



# **BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL**

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## **MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING**

### **OF BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL**

### **HELD ON TUESDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> OCTOBER 2023**

#### **PRESENT:**

Mayor: Cllr. F. Oppler; Cllrs: J. Brooks, D. Dawes, S. Goodheart, R. Nash, Miss. C. Needs, P. Ralph, M. Stanley, Mrs. J. Warr, B. Waterhouse, P. Wells and P. Woodall

#### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mrs. G. Frost (Town Clerk)  
Mrs. R. Vervecken (Civic & Office Manager)  
2 representatives from Showmen Event Group  
1 member of the public  
1 member of the press

***The Meeting opened at 6.33pm***

#### **92. WELCOME BY MAYOR**

The Mayor welcomed all those present. The Council's opening statement was read, and particular attention was drawn to the evacuation procedure in the event of the fire alarm sounding and the Council's Standing Orders relating to public question time.

#### **93. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND THEIR APPROVAL, SUBJECT TO MEETING THE AGREED CRITERIA**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. J. Barrett, K. Batley, N. Smith and Mrs. G. Yeates, with the Clerk recommending that the reasons given were acceptable. These absences were **APPROVED** by Members.

#### **94. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members and Officers are invited to make any declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary, Other Registrable and/or Ordinary Interests that they may have in relation to items on this agenda and are reminded that they should redeclare their Interest before consideration of the item or as soon as the Interest becomes apparent and if not previously included on their Register of Interests to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days.

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 leave the meeting for the discussion and vote
- e) if it is a Disclosable Pecuniary or Other Registrable Interest, and therefore must leave the room 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 Chair reminded Members to declare their Interests as any arise or again at the relative point in the meeting if they have already.

***Cllr. Brooks declared an Ordinary Interest in Agenda item 5, as an Arun District Councillor***

***Cllr. Dawes declared an Ordinary Interest in Agenda item 6, as a BID levy payer***

***Cllr. Goodheart declared an Ordinary Interest in Agenda item 5, as an Arun District Councillor and the proposer of the Motion***

***Cllr. Nash declared an Ordinary Interest in Agenda item 5 as an Arun District Councillor and Chair of the Arun District Council Economy Committee***

***Cllr. Miss. Needs declared an Ordinary Interest in Agenda item 5 as an Arun District Councillor***

***Cllr. Oppler declared an Ordinary Interest in Agenda item 5 as an Arun District Councillor***

***Cllr. Stanley declared an Ordinary Interest in Agenda item 5 as Leader of Arun District Council and a named person within the Motion. He further declared an Ordinary Interest in Agenda item 6 as Manager of a BID levy paying business***

***Cllr. Mrs. Warr declared an Ordinary Interest in Agenda item 5 as an Arun District Councillor***

***Cllr. Wells declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Agenda item 6, regarding the 2-hour free car parking discs and stated he would leave the room for this Agenda item***

**95. ADJOURNMENT FOR PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND STATEMENTS**

***The Chair adjourned the Meeting at 6.37pm***

A member of the public, seated in the gallery, spoke of his hope for the currently empty Brewers Fayre site, which presented a 'golden opportunity' to enhance the seafront's offering, citing the relatively low cost to get the building open and offering something within the vein of regeneration, in the immediate future. In his opinion, it would be wasteful to allow the building to stay empty over a long period and he hoped Councillors would be supportive on the Motion to be discussed, further in the meeting.

***The Chair thanked the member of the public for their question and reconvened the Meeting at 6.39pm***

**96. TO RECEIVE A PRESENTATION FROM SHOWMEN EVENT GROUP**

The Mayor welcomed the two representatives from Showmen Event Group, to address Members on their ideas for the empty Brewers Fayre site.

They spoke of a distinct lack of any kind of large indoor entertainment space, in the nearby area, and the potential this site had to fill this current void. It was their opinion that the interior of the building should be 'ripped out', creating a blank canvas to allow for a multi-use venue, which could then accommodate staging and lighting etc.

