration, with only approximately 14 extra seats being provided in the auditorium. He believed this would do nothing in ensuring larger acts are bought to the Town, considering £12-14 million would be spent on the project. Concerns were raised over the Premier Inn Hotel proposals and the need for 'proper' regeneration at locations such as the Pier being emphasised. Mr. Cosgrove asked those present for support in conveying to ADC that real, substantial, income-generating regeneration was long overdue in Bognor Regis, with the current plans in place, not sufficient in helping to achieve this.

As a seconder, Cllr. Brooks, also spoke for the Motion.

Cllr. Brooks told those present that he had been a resident in this Town since the 1960's, and that for years, Bognor Regis had been promised regeneration. He stated that it was his belief that of the 12 projects submitted to the Leader of ADC in 2021, none had been seriously considered. Of these projects, one of the proposals dismissed related to beach and sea access, which had long been desired for Bognor Regis. He concurred with Mr. Cosgrove's feelings on the disappointment of the small increase in seating for the Regis Centre and cited further the lack of a large community hall within the Town's boundaries, which, he stated, most other towns and parishes possess. Cllr. Brooks asked those present for support in urging ADC to relook at the presentations submitted, as potential sites and ideas for future regeneration, as there is still plenty of land to develop and enhance.

Considerable discussion on this Motion followed, with many agreeing that the regeneration schemes proposed for Bognor Regis, have not been good enough. Some Councillors present highlighted that although these schemes may not be quite what is required, it should be acknowledged that they are at least making some improvements from what was already in place, which was a real lack of any regeneration.

Other comments were made regarding 'consultation fatigue' and the need for ADC to 'get on' with proposals which are going forward, whilst continuing to look at 'key areas' in the Town. Regarding the plan for the Premier Inn Hotel on the site of the Old Fire Station (Clarence Road), those present were keen to ensure the public were consulted fully on the proposals, at an early point whereby changes could still be proposed and implemented.

A vote was taken on all aspects of the Motion, and the result was 6 in favour, and 0 against.

Accordingly, the Resolution was **RESOLVED**.

A courtesy Non-electors vote was taken, 9 in favour, 0 against and 1 abstention.

**6. TO WELCOME THE HONORARY SECRETARY, DR ANYA CHAPMAN FROM THE NATIONAL PIERS SOCIETY, TO GIVE A PRESENTATION ON '2023 THE YEAR OF THE PIER'**

Dr. Chapman thanked the Town Council for the invitation to attend and give a presentation. She advised that the National Piers Society was established in 1979, as a national charity to protect and promote seaside piers, and now has in the region of 1,000 members. With the popular 'Pier of the Year' awards in full swing and other trips organised for its members, the future of piers in the UK, is now far more promising. There are currently 63 piers around the country, with it being nearly 30 years since the loss of the last pier. For 2023, the charity is partnering with 'Year of the Coast', with the 'Year of the Pier' acting as the main attraction for what will be a celebration of our coasts, with many seaside towns holding events, between now and November 2023, to mark this important occasion, including some online events. Another exciting exhibition taking place this year is the 'Piers on Poster', which is free to attend, and will feature an array of vintage posters of UK piers. A commemorative book will soon be released, and a new initiative called the 'Piers Passport' encourages their members to visit as many piers as possible around the country.

Dr. Chapman stated that Bognor Regis' pier was 157 years old and is to be featured in their upcoming book 'The Piers that Never Were', with 3 piers apparently never coming to fruition in Bognor Regis. She further advised that Bognor Regis Pier Society had been contacted on a few occasions, but sadly had not yet signed up to participate in the 'Year of the Pier' events. She emphasised the importance of the support of towns such as Bognor Regis, with this initiative, and encouraged Bognor Regis to reconsider partaking in this celebration of our piers, if at all possible.

Following the presentation, Dr. Chapman asked if there were any questions.

One Councillor present queried whether there were any local examples she knew of, where the pier's structure had helped with implementing beach access? Dr. Chapman stated that this had been achieved in Southport, who had incorporated a ramp, halfway down the pier to allow for access to the beach.

A member of the public confirmed he would speak with the pier's current owner, to ascertain whether Bognor Regis could and would be willing to take part in the 'Year of the Pier' initiative.

The Town Mayor thanked Dr. Chapman for her presentation.

