



BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

HELD ON MONDAY 6th JANUARY 2025

PRESENT:

Cllrs: J. Barrett, K. Batley, D. Dawes, S. Goodheart, R. Nash, F. Oppler, N. Smith, M. Stanley, Mrs. J. Warr, B. Waterhouse, P. Wells, P. Woodall and Mrs. G. Yeates

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs. G. Frost (Town Clerk)
Mrs. J. Davis (Deputy Clerk)
Mrs. R. Verveckken (Civic & Office Manager)

The Meeting opened at 6.32pm

117. WELCOME BY MAYOR

In the absence of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, Cllr. Mrs. Yeates took the Chair and welcomed all those present. With there being no nominations for a Vice-Chair, Members **AGREED** not to elect one for this Meeting. 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.

118. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND THEIR APPROVAL, SUBJECT TO MEETING THE AGREED CRITERIA

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Brooks, Miss. Needs and Ralph, with the Clerk recommending that the reasons given were acceptable. These absences were therefore **APPROVED** by Members.

119. 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. Stanley declared an Ordinary Interest in Agenda item 14 as an Arun District Councillor and in Agenda item 16 as the former Chair and Director of the Bognor Regis Regeneration Board. He stated that he would leave the room should there be any discussion relating to the Board

Cllrs. Batley, Goodheart, Nash, Oppler, Mrs. Warr and Mrs. Yeates all declared an Ordinary Interest in Agenda item 14 as Arun District Councillors

Cllr. Wells declared an Ordinary Interest in any discussion relating to the Bognor Pier Trust, as well as the Bognor Regis Regeneration Board as a member in his own right

120. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 28th OCTOBER 2024

The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 28th October 2024 were **APPROVED** by the Council as a correct record and were signed by the Chair.

121. REPORTS FROM WSCC COUNTY AND ADC DISTRICT COUNCILLORS (IF AVAILABLE)

The Town Clerk had received apologies from Cllr. McDougall, an Arun District Councillor, who could not attend due to another meeting, but had no updates to report. He hoped that other Town Councillors, who were also District Councillors, could report any significant updates, if relevant.

Cllr. Nash, as Chair of the ADC Economy Committee, referenced the recent announcement of a White Paper concerning devolution and local government arrangements across England, and which sets out plans to reform how combined authorities take key decisions.

For information on what this means more locally, a dual-hatted Councillor shared that his understanding was that a strategic authority of a 1.5 million population would be created, encompassing the whole of Sussex and Brighton and Hove, with a strategic Mayor elected to represent the area. Sussex would be split into 3 unitary councils, meaning that all district and borough Councils would be abolished under the plans. Sussex and Brighton and Hove would therefore vote on the same proposal, deciding the path to be taken by all who reside in these areas.

It was understood that West Sussex County Council had met earlier today to discuss whether they wanted to be considered for fast-tracking.

Many Councillors spoke of their concerns over the proposed reorganisation of local government, citing a severe lack of consultation with elected local representatives as well as members of the wider community. Members hoped that West Sussex County Council would reconsider their stance in wanting to proceed so quickly, with no conversations having taken place with any of the councils who would be no more, and with such little information seemingly being available. With District Councils such as Arun being abolished under this programme, it was emphasised that a lot of local Councillors, who have done great work for their areas will be 'wiped out', whilst isolated groups of people, who are not local to Bognor Regis, would be the ones potentially making important decisions for our Town. It was felt this would only create a larger disconnect between the public and local authority.

122. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

There were no questions from Councillors.

123. ADJOURNMENT FOR PUBLIC QUESTION TIME AND STATEMENTS

There were no members seated in the public gallery, the Chair did not therefore, adjourn the meeting.

124. TO CONSIDER ANY WRITTEN DISPENSATION REQUESTS RECEIVED FROM TOWN COUNCILLORS

There were no written dispensation requests received from Town Councillors.

125. TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER REPORTS, MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEES (OTHER THAN ANY SPECIFIC ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA)

126. Policy and Resources Committee Meeting of 18th November 2024

The Chair of the Committee, Cllr. Waterhouse, reported.

126.1 Min. 81 refers - Recommendation of the Adoption of the revised Dignity at Work Policy, to be retitled as the Anti-Harassment Policy, without any amendments to the document proposed

Members unanimously **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the Adoption of the revised Dignity at Work Policy, to be retitled as the Anti-Harassment Policy, without any amendments to the document proposed.

126.2 Min. 87 refers - Recommendation of approval of the Internal Audit Report 2024 - 2025 (First Interim)

Members unanimously **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the Internal Audit Report 2024 – 2025 (First Interim), noting no actions were required.