A Councillor asked how the Showmen Event Group would foresee a venue of this sort operating, the capacity it could hold and how much it would realistically cost to convert the building, alongside any deal with the District Council.

The representatives explained that with the roof and exterior repairs also required, they'd estimate in the region of £500,000 being needed to get the venue to a point, where it could be used as a community indoor venue, with the biggest cost being spent to undo much of the work Whitbread had undertaken on the building. Comment was made regarding the possibility of a partnership with ADC, WSCC and BRTC and coming together to make this happen. With ideas being in the very early stages, they could not yet comment on what deal they would seek with ADC, to put any plans in place.

Another Councillor asked whether, with so many repairs being needed, the Showmen Event Group envisaged these repairs forming a part of their financial investment or whether they would seek this funding from ADC.

It was reasoned that if the company were to form a partnership with ADC for works to this site, in the interest of fairness, all parties involved should contribute to any building repairs.

A Councillor expressed it was his understanding that ADC are looking for an 'ambitious' proposal for the site for the long-term. With the building currently empty, the Councillor questioned how the Showmen Event Group envisaged gaining any return, should they invest a large sum (in the region of £500,000), for a surely short-term lease, and how this would fit into ADC's strategy for this key site.

The representatives agreed that although a 5-7-year lease has been discussed, it would likely need to be on a longer-term basis, to make the project feasible.

A Member queried whether Whitbread should have been liable for any roof repairs, as the building was leased.

Another Member clarified that Whitbread had paid ADC £100,000 in dilapidations, which will most likely be spent on repairing the leaking roof.

The Chair thanked Showmen Event Group for attending and addressing Members.

**97. NOTICE OF MOTION (S.O.9.0) PROPOSED BY CLLR. S. GOODHEART AND DEFERRED TO THIS MEETING BY COUNCIL (MIN. 80 REFERS)**

***"Bognor Regis Town Council ("the council") calls on Arun District Council to reconsider their position on the future use of the Brewers Fayre Site. On 19<sup>th</sup> June, Arun's Economy Committee agreed: "That officers investigate a feasibility study into Option 1, to include both the shorter term and the longer-term options discussed. As well as arranging a site visit for members. Officers are also instructed to hold urgent discussions with Arun Arts."***

***This will lead to lost time as the officers confirmed at the time that the site would remain empty in the meantime and that conversations with interested parties cannot commence. Further delay would likely impact next summer's offering from the Brewers Fayre site.***

- This council therefore agrees to write to the Chair of the Economy Committee, Cllr Roger Nash and the Leader of Arun District Council, Cllr Matt Stanley to ask them to convene an urgent meeting of the Economy Committee to reconsider their position and open up discussions with interested parties, including commercial operators. This letter will be copied to all Arun District Councillors.***
- This Motion also requires that within the letter to Arun District Council, it includes that the council requests a meaningful opportunity to review and be consulted on any future plans.***
- This council wants to express it's views to ADC about the future use***

***of the old Brewer's Fayre site, by supporting the site be used as a multi-use facility using the entire building.***

- ***This Motion also calls on Arun District Council to provide an update on the Bognor Regis Regeneration Masterplan and on an update as to when this council and residents will be consulted."***

Cllr. Goodheart spoke on his Motion, which was seconded by Cllr. Brooks.

Cllr. Stanley, as Leader of ADC, stated he would abstain from voting. He informed Members of a recent decision taken by the ADC Economy Committee, commissioning a feasibility study to investigate whether a multi-use entertainment venue could be achieved within the Brewers Fayre building. Prior to this, and under the previous ADC administration, another feasibility study had already been started to review the whole of the site, including the seafront mounds and importantly, the Brewers Fayre. Results are still awaited for both studies, with Cllr. Stanley emphasising the importance of waiting for the outcomes of these before moving forward with any plans. He confirmed that at the time of the Economy Committee's Meeting, on 19<sup>th</sup> June, ADC were 'not aware' of interest from any parties to make use of the building, in the short-term. The decision taken by the Economy Committee is protected under the six-month rule, meaning any decisions taken cannot be reviewed within a six-month timeframe.

