



BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

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MINUTES OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING

HELD ON MONDAY 31st JULY 2023

PRESENT:

Cllr. B. Waterhouse (Chairman); Cllrs: J. Barrett, S. Goodheart, Miss. C. Needs, F. Oppler, P. Ralph, P. Wells and P. Woodall

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs. G. Frost (Town Clerk)
Mrs. J. Davis (Assistant Clerk)
Heather Allen (Bognor Regis BID COO) (part of meeting)
Matt Reed (part of meeting)
2 members of the public

The Meeting opened at 6.30pm

26. WELCOME BY CHAIRMAN AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chairman welcomed everyone present and read the Council's opening statement with particular attention drawn to the evacuation procedure in the event of the fire alarm sounding and the Council's Standing Orders relating to public question time.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. N. Smith with the Clerk recommending that the reason given was acceptable. This absence was **APPROVED** by Members.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairman addressed those Members present to ask if they wished to confirm any declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registrable and/or Ordinary Interests that they may have in relation to items on this Agenda.

As noted on the Agenda, Members and Officers should make their declaration by stating:

- a) the item they have the Interest in
- b) whether it is a Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registrable or Ordinary Interest
- c) the nature of the Interest
- d) if it is an Ordinary Interest whether they intend to temporarily leave the meeting for the discussion and vote
- e) if it is a Disclosable Pecuniary or Other Registrable Interest, and therefore must temporarily leave the meeting for the discussion and

vote, whether they will be exercising their right to speak on this matter under Public Question Time.

They then need to re-declare their Interest and the nature of the Interest at the commencement of the item or when the Interest becomes apparent. They should request that it be recorded in the Minutes that they will leave the meeting and will neither take part in discussion, nor vote on the item.

As per the Agenda, it is each Member's own responsibility to notify the Monitoring Officer of all Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registrable or Ordinary Interests notifiable under the Council's Code of Conduct, not already recorded on their Register of Interests Form, within 28 days.

The Chairman reminded Members to declare their Interests as any arise or again at the relative point in the meeting if they have already.

Cllr. Goodheart declared an Ordinary Interest in Agenda item 6, in Agenda item 9 as a Member of the Bognor Regis Heritage & Arts Partnership Board, and Agenda item 10 as the Town Council appointed Representative to Arun District Association of Local Councils

Cllr. Miss. Needs declared an Ordinary Interest in Agenda item 10 as a Member of Arun District Council

Cllr. Oppler declared an Ordinary Interest as a Member of both Arun District Council and West Sussex County Council

Cllr. Ralph declared an Ordinary Interest as a Member of Bersted Parish Council

Cllr. Wells declared an Ordinary Interest in Agenda item 8, as a BID levy payer, Agenda item 9 as a Member of the Bognor Regis Heritage & Arts Partnership Board, and Agenda item 19 as a sponsor of one of the Town Council's planters. He also declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda item 16 as he sells the discs for the 2 Hour Free Parking Scheme and would leave the Meeting when this item was discussed

28. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5th JUNE 2023

The Committee unanimously **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the Minutes of the Meeting held on 5th June 2023 and these were signed by the Chairman.

29. ADJOURNMENT FOR PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND STATEMENTS

There were no questions or statements from those seated in the gallery and the meeting was not, therefore, adjourned.

30. CLERK'S REPORT FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

30.1 5th June 2023 – Min. 18 – Local Bank Closures

At the last meeting it was agreed that letters should be sent to Barclays and HSBC “to express Members dismay at news of their forthcoming branch closures in Bognor Regis Town Centre, their concern in relation to the possible effect that this action would have, and their disappointment at the lack of consultation prior to the announcements being made.” A letter has also been sent to both NatWest and Lloyds to ascertain their position. Responses received from Barclays and HSBC have already been shared with Members along with an acknowledgement letter received from NatWest. It is now understood that the NatWest Bognor Regis branch will also be closing on 28th September 2023, and that they have advised their customers of their plans to introduce a community pop-up site following their closure.

With many customers of all these local banks choosing to bank by mobile apps, online or via telephone banking the numbers of customers visiting branches has fallen significantly, with banking remotely becoming the norm.