127. Planning and Licensing Committee Meetings of 29th October, 19th November, 10th December ad 23rd December 2024

The Chair of the Committee, Cllr. Mrs. Warr, reported. There were no recommendations to Council.

128. Environmental and Leisure Committee Meeting of 4th November and the Extraordinary Meeting of 2nd December 2024

The Chair of the Committee, Cllr. Batley, reported. There were no recommendations to Council.

129. TO RECEIVE AND CONSIDER MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING OF 9th DECEMBER 2024

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

129.1 Min. 103.3 refers - Recommendation that provision for a 7-day warden service be included in the 2025/2026 Budget, to provide additional presence in the Town Centre with the period of cover defined following receipt of the feedback from the trial. These costs to be offset against Revenue with the amount going into reserves adjusted accordingly

The Town Clerk advised that whilst final figures and a full report for the trial period of providing an additional warden through the month of December 2024 had not yet been received, she had been informed that stock recovery during the month had been two-thirds higher than usual. Whilst it was acknowledged that this could be due to higher levels of shoplifting in the run-up to Christmas, Members were pleased to hear that the initial feedback was positive. This was reiterated by Members of the Council who work in the Town Centre, who recalled countless occasions through December where the additional warden was 'a real asset' with great feedback having been received firsthand from businesses, also adding to the feeling of safety for shoppers and retailers alike. Other Members called the benefits of having a second warden 'invaluable'.

The importance of waiting for a full report before moving forward was understood by all, with the provision of a 7-day warden service being a 'substantial outlay' for the Council. All present concurred that the Town Council needed to obtain full control of the proposed additional warden, including the areas they would cover, whilst understanding the need to work in partnership with the Bognor BID and the warden managed by them, to ensure maximum 'bang for buck' and benefit. Comment was also made about the positive impact the new radios would have, allowing two wardens to communicate with each other and retailers better.

Following a query regarding logistics and available resource for managing the additional warden daily, the Town Clerk confirmed that these would be considerations for a future Policy and Resources Committee Meeting, should the proposal be agreed. It was suggested that Officers contact Haywards Heath Town Council, who operate a similar warden scheme, for advice and information on the logistics.

Commenting about recent changes made by the Bognor Regis BID, the dissolution of the Bognor Regis Regeneration Board, and the proposed devolution mentioned earlier in the meeting, a Member stressed the importance of the Town Council supporting and being actively involved in discussions surrounding investment and regeneration, which had seen much movement in recent times and was key to ensuring a 'flourishing' Town Centre.

Members unanimously **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** that provision for a 7-day warden service be included in the 2025/2026 Budget, allowing for the Policy and Resources Committee to settle the final details regarding the period of cover once the feedback from the trial had been received, with these costs to be offset against Revenue with the amount going into Reserves adjusted accordingly.

129.2 Min. 103.5 refers - Recommendation that an extra £20,000 be placed into the Youth and Young Persons Budget, on top of the £15,000 previously agreed, for 2025/2026 and that the extra provision be funded from the Economic Development Fund

A Councillor commented that this, and the previous, recommendation was as a result of the Town Council attempting to 'plug gaps' left by cuts in funding from the Police and West Sussex County Council. Members were proud of the good work being undertaken by the Town Council in relation to youth services.

It was therefore unanimously **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** that an extra £20,000 be placed into the Youth and Young Persons Budget, on top of the £15,000 previously agreed, for 2025/2026 and that the extra provision be funded from the Economic Development Fund.

129.3 To consider the Bognor Regis Town Council Budget for 2025/2026

Having noted that the decisions taken in reference to budgets required for an additional warden and youth provision would not impact the Income and Expenditure Budget recommended, Members unanimously **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** formal adoption of the Income and Expenditure Budget for 2025/2026.

Cllr. Waterhouse, as Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee, was thanked for his work and input in formulating the 2025/2026 Budget.

130. TO DECIDE THE AMOUNT FOR THE PRECEPT TO BE ISSUED FOR 2025/2026

The Town Clerk's report, including the Budget Summary attached as an appendix, was **NOTED**. Members unanimously **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the Precept amount for 2025/2026 of £1,054,043.

131. TO FORMALLY RECEIVE THE MINUTES, REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEES, AND REFER ANY SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS DECIDED UPON DURING THE MEETING BACK TO THE RELEVANT COMMITTEE, AND RATIFY ANY COMMITTEE ACTIONS AS MAY BE NECESSARY

The Council unanimously **RESOLVED** to 'formally receive the reports, Minutes and recommendations of the Committee, and refer any suggested amendments decided upon at this meeting back to the relevant Committee'.