Speaking personally, Cllr. Stanley spoke supportively of liaising with the Town Council on proposals for the site, although he didn't feel ADC were in a position to revisit their stance, until at least the results of the feasibility studies had been analysed, which he anticipated would be in February 2024.

Cllr. Nash, as Deputy Leader of ADC and the Chair of the ADC Economy Committee, whilst stating his personal support of the Motion, confirmed he too would also be abstaining from the eventual vote. He spoke of previous discussions at District level, surrounding turning part of the site into flats, but confirmed that during July, the idea of instead utilising the Brewers Fayre as a 400-500 capacity entertainment venue, had come to the forefront, which he cited as progress. He agreed with Cllr. Stanley that awaiting the outcome of the feasibility study was the correct course of action. He hoped that following ADC's Economy Committee Meeting to take place in February 2024, it may be agreed to begin gaining expressions of interest for the implementation of an entertainment venue, with this project hopefully working alongside the revamped theatre to provide real regeneration to the seafront area, which he stated was a big step in the right direction. With the news that the Brewers Fayre site will be used over the next few months, for the ongoing work at the Theatre, Cllr. Nash emphasised that it is not realistic for anything to take shape next year, with 2025 being a far more achievable target, in his opinion.

Cllr. Wells expressed his broad support for the Motion, but understood the recent decisions taken at ADC. He agreed with earlier sentiments expressed that the building should not remain empty for a long period of time and suggested the frontage of the building could be offered to concessions, on a one-year lease, in time for next season, to ensure the site does not look derelict, hides the ongoing

building works and is being used, even if only as a temporary solution. He asked that this be considered by ADC, and expressed hope that the District Council will consult BRTC on any long-term plans for the site.

At this point, Cllr. Stanley confirmed that conversations had already begun with ADC officers regarding exploring the frontage of the building regarding concessions and making use of part of the building in time for next season, which was **NOTED** by Members.

A Member thanked Cllr. Stanley and Cllr. Nash for giving their views and an insight into discussions surrounding the site, at ADC. He hoped that any plans to improve the front of the building, would be done at pace, to ensure this was in time for next season.

The Chair thanked Cllr. Goodheart for bringing this Motion for discussion. He stated the importance of noting that neither the current ADC nor BRTC administration were responsible for the current empty state of the Brewers Fayre building, with both simply 'picking up the mess left' by previous administrations. The Mayor confirmed he too shared the same vision of seeing the site turned into a multi-use entertainment venue, as had been expressed by others during the meeting. He spoke of the disappointment created in previous years, with ADC promising regeneration projects in Bognor Regis, which never came to fruition. Stating the importance of waiting for the outcome of the ADC feasibility studies, he spoke of the need for a strong business plan, to take ideas forward for the community and ensure the venue is profitable.

As seconder of the Motion, Cllr. Brooks addressed Members. He expressed disappointment that with the building being fully operational merely months ago, that money is now being 'wasted' on securing the building and keeping it shut. It was his opinion that it would require a small amount of funding in comparison, to complete repairs for the building to reopen and be used in the short-term whilst long-term plans were being considered. With the Theatre closed for the foreseeable future, he stressed the urgency in ensuring this building was being utilised as a valuable community space, as soon as possible. Regarding the news that the Brewers Fayre site is to be used to facilitate ongoing works undertaken at the Theatre, Cllr. Brooks disputed this decision, which he felt put an unfortunate halt to any short-term use of the Brewers Fayre site.

If we were able to reuse the building until the longer-term plans are in place, Cllr. Brooks advised Members his company was able to donate PA systems, LED screens, staging and lighting with everything needed to open up the old play area, which is quite substantial so the building could be used now.