Barclays have advised that they have been in contact with their regular customers who use the branch and advised them of their plans as well as undertaking outreach calls with those more elderly/vulnerable customers. They are working on plans to stay in the community and customers will be able to talk to someone in person. They are currently finalising the details of where they will be based and will share the details locally once this is confirmed.

HSBC have invested heavily in their ‘post closure’ strategy, including a Community Tablets programme, through which they distribute free tablets to those who have no other means of getting online. They can then teach them how to use the tablet, and how to access their banking online. They are able to track usage of this, so they can contact customers who have received a tablet, but not used it.

They also offer HSBC@Home, a series of instructional and educational tutorials designed to support with the most basic everyday banking queries, along with support when banking digitally. They run Community Pop-Up events, where customers can complete everyday banking tasks, which, in Bognor Regis, take place at Bognor Library, the next of which is on 02 August 9.30am – 1.00pm (and a further two sessions on 06 August 9.30am -1.00pm and 04 October 9.30am – 1.00pm). They are advertising the events to local customers but have asked the Council to help them raise awareness with our constituents through our own communications. The frequency of the pop-ups is driven by customer demand, so they are trying to ensure as many customers know about these as possible.

They understand the Council's concerns about elderly and vulnerable customers and can assure the Council they have a specific plan to support these customers. They have written to all regular users of the Bognor Regis branch, and from this group of customers they identified those who are vulnerable. They contacted these customers to provide solutions to their ongoing banking needs post-closure, through writing and telephone. The community pop-up events also allows customers to undertake a range of banking services including digital account opening and servicing, online and mobile banking help, and education on fraud and Post Office services.

Having listened to the Clerk's report, many Members felt that the treatment from those banks due to close branches in Bognor Regis had been less than satisfactory with a complete neglect of social need. The suggestion of a banking hub was considered crucial by many, with the idea that one could be located in Bognor Regis Town Hall. A Member asked whether the Town Council could ask Arun District Council, as Landlord of the Town Hall, to write to those banks closing about setting up a hub. The Clerk advised that it was not possible for Members to resolve that such action be taken at this point in the Agenda but suggested that the matter could be included on a future Agenda for consideration.

30.2 5th June 2023 – Min. 19 – New location for the Model Bathing Machine

Following the request from the Bognor Regis Museum to consider a new location for the model bathing machine, Members agreed at the last meeting that delegated authority be given to the Town Clerk regarding the final location for the model to allow for this to once again be on public display. Liaison with the Chairman of the Museum has been undertaken who has advised that following his initial discussions with the Royal Norfolk Hotel he has received a very positive response to the possibility for this to be located within their grounds. Discussions are ongoing and Members will be updated once further information becomes available.

30.3 30th January 2023 – Min. 119.3 – Bognor Regis 2-Hour Free Parking Discs

Members were last updated on the Bognor Regis 2-Hour Free Parking Discs Scheme at the meeting held on 30th January. The Committee were advised that an update had been requested on how the future provision of the Scheme for Bognor Regis was now being dealt with following the ADC Environment Committee resolving not to commission a Parking Services Review in November 2022. Officers were also asked whether Arun District Council were happy to continue to support the Disc Scheme including the recommendations put forward that had been submitted to the Town Council by the Bognor Regis BID in relation to it, that had unanimously been supported by Members at a meeting back in September 2022 – Min. 58 refers.

Following some liaison with officers, a proposal was finally received from ADC at the end of the week before the Clerk's annual leave seeking comments and agreement to their proposal by the end of July 2023.

The Parking Services Manager at ADC was advised that this would need to be placed before Members for consideration, which in view of the timescale would not be possible to achieve by the end of the month. The Clerk will therefore be liaising with the Chairman to call an Extraordinary Meeting of the Committee to discuss this matter in detail once the opportunity to review the document and understand its implications has been undertaken.