132. TO NOTE THE LIST OF PAYMENTS AND TRANSFERS MADE IN OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER 2024 AND TO NOTE THE BALANCES, BANK RECONCILIATIONS AND FINANCIAL REPORTS (DECEMBER NOT YET AVAILABLE) AND OUTTURN AND APPROVAL OF THE CONTENTS AND THEIR PUBLICATION

The Council unanimously **RESOLVED** 'to note the payments and transfers

made in October and November 2024 and to note the balances, bank reconciliations and financial reports (December not yet available) and outturn and approval of the contents and their publication’.

133. NOTICE OF MOTION (S.O. 9.0) PROPOSED BY CLLR. S. GOODHEART, SECONDED BY CLLR. D. DAWES

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

“Bognor Regis Town Hall - Cllr. Dawes and I are presenting this Motion to the Council because we believe that at some date in the future, BRTC will have the opportunity to acquire the Town Hall when ADC decides to relinquish its responsibilities and put it on the market. This Motion is to make sure the Town Council is ready for this scenario and is in a good position to engage with ADC and negotiate a favourable deal, as the building is Listed and is a community asset which should be gifted to BRTC. Hopefully, you will support this Motion, in principle, and we can all participate in the discussion that will follow. In preparation for this, I believe we should explore the many different opportunities for which we could use the building both now, and in the future. Setting up a Members/Officers Working Party might be the best vehicle to build up a programme of ideas and uses for the building.

- ***A small budget will be needed to cover the cost of pulling a team together***
- ***Working Party to work out the items to be on the agenda and to create a working schedule***
- ***Engage a professional grant finder/writer to apply for lottery funding etc.***
- ***Engage a structural engineer to enable us to understand what the building needs, to make it fit for purpose – cost implications***
- ***Engage an architect/designer***
- ***There are many trusts that can be approached which support Listed buildings***
- ***Consider incorporating new works to transform the building into a multi-functioning building***
- ***Need to be able to earn an income from the building***

This Motion will give every Member the chance to show support for BRTC to acquire an incredible asset for the Town’s future – The Town Hall.”

Cllr. Goodheart spoke on his Motion, which was seconded by Cllr. Dawes, briefly summarising his proposal.

As the Chair did not deem the issue as urgent, Members **RESOLVED** to instruct that the issue be placed on the agenda for the next Council Meeting, in accordance with S.O. 9a.

134. TO RECEIVE ANY FEEDBACK FROM THE ONLINE COMMUNITY OPEN FORUM HELD ON 29th OCTOBER 2024

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

Members discussed possible reasons for the lack of engagement from the public with this Forum, with one indicating that the problem may have been the time of evening and because the date fell within the half term holidays. Comment was made that unless there was a substantial issue or topic of hot debate in the Town then people did not seem keen to engage, as was evidenced by the lack of members of the public seated in the public gallery.

The Town Council's social media presence was discussed, with some remarking that perhaps as a local authority, the Town Council are a little 'behind' with their use of social media platforms, which if used correctly, can be such a useful tool for promotion of events such as these. Members discussed the benefits of posting a few 'positive posts' a day, which may help gain traction to these platforms. Whilst it was agreed that public information such as disruptions to trains and road closure notices were useful to share, they were not necessarily as eye-catching and interesting as other stories/posts, that the Town Council could look to post more frequently.

Talking more directly again about the Online Community Open Forums and the Town Council's engagement with the public, Members were broadly in agreement that these opportunities should continue, with some suggesting perhaps rather than ending the session if there was no interaction forthcoming, that Members should continue to be 'live' on Facebook, for the hour duration of the scheduled Forum. Other ideas included contacting University of Chichester students, who may be able to offer some useful advice on making the best use of the Town Council's online platforms. It was **AGREED** this would be put on a future Council agenda, for consideration.

Furthermore, it was **AGREED** that, to aid in having a 'starting point' for the next Online Community Open Forum taking place at 6.30pm on Thursday 30th January, Members of the public should be asked to send in any questions in advance of the Forum, for Town Councillors to answer as part of the live session.

135. REGENERATION INCLUDING: - TO NOTE THE PUBLICATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE BOGNOR REGIS REGENERATION BOARD AGM HELD ON 17th OCTOBER 2024 (IF AVAILABLE) (DEFERRED FROM THE LAST MEETING – MIN. 107 REFERS)

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

Cllr. Stanley redeclared his Ordinary Interest as the former Chair and Director of the Bognor Regis Regeneration Board

With the Bognor Regis Regeneration Board now disbanded, the Town Clerk advised that it was unlikely that the Minutes of the AGM held on 17th October

2024, would be received. This was **NOTED**.

