



BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

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MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 29th JUNE 2022

PRESENT:

Cllr. B. Waterhouse (Chairman); Cllrs: J. Barrett, Mrs. S. Daniells, J. Erskine, S. Goodheart, W. Smith (left during Min. 30), M. Stanley and Mrs. J. Warr

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs. G. Frost (Town Clerk)
Mrs. J. Davis (Assistant Clerk)
Mr. D. O'Connor (ADC Community Safety Officer)
Mr. R. Wickham (ADC Group Head of Wellbeing and Communities)
Ms. H. Allen (Bognor Regis Business Improvement District Co-Ordinator)
Cllrs: J. Brooks, S. Reynolds and P. Woodall in the public gallery (part of meeting)
3 members of the public

The Meeting opened at 6.30pm

27. WELCOME BY CHAIRMAN AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chairman welcomed everyone present and read the Council's opening statement.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. A. Cunard owing to work commitments.

The Clerk informed those present that whilst all Town Councillors had been invited to attend this meeting, for those not able to attend, it was not customary for them to give apologies for absence since they are not Members of the Committee.

28. 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.

There were no declarations of Interest

29. ADJOURNMENT FOR PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND STATEMENTS

The Chairman adjourned the Meeting at 6.32pm

A local business owner, seated in the public gallery, spoke of his confusion about the proposal for Community Wardens and his concerns about any crossover between them and the current Business Wardens scheme in Bognor Regis. In his experience, the Business Warden scheme operated by the Bognor Regis Business Improvement District (BID), with financial support from Bognor Regis Town Council (BRTC), had proved to be a successful service which included intelligence sharing between businesses and the Police. The local business owner felt that there were complex issues to be dealt with in Bognor Regis Town Centre, on a daily basis, and was concerned that Community Wardens would not be as involved with businesses as the Business Wardens are. Should the Town Council go ahead with any funding of the proposed scheme, he hoped that this would not result in cuts to the Business Warden scheme and that he would, in fact, prefer to see any investment go towards further funding for Business Wardens.

A fellow local business owner echoed the comments previously made and was concerned that the introduction of Community Wardens might dilute the current Business Warden scheme. He spoke of the struggles that independent businesses are facing and of the support that the Business Warden scheme provides them. It was suggested that the reasons as to

why it was felt that a Community Warden scheme was needed in Bognor Regis be further investigated, and that these problems be addressed by redirecting the monies involved with the proposal into investing in families that were struggling by way of funding food banks or youth services, for example.

A Member seated in the public gallery spoke in support of the comments so far made and believed that money paid by taxpayers should be given back to the community, as proposed by the previous speaker. Whilst he acknowledged that crimes took place outside of the Town Centre, he believed that the main problems are within.

Cllr. Stanley declared an Ordinary Interest as the manager of a High Street business

Comment was made from the public gallery that this matter would not be under discussion if there was an effective police force, and Councillors were asked to lobby for a better service from them. The Chairman stated that these points had been made to the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner, Mrs. Katy Bourne, when she had attended a Council Meeting earlier this year.

The Chairman reconvened the Meeting at 6.44pm

30. TO CONSIDER PROPOSAL FOR COMMUNITY WARDEN SCHEME IN BOGNOR REGIS, AS A JOINT INITIATIVE BETWEEN THE TOWN AND DISTRICT COUNCILS

The Town Clerk's report and relating appendices were **NOTED**.

The Chairman welcomed Mr. D. O'Connor and Mr. R. Wickham, from ADC, to the meeting and invited them to speak.

Mr. O'Connor thanked the Town Council for the opportunity to address the Committee and gave a brief introduction to the Community Warden scheme that had launched in Littlehampton in April 2021. It was deemed that the scheme had had a positive impact and ADC, in partnership with Littlehampton Town Council, had subsequently agreed further funding for the continuation of Community Wardens in Littlehampton. ADC officers had now been instructed to see what scope of interest there would be for the same scheme in Bognor Regis.

The Chairman then invited Ms. H. Allen, from Bognor Regis BID, to address the Committee.

