



BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

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MINUTES AND REPORT OF THE TOWN MEETING OF THE ELECTORS OF BOGNOR REGIS HELD ON MONDAY 18th MARCH 2013

PRESENT (BRTC)

Cllr Mrs E Anderson - Town Mayor (in the chair)
Cllr J Brooks
Cllr A Cunard
Cllr Mrs S Daniells
Cllr Ms K Davis
Cllr P Dillon
Cllr D Edwards
Cllr T Gardiner
Cllr D Meagher
Cllr R Nash
Cllr W Toovey
Cllr Mrs J Warr
Cllr P Wells

(Note: Cllrs Brooks, Cunard, Mrs Daniells, Edwards, Nash, Mrs Warr and Wells are also Arun District Councillors and Cllr Wells is a West Sussex County Councillor)

IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs G Frost (Town Clerk)
Mrs S Holmes (Minutes Secretary)
Mrs R Hambleton (Minutes Secretary)
One representative of the press
(Approximately) 130 members of the public of which around 53 were Electors

COPIES OF DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE FOR THE PUBLIC

Notice and Agenda for the Meeting
Minutes of the Town Meeting of Electors held on 2nd April 2012
Audited Accounts to 31st March 2012
Proposed Expenditure for the year 2013/2014
Schedule of Councillors' Attendance at Meetings

The Meeting opened at 7.05 pm

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

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Town Councillors in attendance introduced themselves.

There were apologies received from Bersted County Councillor S McDougall, Nigel Lynn (Chief Executive at A.D.C.), Tim Seddon (St Modwen) and 13 District Councillors.

The Mayor explained that it was the intention to record the content of the meeting if those in

attendance were in agreement. Following a show of hands, with the majority being in favour of the proposal, the meeting continued.

2. TO APPROVE AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN MEETING OF ELECTORS HELD ON MONDAY 2nd APRIL 2012 AND ANY MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the Town Meeting of Electors held on Monday 2nd April 2012 were considered and 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 her report - copy attached to Minutes.

4. TO RECEIVE THE ACCOUNTS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL YEAR ENDING 31st MARCH 2012 AND BUDGET FOR 2013-2014

The Chairman of the Policy & Resources Committee, Cllr A Cunard, reported on the Accounts of the Town Council to year ending 31st March 2012, which had been circulated.

As the Mayor had explained, it is a tough time at the moment as A.D.C had been burdened with the whole costs of Council Tax as the help received from Government in previous years, which helped to pay for those who did not make Council Tax contributions, was no longer available.

Bognor Regis Town Council had agreed a precept increase of 3.78% (£3.70 per annum for a Band D property). This was to ensure the continued delivery of the Town Council's services which included the Free Parking Scheme and Grants to various projects/organizations important to the Town. With services being pushed down to local level it was difficult to predict what the coming year would bring. The costs of the refurbishments to the Picturedrome Cinema did not impact on the precept increase.

A member of the public questioned where the costs of the Picturedrome refurbishments came from and why the accounts for the Bognor Pier Co. were not available.

As the Cinema Operator Cllr Cunard declared his interest and referred the question to Cllr Nash, as the Vice-Chairman of the Policy & Resources Committee, for a response. Cllr Nash reported that the accounts were available on request from the Town Council Offices and that the approximate £200,000 cost of the refurbishment undertaken so far had come from a building fund previously put aside by the Town Council.

There were no further questions.

The Accounts were duly noted and accepted.

5. TO CONSIDER RESOLUTIONS OF WHICH WRITTEN NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN BY FRIDAY 15th MARCH 2013

5.1 The following **Resolution** had been received:

'REGENERATION: This Meeting considers the current Regeneration Plans proposed by Arun District Council and St Modwens to be deficient in that they lack a viable and imaginative cornerstone, a landmark project which could attract trade, visitors and attention to the Town;

Believes the intention to focus on a multiplex cinema is short-sighted and that the best option will be to develop the Alexandra Theatre into a 750-seater centre for theatrical and musical excellence, working with the University of Chichester;

Establishes an Electors Commission, open to all electors to attend, to meet as required, to consider and to vote upon, a viable and improved Regeneration Plan. The Commission will:

- *ask the Mayor to chair its meetings; otherwise elect its own chair from time to time*
- *organise its own administration so as not to burden the Council*
- *pay its own way*
- *organise its proceedings as it sees fit*
- *publish its proceedings to the Town Council and as necessary*
- *invite, cooperate/liaise with other bodies as appropriate*
- *seek funding sources for regeneration projects*
- *maintain political balance*
- *report to the next Electors Meeting on progress.*