Some Members expressed regret over the disbandment of the Board, with all being in agreement that with much regeneration going on in the Town, it was an important time to ensure that regeneration as a whole is still discussed and moved forward, with many keen for the Town Council to take a lead role in this. A Councillor asked those present, who were also Members of Arun District Council, to lobby ADC into forming a 'body' that could steer any such discussions with relevant partners, including the Town Council. This idea was favorable, with a dual-hatted Councillor also stating that ADC should also be more proactive in compulsory purchases of any building in the Town that are derelict, ensuring the general upkeep of the Town and so as not to dampen any of the positive effects of the regeneration projects taking place.

It was **AGREED** that, with the Bognor Regis Regeneration Board now disbanded, consideration of how regeneration is moved forward in the Town should be **REFERRED** to the next Policy and Resources Committee Meeting, as an agenda item. It was further **AGREED** that an agenda item to discuss and provide any important updates on regeneration, should remain on future Council agendas, with it being suggested that a more structured report could be provided by a dual-hatted Councillor.

136. MAYOR'S REPORT AND DUTIES UNDERTAKEN

The Civic & Office Manager's report on the Mayor's activities was **NOTED**.

The Deputy Mayor spoke of her busy schedule of Mayoral events, and how much she had enjoyed those attended so far.

137. TOWN CRIER'S REPORT AND DUTIES UNDERTAKEN

The Civic & Office Manager's report on the Town Crier's activities was **NOTED**.

138. REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Members **NOTED** that reports had been received from the following representatives to other organisations and had been emailed to all Councillors.

138.1 Cllr. Miss. Needs - Bognor Regis Concert Band (President); Stonepillow (Patron).

138.2 Cllr. Mrs. Yeates - Arun District Association of Local Councils (ADALC); Bognor Regis Heritage and Arts Partnership Board.

Verbal Reports:

138.3 Cllr. P. Wells - Having missed the last meeting of the Bognor Regis Youth and Community Centre, Cllr. Wells advised that a copy of the Minutes would shortly be made available to him, to pass to the Town Clerk for Members to view at the Council offices, if required.

139. TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM OFFICERS FOLLOWING ANY ATTENDANCE AT THE MONTHLY ARUN PARISH MEETING WITH THE NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING TEAM

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

Whilst grateful for the update, a Member was keen to understand what resolutions Sussex Police were finding to address the persistent shoplifting and anti-social behaviour in the Town.

140. TO RECEIVE CORRESPONDENCE

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

141. PICTUREDROME SITE UPDATE INCLUDING: DIRECTOR'S REPORT, ANY URGENT ACTIONS TAKEN FOR RATIFICATION, TO NOTE RECEIPT OF £15,000 MANAGEMENT FEE FROM THE BOGNOR PIER COMPANY LTD – FIRST PAYMENT 2024

141.1 Director's report, any urgent actions taken for ratification

The previously circulated Director's report was **NOTED**, with any actions taken, and expenditure **RATIFIED**.

141.2 To note receipt of £15,000 Management fee from The Bognor Pier Company Ltd – First payment 2024

Members **NOTED** receipt of £15,000 Management fee from The Bognor Pier Company Ltd. (first payment for 2024).

141.3 Many Members expressed their frustration with the current state of the Picturedrome Cinema, noting that the ongoing works were taking substantially longer than were promised by the Tenant, with much of the signage outside of the building continuing to be well-outdated, despite promises that this, along with other parts of the façade, would be rectified. Members spoke of their waning patience with the project, with negative social media posts also commenting on the untidiness of the building as well as its disused appearance. The need for weeding of the outside area and replacement of cracked windows were also identified by Members. The Town Clerk confirmed that the outside of the building was the responsibility of The Bognor Pier Company Ltd., and that Town Force had already painted some of the stone around the entrance door, but that the weather needed to be warmer for further painting to take place.

More positively, but whilst agreeing with the comments above, some Councillors expressed their appreciation of having an independent cinema, the size of the Picturedrome, in our Town, something that many larger Towns do not possess.

The Town Clerk advised that she had an upcoming meeting with the Tenant, at which all points discussed could be raised.

Should the Tenant be unable to commit to minor outside remedial works such as weeding, Town Force could complete this work, although this would of course be charged to the Tenant.

Cllr. Oppler left the Meeting

It was **AGREED** that an update from the Town Clerk's meeting with the Tenant would be shared with Members at the next Council Meeting.

The Meeting closed at 8.01pm