## **7. BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL'S PROGRAMME OF EVENTS FOR THE YEAR**

The Chairman of the Events, Promotion and Leisure Committee, Cllr. Brooks gave a brief report on some of the upcoming events planned for 2023.

### **Book Day - Hotham Park**

Taking place on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April, the day which returns as a 'standalone' event this year, will feature a 'giant' Easter bunny and fox, interactive Easter trail, face painting, 'Bubblemania', laser tag, circus skills and much more.

### **Live-screen broadcast of the Coronation of King Charles III – Hotham Park**

The Chairman was delighted to advise that the Events Officer had obtained £10,000 worth of additional funding for this event from the National Lottery, to enable two days' worth of entertainment, over Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> May. This will include a family film showing after the Coronation, as well as 'The Big Lunch' and a host of other activities, with further plans in place for a special lighting of the Town Council's beacon to commemorate this historic event.

## **8. 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 asked Councillors to consider funding summer activities for children within the Town, using Councillor Ward Allocations which were used, in the past, to fund playschemes. On this issue, another Member present suggested that any Ward Allocations which have not been used by Councillors with poor attendance at meetings, should be allocated to more 'present' Councillors to make use of within their Wards, rather than being swallowed into the Town Council's reserves.

In response, a Councillor stated that Councillor Ward Allocations had not been included within the Town Council's budget for the 2023/2024 municipal year.

The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee was asked about a grant to the Pier Company, in relation to the Picturedrome Cinema, reflected in the Town Council accounts year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, which were reported earlier in the Meeting. The Chairman of the Committee advised that he would source the relevant information and email the member of the public directly.

A Councillor had questions which came from the earlier discussed Motion, specifically regarding the recently completed Place St Maur development and its effectiveness for holding outdoor events. One dual-hatted Councillor advised that all but one question were for ADC to answer, with one to be directed to WSCC. The Assistant Clerk clarified that the issue of suitability for holding outdoor events has been questioned and chased up on numerous occasions. Town Council Officers have been assured by ADC that answers to these questions will be made available to Members at the Meeting of the Events, Promotion and Leisure Committee taking place next Monday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

There were many comments regarding anti-social behaviour and graffiti around the Town. It was concurred by those present that the Town Council should consider using the homepage of their website to signpost those wanting to report graffiti, perhaps using the 'What 3 Words' app. Although Bognor Regis BID and WSCC have engines for reporting this, it was felt that many would approach the Town Council in the first instance for information. With other comments suggesting providing a specific wall for graffiti artists to use, Cllr. Greenway (WSCC Councillor for Bersted - present in the public gallery) advised that this idea is being considered by the Bognor Regis Youth & Community Centre. He further advised that if the Town Council encouraged residents to report graffiti, it would mean areas outside of the Wards would also be reported through the Town Council. He suggested signposting to ADC in the first instance. The above comments were noted.

The presence of youth provision was highlighted as an important vehicle for deterring anti-social behaviour. The Town Council was praised for investing extra funding and research into ensuring the continuation and improvement of youth provision in the Town. A member of the public commented that the youth groups desperately need this extra funding and support to allow for more staff and more sessions to be held, to get potential young offenders off the streets and doing something they can really engage in.

Discussion turned to the Town Council's 2023 Newsletter, which had recently been distributed to all households within the five Wards. A member of the public commented on the font, which he felt was too small for some to read. It was suggested that the Town Council could consider seeking sponsorship for next year's Newsletter, to help offset the cost of producing and delivering the newsletters, whilst offering interested businesses the chance of invaluable promotion to residents all around the Town.

Another member of the public commented on the publicity of Bognor Regis online, and particularly through YouTube and other 'vlogging' sites. He warned that with many people using these platforms to look at potential holiday destinations, Bognor Regis should have a more active and positive presence, particularly as a seaside resort, wanting to attract tourists.

Other questions raised related to the Picturedrome Cinema, and the ongoing works. A Councillor confirmed that an update had been requested at a recent Town Council Meeting, and with new resources being put into finishing the improvements promptly, a formal answer concerning deadlines will be coming imminently, through the Town Clerk.