Ms. Allen stated that she was happy to answer questions about the existing Business Wardens scheme in Bognor Regis and that, whilst she wouldn't try to influence the Town Council's decision on the proposal before them, she could not support money from the businesses being used to support the Community Wardens scheme. In the last 5 years, during the BIDs first

term, £26,000 of the £36,000 cost for Business Wardens in Bognor Regis has been provided by the BID and they cannot afford to pay any more money to dedicated Town Centre Wardens.

However, Ms. Allen felt that the BID would be in support of Community Wardens if the scheme were to specifically provide Wardens to respond in Hotham Ward and Marine Ward, where the Town Centre sits. Were the Community Warden proposal to go down that route then it was suggested that the BID may be able to provide for 2 days of provision.

Ms. Allen pointed out that Littlehampton does not have a Business Improvement District and those local businesses do not contribute to a scheme that provides for personnel to address crime that affects them. It was her experience that it is imperative for businesses in a Town Centre to share information through reports that Business Wardens act upon and that the Police then respond to.

In closing, Ms. Allen drew attention to the fact that the BID's first term comes to an end on 31st March 2023 and that should the BID not be voted in for a second term then the conversation about Wardens in the Town Centre would most definitely need to be had.

A Member spoke to say that they were not in support of the proposal for a Community Warden scheme in Bognor Regis and felt the money required for the scheme would be better spent on youth provision, for instance. Concern was expressed about the level of funding required and the question asked as to where it would come from. The Chairman responded by saying that the funding required in the proposal would equate to a 7.5% increase in the Precept unless the Town Council made economies elsewhere.

Cllr. Smith gave his apologies and left the Meeting

Mr. O'Connor explained that the proposal being presented to Bognor Regis Town Council was based upon figures from the Littlehampton Community Warden scheme. However, he went on to say that those costs might be different for Bognor Regis when taking into account other schemes, financial constraints etc. Following a question from a Member about how the figure of £150,000 per annum for three Wardens arose, Mr. O'Connor detailed that this comprised of a £28,000 salary for each position, uniforms, significant costs for training, and ongoing budgets, hence this was why ADC believed this to be the sum that was needed.

Upon further discussion comment was made about how the two Warden schemes were similar and yet different, therefore the question should be asked about what was trying to be achieved. If it were to address anti-social behaviour and crime in the Town Centre then there was some doubt as to why three Community Wardens would be needed when the current Business Warden scheme seems to work reasonably well at tackling these issues.

Mr. O'Connor detailed the abilities of the Littlehampton Community Wardens who were accredited and had the power, devolved to them by Sussex Police, to remove alcohol, issue Fixed Penalty Notices, stop cycling, and acquire names and addresses in relation to anti-social behaviour. Whilst the Community Wardens have access to the Disc system (an online information-sharing system that aims to help drive down low-level crime and anti-social behaviour across the UK) they do not add shoplifting reports, or any other reports on behalf of businesses.

It was queried whether there was any evidence of crime reduction in Littlehampton Town Centre since the Community Warden scheme had begun. Mr. O'Connor explained that whilst he did not have that information to hand, he could obtain this data.

Members of the public present at the meeting asked whether ADC were offering to work with partners to develop a bespoke scheme for Bognor Regis. It was suggested that this might include considering contracting an external security service provider, such as SWL, rather than recruiting Wardens on an employment contract. Mr. Wickham stated that it was possible to come up with a bespoke proposal for the scheme in Bognor Regis which could then be presented to the relevant Committee at ADC.

Many Members commented that they were not supportive of the proposal presented for Community Wardens in Bognor Regis in its current form, with some deeming it to be a luxury that could not be afforded and was a duplication of what was already provided courtesy of the Business Wardens. It was largely agreed that a conversation should be had about supporting or enhancing the existing Business Warden scheme, and to potentially develop the aspect of two extra Wardens to be provided by SWL, for example. Following the lengthy debate, it was suggested that BRTC Officers liaise with the BID to understand what is required, in their opinion, with consideration given to the potential that the BID might not be around in 9 months' time and what BRTC would do if that were the case. It was **AGREED** that BRTC Officers, and Ms. Allen, then liaise with ADC Officers about a bespoke service for Bognor Regis.

The Chairman thanked Mr. O'Connor and Mr. Wickham for attending the meeting, which had been very helpful in understanding the proposition, and had encouraged lots of engagement with those present.

The Meeting closed at 7.33pm