***Cllr. Brooks declared an Interest as a business owner who could provide equipment to the Brewers Fayre site***

He further spoke of a local businessman who had confirmed willingness to invest a 'large sum' if the building can be reopened to the public by spring 2024, which he cited could be achieved 'without major expense'. Further to earlier comments

made by Cllr. Nash, Cllr. Brooks expressed disbelief that the decisions taken by the ADC Economy Committee at their meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> June, could not be revisited, particularly, as, in his opinion, not all information had been made clear for the Committee to consider the site as a whole, and questioned whether there were any possible links between the proposals for the Premier Inn Hotel and the Brewers Fayre site. Cllr. Brooks raised several questions which he felt were loose ends and needed answers, and therefore in his opinion the 6-month rule would not apply if these were not answered by the time the Economy Committee met.

Cllr. Goodheart, as the proposer of the Motion summarised his final thoughts and thanked Cllr. Brooks for the points raised. He spoke of the urgency of the matter and his wish to submit a list of questions to ADC as part of the Motion, particularly emphasising ADC's future plans for the building and requesting transparency and an opportunity for engagement with BRTC.

Following a vote, Members **RESOLVED** to **SUPPORT** the Motion in its entirety, and to submit the list of questions, provided by the proposer, alongside the letter to be sent to ADC - appended to the Minutes as **Appendix 1**.

**98. CONSIDERATION OF THE NEW 2 HOUR FREE PARKING SCHEME PROPOSALS FROM ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL AND THE TOWN COUNCIL'S CONTINUED PARTNERSHIP CONTRIBUTION**

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

***Cllr. Dawes redeclared his Ordinary Interest in Agenda item 6, as a BID levy payer***

***Cllr. Wells redeclared his Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in this Agenda item, regarding the 2-hour free car parking discs and left the Meeting***

Following the proposed changes to the scheme by ADC, which had been forwarded to Members within the report, the Town Clerk advised of an email received from the Bognor Regis BID coordinator, informing that, given the impact the changes the proposal would have on the BID, a formal response was being formulated, and would be provided to ADC the next working day.

The Mayor briefly summarised the changes to the proposal by ADC, which had been made since this had last come before Members at the Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> September (Min. 57 refers).

The main change related to the Bognor Regis BID, who were now being offered a 'flat fee' of just £6,000 per annum by ADC, for providing administration, disc storage and a collection facility for retailers. Further, instead of being enabled to generate a surplus from the sale of the discs, which in previous years has been invested back into the Town Centre through events and other projects, hugely benefiting Bognor Regis, the Bognor Regis BID was now being asked to return money from sales to ADC, meaning an overall loss to the BID of some £16,000 per annum. All those present concurred that the treatment of the BID, by ADC, through these proposed changes, was poor, particularly given the track record with their involvement thus far, which has contributed greatly to the Scheme's success in the Town. On a more positive note, ADC had agreed to run the new

App system, parallel to the physical parking discs, to ensure all shoppers could easily access the Scheme.

There was much discussion on this item, and whether Members would support the continuation of the 2 Hour Free Parking Scheme, with a financial contribution, particularly given the detrimental impact the proposed changes would have on Bognor Regis BID. Other discussions included the setting up of a Working Party, which would involve representatives from ADC, BRTC and the BID, to discuss the finer details of the Scheme and the possible significance that having the Leader and Deputy Leader of ADC also as Members of the Town Council, could have on future discussions on this matter, at District level.