The last subject raised for discussion again related to anti-social behavior and in particular, problematic roads within the Wards. A member of the public shared details of a local petition that had been started, seeking to improve traffic conditions and speeding issues experienced in Linden Road (from Town Cross Avenue), which was having a negative impact on residents of these and surrounding roads. The petition sought to implement CCTV, one-way systems and speed bumps to deter anti-social behaviour, speeding and the immense flow of traffic these roads, and their residents, have to endure. A dual-hatted Councillor, advised that he was aware of the problems in Linden Road, having recently met with Officers from WSCC and WSCC Councillor Francis Oppler, to assess what could be done. Unfortunately, it would seem that speed bumps are not a viable option, due to buses using this route. The same Councillor shared that another meeting was due to take place, and Cllr. Woodall, as a Councillor for the Ward in question, asked to be invited to hear any updates. The member of the public who brought this to the attention of the meeting, spoke of neighbours helping and supporting each other when faced with verbal abuse by drivers passing through, with some, particularly those with children, even choosing to move home due to the terrible impact this was having on the community. The Assistant Clerk invited the member of the public to email her directly, with a copy of the petition, so that this and the examples given by residents could be shared with the relevant Committees and partnership agencies.

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

***The Meeting closed at 8.45pm***

## **Annual Report of the Town Council**

Good evening and thank you for joining us for Bognor Regis Town Council's Annual Town Meeting of Electors. This is your Meeting, and we look forward to hearing your views and contributions over the course of the evening.

It's been another challenging year, nationally and internationally, as we've continued to watch in despair, the ever-unfolding conflict in Ukraine. Now a year since the invasion began, our thoughts and prayers remain with those who have so sadly been caught up in this war, including the many Ukrainian civilians who have been displaced from their homes. Back here, the cost-of-living crisis has hit hard for so many families up and down the country, including right here in Bognor Regis and we must continue to do all we can to support our local charities and Foodbanks, in helping them to provide for those so desperately in need.

With that in mind, it's been my absolute privilege to have supported 4Sight Vision Support and in particular the Bognor Regis Foodbank, as my chosen Mayoral charities for this year. Through 'Wellbeing Walks', 'Tea and Coffee Afternoons' and 'Food Drives', the Mayoress and I have met many of the wonderful people who have rallied to provide local people with the increasing assistance that has been required over these turbulent months. It has been an honour to play a very small part in helping to collect food and raise money for these charities, which are so deserving of our support. We are very lucky to have many charities and organisations locally, all of which are deserving of our gratitude. On behalf of my fellow Town Councillors, we thank each and every one of them, for their vital work and tireless efforts in supporting the people of Bognor Regis.

I have thoroughly enjoyed serving as your Mayor this year, and being able to meet some of the wonderful people, who make our Town the fantastic place it is. It is nearly impossible to choose just a few events to bring to your attention, out of the many I've had the honour of attending, but some that spring to mind immediately include the Town's very first 'Town Crier Competition - Guild Championship', held back in June, which, coinciding with the Town's Armed Forces Day event, provided a wonderful backdrop of colour and vibrancy to the seafront, and welcomed Town Crier's from around the country - and even Canada, to 'Sunniest' Bognor Regis! Armed Forces Day and Remembrance Sunday were of course, poignant occasions and it was wonderful to see Clarence Road filled to the brim with residents paying their respects to our fallen heroes.

The Town Council organised 'Drive through Time' Motor Gala and 'Funshine Days' proved as popular as ever, and the Mayoress and I certainly had a tricky job trying to choose one winner from the outstanding sandcastle's built, as part of the activities!

It's been lovely to interact with the younger members of our community, through visiting Scout and Guiding groups, to give out awards and judging competitions, to attending school assemblies to hand out School Council badges.



Also, our annual Bognor Regis in Bloom Schools Vegetable Growing competition for which I had the delight of visiting South Bersted School to see their wonderful French bean plants, which they showed us with such pride and enthusiasm!

The Town Council continues to support the youth provision available within the Town, through donations to various youth groups over the past twelve months. As a Council, we are committed to continuing to provide this support in the coming year, to ensure the youngest generation is well represented within the services on offer in Bognor Regis.

Visits to Care Homes, the Sunday Afternoon Concerts at Hotham Park through the summer as well as performances by the West Sussex Guitar Club and Edwin James Festival Choir to name a few, have also been extremely enjoyable. The Bognor Regis Carnival Association hosted another extremely well-attended Carnival, to the theme of Her Late Majesty's Platinum Jubilee, in addition to the 'Party on the Prom', as part of the Jubilee celebrations.