Proposed by J Cosgrove

This Resolution was debated at some length by the Meeting. Comments included: What other seaside Towns such as Margate had achieved with their regeneration; the Picturedrome will suffer as a result of the new Multiplex; Electors should be given an opportunity to say what they would like and have it, developers should not get what they want; Bognor Regis has been betrayed with these Regeneration Plans; B.R.T.C. is listening to Electors and working hard with W.S.C.C. and A.D.C.; applaud for Picturedrome refurbishment; Bognor Regis had 6 theatres at one time now they have all been taken away; The University of Chichester may literally take over this 750 seat suggested theatre; B.R.T.C. recently resolved a vote of no confidence in A.D.C.'s regeneration plans; a letter from the Chief Executive at A.D.C. was read out regarding B.R.T.C. being entitled to a view on the St. Modwen regeneration proposals and equally, Arun District Councillors are entitled to their view on A.D.C. owned land; Regeneration plans will not work without parking and all parties involved have agreed that the parking problems have to be solved; Town Councillors who are District Councillors have been involved with all Regeneration discussions; what will be the benefit if the developers make a mistake; a 750 seater theatre would be costly and needs the population figures to sustain it; a multipurpose theatre hall was suggested as an alternative; University want to invest in Bognor Regis and would make a 750 theatre work, it would be a partnership; Bognor Regis is an entertainment Town; Caution needed to be taken with this resolution, a 750 seat theatre is a point of view not necessarily what is wanted by all; setting up an Electors Commission would be complex; suggestion that the proposed resolution should be split up.

A question was asked regarding a resolution passed at last year's Annual Electors Meeting and how the Town Council would move this new resolution forward in a positive way. Cllr Wells reported on the progress made with that particular resolution and commented that it was taking time but the matter was still a work in progress.

Following concerns over the details included within the resolution it was suggested that the first three lines of the resolution be voted on by electors, the remaining would be remitted to the Town Council for consideration.

A vote was taken and the result was 37 For and 2 Against. Accordingly the **Resolution** as amended was passed. The remaining part of the proposal would be referred to the Town Council for consideration.

5.2 The following **Resolution** had been received:

'FUTURE PARISHING ARRANGEMENTS: Noticing there has been no progress in the consideration of this matter since a large majority at the last Annual Electors Meeting showed strong support for the concept of one Town Council to replace the existing 6 parish-level councils covering the Bognor Regis area;
Noting the support shown in limited polling by One Bognor for a single Town Council;
Supports a Post Card Poll of the whole Bognor Regis area - Aldwick, Bersted, Bognor Regis, Felpham, Middleton and Pagham - to seek an answer to the question concerning a single Town Council as the least expensive, quickest and most accessible means of such a test;
Urges the Town Council, parish councils, local businesses, residents etc to contribute to such an operation as an important step in securing a strong, local democratic voice for the 68000

residents of this urban area;

And believes that this Post Card Poll could also include a question as to whether local people wish to remain within Arun District.'

Proposed by J Cosgrove

This Resolution was debated by the Meeting. Comments included: The Parish Councils won't vote for this; this would offer similar powers to A.D.C. but on this side of the river; 86% of One Bognor's 100 members want to see a single Town Council; BRTC won't be able to do a poll outside of its area; Residents asked to vote for 6 Parishes or 1; Electors asked to support a post card poll of all 68,000 residents by One Bognor or an alternative body, as agreed by B.R.T.C.; It was queried whether B.R.T.C. will have to fund this; the details need to be ironed out by the Town Council; it could be undertaken by a group of people, does not have to be the Town Council

The Electors were asked to vote in principle whether they supported the idea of a postcard poll, with the mechanics being subject to further discussion by the Town Council.

A vote was taken and the result was 38 For, 4 Against and 1 Abstention. Accordingly the **Resolution** was passed.

6. ST MODWEN REGENERATION PROPOSALS

The Deputy Mayor, Cllr Wells spoke about the A.D.C. council meeting taking place on Wednesday 20th March 2013, where District Councillors had a big decision to make regarding the regeneration proposals for Bognor Regis. He advised those present to let their District Councillors know their views on the proposals prior to that meeting.

The public were asked for their comments and views, which included: Why do we have to accept the proposals for Bognor Regis?; the car parking is being taken away; Bognor Regis needs to develop as there are a lot of developments happening on the outskirts, but two cinemas will not work; a multipurpose venue is needed; an out of Town leisure facility should be developed; Infrastructure is needed; the Picturedrome should be a multipurpose facility, including the Council Offices; A.D.C. hold the lease for the land on behalf of Bognor Regis residents, it's our land; the main facility needs to be put on hold until the car parking issue is resolved; any one way system or park and ride scheme will be a disaster; reference was made to the results of the recent consultation; no one listens to Bognor Regis and this has created a lot of apathy in the Town; there are businesses wanting to invest in Bognor Regis and the seafront is being left to deteriorate whilst we wait for St Modwen; not enough has been invested in the seafront; as the Picturedrome is listed inside and out, it cannot be easily changed into an alternative venue; both the Town Council and the operator have invested in the Picturedrome; we are told that a new cinema will generate competition and at the same time the operator of the Picturedrome is told to increase the prices.

The item concluded with a final question from a member of the public - What can we do to stop these regeneration proposals? Cllr Wells advised that all those present should let A.D.C. know their views by going to A.D.C.'s full Council meeting on the 20th March and by writing to the District Councillors themselves.

7. POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PICTUREDROME CINEMA

The Deputy Mayor, Cllr Wells reported that following the resolution put forward at last year's annual electors meeting, the Town Council had been actively looking at the options available to increase the number of screens at the Picturedrome. Architectural drawings were available to view in the lobby detailing the four options for improvement, three of which were affordable.

Cllr Nash detailed the proposals on offer and the cost. He stressed that there would be no

additional cost to the charge payer with options 1, 2, 3 and 3a. The Town Council would obtain a loan for any agreed option, the payments would be off set. Although the Town Council had been advised by their accountant that work could begin in 2016, if the resolution was passed B.R.T.C. hoped that the work could begin as early as 2014. Cllr Nash asked those present for their views in principle.

- Option 1 – new screens in the Octagon Room and existing café - £223,700
- Option 2 - new screens in the Octagon Room and a 1st floor extension built in the car park - £483,400
- Option 3 - Two new screens built in a two floor extension in the car park - £815,620
- Option 3 (a) - Similar to Option 3, but 2 extra screens and the Octagon Room as a new screen (being provided by the Tenant) with the current screen 2 being turned into a community space - £815,620

Following a question regarding whether these proposals were really affordable and where the money would come from, Cllr Wells explained that the added spaces in the Picturedrome would result in an increase in rental from the operator. This first stage was to get an indication of support in principle. Prior to any decision there will be a public consultation.

The public were asked for their views in principle to the proposals, comments included: improvements to the area outside the Picturedrome/Reynolds/Railway station; the cinema operator spoke briefly about how his business operates and the financial modelling he had undertaken with the accountant; improvements to the entrance vestibule were suggested; comment was made regarding the financial impact on the 4 wards, some of the poorest in the district; more details were requested; what professional advice was sought as to the long term viability, particularly as it is a listed building?; development of Town's assets was preferred over seafront redevelopment; the number of Cinema seats in A.D.C.'s dcinex report is incorrect; if the Picturedrome does not expand and the seafront is redeveloped, it will not survive; the costs of the refurbishment and the repayments were questioned; A lot of money has already been spent or is to be spent on the Schedule of works; publication of finances and facts was promised; general support for the regeneration of the Picturedrome;

Electors were asked to support Option 3a, in principle as having the most potential and flexibility and subject to a public consultation taking place on the matter.

A vote was taken and the result was 42 For and 3 Against. Accordingly the Resolution was passed. A courtesy Non-Electors vote was taken, which resulted overwhelmingly in support for the proposal.

8. TO DEAL WITH ANY OTHER QUESTIONS

8.1 The following **Resolution** was put forward:

We note that the Town Council passed a vote of no confidence in the St Modwen regeneration proposals at its recent Full Council meeting on Monday 11th March. We propose that this Town Council Electors' meeting, in addition passes a motion of no confidence in Arun District Council in view of its poor handling of Bognor Regis regeneration.

In particular:

- 1. Allowing a regeneration scheme to be presented that loses 275 town centre car park spaces.*
- 2. Proposing the building of 280 more flats in the town centre*
- 3. Unreasonably rejecting the 10,868 signature petition and undermining the Town Council and its taxpayers' investment in the Picturedrome Cinema, or even considering a reasonable compromise.*
- 4. Active resistance to informed debate on regeneration with Bognor Regis taxpayers due to the non-participatory nature of its Regeneration Sub-Committee and other similar lack of engagement.*

5. *Restricting access to its only public consultation meeting which also failed to provide the consultation results data and was 'stage managed' to preclude proper debate.*
6. *Allowing its consultants to produce the anti-competitive proposal of doubling the price of the Picturedrome Cinema seats from £2.50 to £5.00, which is none of their business, in order to justify an unwanted multiplex cinema.*
7. *Adopting the proposals of a secretive unelected quango which has some members with commercial interests in the town.*

We therefore request that the Town Council itself also adopts a similar motion of no confidence in Arun District Council in relation to the regeneration proposals.

Proposed by L Barnes

Cllr Cunard asked for clarification on whether this was for Town Electors or the Town Council. Mr Barnes clarified that this motion was being put forward to the electors and then the Town Council was asked to consider it.

Cllr Wells pointed out that the Town Council had passed a vote of no confidence in A.D.C.'s regeneration proposals.

A vote was taken and the result was 35 For, 2 Against and 4 Abstentions. Accordingly the **Resolution** was passed.

Due to the Code of Conduct Town Councillors who are also Arun District Councillors did not partake in this vote.

8.2 The following issues were raised:

- WSCC cuts to community centres/projects
- Loss of facilities/cinema/theatres causes big problems within a community
- New Civic society petition - No to Multiplex
- Burden of financial implications of free parking, cinema etc put on Bognor Regis taxpayers, when surrounding parishes benefit too. They should share the costs.
- Reference to the Regis Centre funding and the volunteers that support the running of the centre
- A.D.C. has no parking strategy, visitors to the Town are being lost due to overpriced and under maintained car parks
- Cleanliness of the Town in particular dog fouling

The Town Mayor thanked everyone for attending and asked those present to spread the word amongst others about Council Meetings to encourage attendance and discourage apathy.

The Meeting closed at 9.50pm