30.4 Town Council's Annual Insurance Renewal

Details of the Town Council's annual insurance renewal has now been received. In order to ensure rate reliability, a 3-year binding Long Term Agreement was set up with Hiscox Insurance Company Ltd. This agreement is now entering its final year with expiry on 9th August 2024. Premium increases are however affected by an annual inflationary increase as a result of (index linking) applied to the sums insured for the assets covered against loss or damage as well as any imposition by the Government of a higher rate of Insurance Premium Tax (IPT). This year the premium has been quoted as £8,490.02 plus £1,018.80 (IPT) and £75.00 Admin Fee making a total of £9,583.82 against £9,480.48 in 2022.

30.5 Town Force Vehicle Insurance Renewal

The Town Force Vehicle Insurance is also up for renewal with effect from 10th August 2023. The premium for this year has been quoted as £2,550.00 with £306.00 (IPT) and £25.00 Admin Fee making a total of £2,881.00 against £2,209.00 in 2022. The price increase also reflects the addition of the 3-year-old Ford Connect replacement van with a refund being applicable when the old Escort van is removed from the insurance, once this has been sold.

31. TO RECEIVE THE TOWN FORCE REPORT INCLUDING CONSIDERATION OF DIGITISING TOWN FORCE OPERATIONS

The Town Force Manager's report was **NOTED**.

The Chairman invited the Clerk to give an outline of the proposal to digitise Town Force operations. However, as the report was quite detailed, the Clerk suggested that if Members had not yet had the opportunity to read the report then the matter be deferred, to allow Members extra time, rather than choosing a lesser option that wouldn't meet requirements.

Given the costs involved with some of the options presented, a Member felt that more information was required and was keen for Officers to look at other apps that might be available. A Member asked if it would not be better to review the way the organisation of Town Force works and stated that they would be interested to listen to the Town Force Manager's views.

A Member supported the concept in principle and, being resolutely opposed to increasing staffing levels, felt that IT could provide solutions.

The Chairman commended the Town Force Manager on the work that had gone into researching and reporting but asked that they revisit the

proposals. He invited Members to email him any questions, within the next week, which he would collate and send to the Clerk for the Town Force Manager's attention.

Members **AGREED** to **DEFER** any decision to digitise Town Force operations until alternative options had been explored with a report brought back to the Committee for further consideration.

In noting the second part of the Town Force Manager's report, providing an update on Town Force activities, the issue of graffiti was discussed. Praise was given, by several Members, to the efforts of Town Force in removing graffiti around the Town. A Member believed that until the Police start dealing with the problem, and shops stop selling spray cans, the persistence of graffiti would not go away.

There was concern amongst a couple of Members that, having purchased a ride on mower, Town Force would be asked to take on more cuts to fill the gaps left by West Sussex County Council's reduction in their own grass cutting schedule.

32. REPORT FROM THE PROJECTS OFFICER ON TOWN CENTRE ISSUES INCLUDING ANY REPORTS ON MEETINGS WITH THE BID MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Projects Officer's report was **NOTED**. With Heather Allen from the Bognor Regis BID seated in the public gallery, Members were invited to ask any questions.

A Member asked for an update in relation to the vacant Brewer's Fayre site and any future plans. Ms. Allen confirmed that the BID had worked as delivery partners with Arun District Council on the graphics presently adorning the building. It was her understanding that Officers at Arun had been tasked by Members to look into the feasibility of reviving the Royal Hall which had previously occupied the site. As this was an Arun District Council matter, Ms. Allen could add nothing further.

Members were reminded that BID Team updates are available on their website and are free to sign up to.

33. TO RECEIVE A PRESENTATION IN RELATION TO A PROPOSAL FROM THE BOGNOR REGIS BID TO INSTALL AN AUGMENTED REALITY ARCHWAY ON THE PROMENADE

The Chairman welcomed Matt Reed to the meeting and invited him to deliver a presentation to Members.

On behalf of the BID, Heather Allen firstly addressed the Committee to explain that whilst the Augmented Reality project was being presented by the BID, it actually related to a priority that was identified by stakeholders about improving perception in Bognor Regis.

Having stated that she was keen for the Town Council to support the idea, Ms. Allen handed over to Matt Reed, the artist that had been working with the BID on the project.