Cllr. Stanley stated that he would abstain from any vote, given his position and he emphasised the importance of hearing the BID's view on these proposals. The Mayor felt it valuable to clarify that it is ADC, not the Town Council, nor the BID proposing to make any changes to the Scheme, which has run so successfully in its current format. Other discussion focused on why Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) had not been considered by ADC earlier in proposals, with similar schemes in Worthing and Portsmouth cited as good examples of collecting data, relative to ongoing car park usage. A Councillor suggested not financially supporting the Scheme and instead using £16,000 of the Town Council's current partnership contribution of £21,000 to fund the BID or for BRTC to enable spending on projects, benefiting the Town, whilst allowing a £5,000 saving, for other ventures. Conversation turned to whether the discs should be increased to £3, with the Town Council still contributing £21,000, and the BID keeping the £1 to enable them to have a small income, for investing back into the Town. However, it was eventually conceded that given the very short timescale, due to the discs needing to be printed imminently, there was simply not the time to propose making substantial changes, such as the price, at this late stage.

In conclusion, Members were in full support of the continuation of this successful Scheme. It was felt that it was an excellent example of triangular partnership working between ADC, BRTC and the BR BID, and that what the Scheme delivers to the businesses and members of the public works well presently. It was felt that the provision of 2 Hour Free Parking brought many benefits to the Town and, therefore, Members stressed that ADC should revisit their proposals.

Bognor Regis Town Council therefore **RESOLVED** to **AGREE** to support the 2 Hour Free Parking Scheme continuing from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 for a period of 2 years with a partnership contribution of £21,000 per annum. This agreement would be subject to the Scheme being administered precisely as it has previously by BR BID (with profits being retained) with the addition of virtual permits via an App running alongside. However, if Arun District Council insist on taking control of producing the discs for Bognor Regis, and changing the administration of the Scheme, to the detriment of the Bognor BID, then Bognor Regis Town Council further **RESOLVE** to **WITHDRAW** the £21,000 contribution. The Town Council would then discuss with the Bognor BID the possibility of funding them with £16,000 for at least twelve months, from this sum, to be put back into the Town Centre, through projects to be discussed and agreed with the BID, through a service level agreement.



Members **NOTED** that by withdrawing the Town Council's partnership

contribution of £21,000 this would have the effect of increasing the price of the disc from £2 to £3 as detailed in the amended proposal received from ADC.

Subject to the outcome of Arun District Council having considered and responded to the Town Council's position in relation to the 2 Hour Free Parking Scheme, it was **AGREED** the Mayor and the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee, be put forward as the Town Council Representatives for the proposed Joint Working Party.

***The Meeting closed at 7.54pm***

**' Questions to Ask' in relation to Brewers Fayre site –**  
**as suggested by Cllr S. Goodheart**

1. Premises became 'unexpectedly vacant'. Was this allowable?
2. Brewer's Fayre was licensed, open and meeting all requirements. Can certainly be used now if the will was there.
3. 100k from Whitbread 'towards dilapidations? Is this enough? How did we get in this situation?
4. Money is already being used to maintain the premises in a secure condition and weathertight.
5. Splitting services said to cost £35k but this is presumably with long term use in mind.
6. What about agreement for Whitbread to carry on for 2 years? Who made the deal with loss of rates of £78k (rates £38k per annum)? Does ADC have any redress?
7. Please explain rates – does ADC not own the building?
8. ADC does have to obtain 'best consideration' for short tenancy under 7 years and the building's value to the community can outweigh purely monetary considerations.
9. We've lost the only other indoor space while the theatre is being developed yet we have a solution if we re-open Brewer's Fayre instead of just paying money to maintain it empty and an eyesore.
10. If we were able to re-use the building until longer term use is in place, say next 2 years, local companies are (interest) in donating stages and LED screen displays to promote the venue.
11. I am also aware of someone willing to offer/invest a substantial sum if with ADC and other local organisations and businesses, we can make this happen in time for the Spring 2024.
12. We could start by forming a local partnership to explore and cost the best temporary layout of the building to maximise existing space/usage without major works and expense.
13. Re-opening the The Brewer's Fayre 'temporarily' would not affect longer term plans for the building from any interested parties such as Showmen Events, although their involvement would be welcome.