Whilst 2022 was meant to be a year of Royal celebrations, with the occasion of the Late Queen celebrating 70 years of Service and Duty, the jubilant scenes of June turned to National Mourning in September, with the sad passing of Her Majesty. Our Town certainly did itself proud with the outpouring of emotion that came with this, including the hundreds of residents who came to the Town Hall to write in the Book of Condolence, and those who lined the streets to pay their respects as well as celebrate the new King, at the Proclamation of Accession, outside the War Memorial. It was an honour to take the Book of Condolence round to local Care and Nursing Homes, to allow residents, who were not able to make the trip to the Town Hall, to share their memories, thoughts and feelings on the life of Queen Elizabeth II and of the impact she'd had on them.

As we look ahead to the Coronation of King Charles III, on 6<sup>th</sup> May, there will be plenty of chances to celebrate this historic event right here in Bognor Regis, including a big screen broadcast of the Coronation at Hotham Park, with plenty in the planning to make this a wonderful event! Back for 2023 is the ever-popular 'Book Day'. Taking place on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April, this year's theme will be celebrating Easter and the joys of Spring. Proms in the Park takes place on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> June and Drive through Time will be taking over West Park once again, on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> July. With the 'Hampshire Avenue Fun Week' featuring free play activities for children towards the end of July, Funshine Days through the Summer holidays, the exciting addition of a Halloween themed event in October and of course our usual Christmas Lights Switch-On in November, 2023 promises an action packed programme of events, all put on for free by your Town Council.

There are plenty of regeneration projects about to take place, including the upcoming major redevelopment of the Regis Centre and Alexandra Theatre, which will provide the Town with a high quality, modern arts venue for the people of Bognor Regis and visitors to the area.

Plans include a complete refit of the Regis Centre and Alexandra Theatre, enhancing and improving the facilities, thus attracting larger and more far-reaching shows.

With many local community groups also already using the Centre, for regular meets and hosting of free activities, the improvements will undoubtedly increase footfall and use of the building itself.

Along with plans for the construction, by Whitbread PLC, of a new 102-bedroom Premier Inn hotel on the south-eastern corner of the Regis Centre car park site, coming to fruition, this important tourist spot within our Town will most certainly be seeing large scale redevelopments.

It truly has been a year of memorable moments, and I'm extremely proud to have served as First Citizen of our special Town. I would like to thank everybody who has invited me to attend their premises opening, gala night, concert, charity fundraiser and every other type of event the Mayoress and I have been lucky enough to have been a part of.

As well as my two Mayoral charities, Bognor Regis Foodbank and 4Sight Vision Support, who have been tremendous in collaborating with me this year, I would like to also pay special thanks to my Mayor's Chaplain, Major Matt Butler, who has been a steadfast support and who as well as contributing so much in his role at The Salvation Army, has also supported the Town Council through leading the Civic Service, Remembrance Sunday Service and the other unforeseen events which took place following the death of Her Late Majesty.

Lastly, I would like to thank my fellow Councillors, Town Council staff and the residents, business owners and charitable organisations here in Bognor Regis, who make our Town a better place for us all.

Thank you for coming tonight. This is your meeting, and we look forward to hearing from you as the opportunities present themselves, throughout this evening.

## **Policy and Resources Budget Report 2023/2024**

It's been a challenging year for everyone as we face the cost-of-living crisis. Your Town Council has focused on presenting a budget that will minimise the impact on residents whilst ensuring the future financial stability of our Town whilst maintaining all the important activities the council funds for the residents of Bognor Regis

As a Town Council we will make sizeable contributions to some extremely important partnerships such as the Bognor Regis Seafront Lights, our Town Centre Business Wardens, the 2 Hour Free Parking Scheme and CCTV all of which are of great benefit to our Town.

We continue to support our young people, providing funding to local youth work initiatives as well as planning to once again, offer a variety of free entertainment during the summer months both by running our own events and by providing funding to outside bodies to run their events.

Town Force will continue to work to improve the look and feel of Bognor Regis for both residents and visitors by removing graffiti and rubbish around the town as well as providing income by providing services to nearby parishes and private businesses. Without their tireless work the Town would soon become a much less desirable place to live and visit.

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. As refurbishment nears completion it is rapidly becoming the star in Bognor Regis's cultural life.

The ceremonial turning on of the Christmas lights, by the Mayor in the Town centre attended by many residents, despite the rain, illustrates the power of working together with local business and the wider community, and the Town Council was proud to continue to play their part by supplying the Christmas Lights, which were warmly received and will be back again this year.

Details on the budget can be found on the Town Council website.