Following a brief introduction about his background, Mr. Reed gave an outline of the Augmented Reality project which would immerse users of mobile phones into a digital world reflecting the seafront heritage of Bognor Regis. Having scanned a QR code, users walk through the archway, which acts as a time portal, whereupon they will see 3D representations of a row of bathing machines situated on the beach. Also represented will be an image of Mary Wheatland, played by local actor Vicky Edwards, enrobed in a historically accurate costume and reciting a script developed with the support of local historian Sylvia Endacott. Mr. Reed reported on the progress to date which included the funding that had been secured. The presentation concluded with the Committee being reminded that the Town Council were not being asked to financially contribute to the project, however, it was hoped that they could support the project which was intended to be in place for 18-months.

Questions from Councillors, answered by either Ms. Allen or Mr. Reed, included: -

Q: How will the QR code be accessible to everyone, in particular those that do not know how to use them?

A: The QR code will be in a low position on the archway. It is hoped to have an information board in place, explaining how the Augmented Reality project works. Furthermore, the intention is to have volunteers present at weekends, and on key dates, with iPads to help those struggling to access the experience.

Q: Have you thought about audio commentary for blind users?

A: We are keen address issues for those with hearing or sight impairments.

The Committee **AGREED** that Cllr. Miss. Needs meet with Mr. Reed to discuss these issues as the project progresses.

Whilst some spoke positively about the Augmented Reality Archway project, a Member expressed concern that permission may be granted for the archway to be located adjacent to the decked area, managed by the Town Council, whereas when the council had recently asked ADC about placing a sculpture on the decking a negative response was received.

34. BOGNOR REGIS HERITAGE & ARTS PARTNERSHIP BOARD (BRHAPB) INCLUDING: - TO RECEIVE THE NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19th JUNE 2023 PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED TO COUNCILLORS

Cllr. Wells redeclared his Ordinary Interest as a Member of the Bognor Regis Heritage & Arts Partnership Board

The Assistant Clerk's report, including the Notes of the Bognor Regis Heritage & Arts Partnership Board Meeting held on 19th June 2023, was **NOTED**.

35. ARUN DISTRICT ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (ADALC)

The Assistant Clerk's report was **NOTED**.

Cllr. Miss. Needs redeclared her Ordinary Interest as a Member of Arun District Council

Having considered the suggested topic themes, Members unanimously **AGREED** to request that all of the topics proposed by ADALC be included at the conference in October, in addition to beach access and banking hubs being topics for discussion.

36. TO CONSIDER THE REQUIREMENT FOR COUNCILLORS TO STAND WHEN SPEAKING AS SET OUT IN STANDING ORDERS (S.O. 3j) – MIN. 8 OF THE ANNUAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD 22nd MAY 2023 REFERS

The Assistant Clerk's report was **NOTED**.

Following a vote, Members **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Council that an amendment should be made to Standing Order 3j in relation to Councillors standing when speaking, to reflect that Councillors are no longer required to do so.

37. TO REVIEW THE RETURN TO PAPER COPIES OF AGENDAS AND REPORTS – MIN. 119.6 REFERS

The Town Clerk's report was **NOTED**.

The benefits of reducing paper usage were noted with a reminder that agendas and reports are available online, accessible by using a laptop/tablet/smartphone, and are also projected onto a screen in the Chamber during meetings. The Chairman is provided with printed copies of the agenda and reports as they are unable to see the screen from where seated.

A Member felt that, wherever possible, those whose preference it was to have printouts should do this for themselves with costs in doing so covered by their Member's Allowance.

In considering the huge saving being made by not printing agendas and reports to then post out to every single Councillor and given the small number of individuals who were requesting printed copies from the office, Members **AGREED** to continue with the current practice of supplying paper copies of agendas and reports, for those that require them in line with the previously agreed criteria.

As before, it was further **AGREED** that, in an effort to reduce the Town Council's carbon footprint, these papers are not posted but that the current practice is continued with Councillors required to hand collect them from the office on the Thursday before the meeting to allow time for their preparation and collation.

38. TO RECEIVE ANY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE EVENTS, PROMOTION AND LEISURE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO THE PROPOSALS FOR UTILISATION OF THE REMAINING PUBLICITY AND PROMOTION BUDGET FOR 2023/2024 – MIN. 16 REFERS

The Assistant Clerk's report was **NOTED**.

There were no further recommendations from the Events, Promotion and Leisure Committee for the utilisation of any funds remaining in the Publicity and Promotion Budget 2023/2024 at this time.

39. ROLLING CAPITAL PROGRAMME INCLUDING: -

The Assistant Clerk's report was **NOTED**.

39.1 To ratify expenditure of £1,210 excluding VAT for two Dell OptiPlex 7000 Micro PCs

Members unanimously **RESOLVED** to **RATIFY** expenditure of £1,210, excluding VAT, for two Dell OptiPlex 7000 Micro PCs to replace poorly performing office machines that had exceed the end of their shelf life.

39.2 To ratify expenditure of £20,890 excluding VAT for a Ford Transit van, including 36 months warranty - Min. 148.1 refers

Members unanimously **RESOLVED** to **RATIFY** expenditure of £20,890, excluding VAT, for a Ford Transit van, including 36 months warranty, to replace an older vehicle.

39.3 To ratify the use of a CHAPS payment to purchase the Ford Transit van including the £25.00 expenditure for the CHAPS charge made for this transaction (as detailed in the Financial Regulations 6.8)

Members unanimously **RATIFIED** the use of a CHAPS payment to purchase the Ford Transit van including the £25.00 expenditure for the CHAPS charge as detailed in the report.

39.4 To ratify expenditure of £827.49 excluding VAT for a replacement Control Point awning for use at BRTC events

Members unanimously **RESOLVED** to **RATIFY** expenditure of £827.49, excluding VAT, for a Control Point awning for use at BRTC events, to replace the damaged awning previously used.

40. FINANCIAL REPORTS INCLUDING: -

The Assistant Clerk's report was **NOTED**.

40.1 To note Committee I&E Reports for the month of June 2023 - previously copied to Councillors

Members **NOTED** receipt of the financial reports for the month of June 2023.

40.2 To note verification of bank reconciliations with the Town Council's Current account and Mayor's Charity account for the months of May and June 2023, undertaken by the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee in line with the Council's Financial Regulations

The verification of bank reconciliations as detailed was **NOTED**.

41. TO CONSIDER THE APPOINTMENT OF A LIAISON WORKING PARTY AND ITS MEMBERSHIP, TO MEET TWICE A YEAR TO DISCUSS THE 2 HOUR FREE CAR PARKING SCHEME WITH ADC, BOGNOR REGIS BID AND UP TO TWO BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE TOWN CENTRE

Cllr. Wells redeclared his Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and left the Meeting

With a view expressed that the Town Council should lead on this initiative, and concern about being otherwise sidelined, Members unanimously **AGREED** the appointment of a Liaison Working Party to discuss the 2 Hour Free Car Parking Scheme. It was further unanimously **AGREED** that its membership be made up of 5 x Town Councillors, 2 x Town Centre business representatives (with one of these places offered to Paul Wells), 1 x Bognor Regis BID representative, and 1 x ADC representative.

Wishing to open membership on the Liaison Working Party to all Town Councillors, it was proposed and **AGREED** that the Clerk email all Members inviting them to submit an expression of interest in becoming a member. Any responses should be sent 'reply all' and places would be appointed on a first come first served basis.

Cllr. Wells returned to the Meeting

42. CORRESPONDENCE

The Committee **NOTED** receipt of correspondence as detailed in the list previously circulated.

43. TO RESOLVE TO MOVE TO CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS (S.O. 3d) - (CONTRACTUAL)

The Committee **RESOLVED** that in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted it is advisable in the public interest that the public be temporarily excluded, and they are instructed to withdraw (S.O. 3d) - Agenda item 18 (contractual).

44. TOWN FORCE: NOTE OF OUTSTANDING DEBTORS

Cllr. Wells declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest as a sponsor of Town Council owned planters, although he was not on the current list of debtors previously circulated to the Committee

The Committee **NOTED** the list (confidential).

The Meeting closed at 8.12pm