



BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

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MINUTES AND REPORT OF THE TOWN MEETING OF THE ELECTORS OF BOGNOR REGIS HELD ON MONDAY 16th MARCH 2026

PRESENT (BRTC)

Cllr. Mrs. G. Yeates - Mayor (in the chair)
Cllr. J. Barrett
Cllr. K. Batley
Cllr. S. Goodheart
Cllr. R. Nash
Cllr. Miss. C. Needs
Cllr. F. Oppler
Cllr. P. Ralph
Cllr. Mrs. J. Warr
Cllr. P. Wells
Cllr. M. White

(Note: Cllrs. Goodheart, Nash, Miss. Needs, Oppler, Mrs. Warr and Mrs. Yeates are also Arun District Councillors)

IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs. J. Davis (Town Clerk)
Mr. M. Hirst (Deputy Clerk)
Mr. D. Azemi (Area Manager for Premier Inn) (part of meeting)
5 members of the public

COPIES OF DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE FOR THE PUBLIC

Notice and Agenda for the Meeting
Minutes of the Town Meeting of Electors held on 17th March 2025
Audited Accounts to 31st March 2025
Proposed Expenditure for the year 2026-2027
Schedule of Councillors' Attendance at Meetings

The Meeting opened at 7.00pm

1. WELCOME BY THE MAYOR AND INTRODUCTION OF COUNCILLORS PRESENT

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and attention was drawn to the evacuation procedure in the event of a fire. Councillors present introduced themselves. Apologies for absence were noted from Cllr. Dawes. No apologies were received from Cllrs. Smith, Stanley and Woodall.

2. TO APPROVE AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN MEETING OF ELECTORS HELD ON MONDAY 17th MARCH 2025 AND ANY MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting of Electors held on Monday 17th March 2025 were considered and agreed as a true record and signed by the Mayor as presiding Chair.

3. TO RECEIVE THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNCIL

The Mayor gave their report (appended to Minutes as **Appendix 1**).

4. TO RECEIVE THE ACCOUNTS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL YEAR ENDING 31st MARCH 2025 AND BUDGET FOR 2026-2027

The Town Council's Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2025 were duly noted and accepted. The Vice-Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee, Cllr. Wells, gave the report on the budget (appended to Minutes as **Appendix 2**).

5. TO RECEIVE THE ACCOUNTS OF THE BOGNOR PIER COMPANY LTD. YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2025 (IF AVAILABLE)

The Accounts were duly noted and accepted.

6. TO CONSIDER RESOLUTIONS OF WHICH WRITTEN NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN BY FRIDAY 13th MARCH 2026

No resolutions were received.

7. TO WELCOME DARDAN AZEMI, AREA MANAGER FOR PREMIER INN, TO GIVE A PRESENTATION AND PROVIDE AN UPDATE IN RELATION TO THE NEW HOTEL ON THE ESPLANADE

Mr. Azemi was welcomed to the meeting and delivered a detailed presentation.

The presentation covered a range of topics including projected revenue, opening date, and the hotel's position within the wider group. Details were provided on the integrated ground floor system, car park arrangements, and overall site information. It was noted that, although risks were marginal, no ground floor bedrooms are included within the design due to flood risk considerations.

Measures to encourage sustainable travel were outlined, including promoting cycling to work to reduce environmental impact and alleviate parking congestion, whilst still providing accessible parking spaces. It was further noted that the development aims to act as a catalyst for further investment in the area.

Additional information was provided on bedroom layouts, supported by visual materials, and confirmation that no commercial bins will be located outside the hotel.

Construction progress was reported as nearing completion, with a readiness update provided.

The hotel also plans to engage in beach and town clean initiatives at opening and intends to support the Mayor's chosen charities through fundraising, alongside employment and apprenticeship programmes.

The Grand Opening is scheduled for 28th April 2026.

Members thanked Mr. Azemi for the detailed and informative presentation.

In response to questions, it was clarified that two kiosks within the hotel will be used for self check-in.

With regard to charitable activity, it was noted that initiatives such as beach cleans are typically undertaken around the time of opening rather than on an ongoing annual basis. The hotel also supports national charities, including Great Ormond Street Hospital, and intends to engage with local charitable initiatives and events.

Concerns were raised regarding accessibility, particularly the absence of accessible rooms on the ground floor. It was confirmed that accessible rooms are provided on the first floor and that this has been fully considered within fire safety planning. Appropriate risk assessments have been undertaken, and staff are trained in evacuation procedures, including the use of evacuation chairs and designated refuge points.

In relation to parking, it was acknowledged that not all guests travel by car, based on experience at other locations such as Worthing. The proximity to a train station was highlighted, and it is anticipated this will reduce reliance on private vehicles. Ongoing discussions with Bognor Regis Town Council and Arun District Council regarding parking provision were noted, with a commitment to minimising impact on local residents.

It was confirmed that the hotel restaurant will provide approximately 100 covers, with additional outdoor seating, and will be open to both guests and non-residents.

In response to questions regarding event sponsorship, it was confirmed that the hotel intends to actively support and sponsor local events and encourage supplier involvement.

It was further confirmed that guests will be encouraged to explore local restaurants as well as the hotel's own facilities, particularly during multi-night stays, with information provided to direct them to alternative venues. Approximately 25% of guests are expected to dine in the hotel for dinner and 40% for breakfast, with the remainder utilising local businesses. A "kids eat free" scheme will also be in place.

Members expressed that they were pleased with the design of the hotel and welcomed the positive and proactive approach presented.

In response to questions regarding security, it was confirmed that robust procedures are in place. Staff are well trained, and additional reminders have been issued following recent national reports of security concerns. A range of security measures will be implemented throughout the hotel.

Questions were also raised regarding pricing displayed online. It was confirmed that the hotel operates a dynamic pricing model, with rates varying based on demand. It was acknowledged that some initial pricing anomalies have occurred due to website errors, which are being monitored and addressed to ensure competitiveness.

8. TO DISCUSS THE FUTURE OF BOGNOR REGIS TOWN HALL

Residents were encouraged to provide their views on the potential purchase of the Town Hall. It was noted that there is limited information available publicly regarding costings and any due diligence undertaken to date. Concern was expressed at the low level of public attendance, which was considered to reflect poorly on local engagement. It was suggested that the Council should consider alternative methods of disseminating information more widely.

Cllr. Batley left the Meeting

Background information was provided, including that Local Government Reorganisation presents a potential opportunity for the Town Council to explore acquisition of the Town Hall. It was confirmed that funds have been allocated to undertake due diligence, with preparatory work currently ongoing. Due to the ongoing nature of negotiations and the fact that Arun District Council had not at the time made much information public themselves, there were limitations on the level of detail that could be shared at this stage. A comparison was made to the Picturedrome as a similar local asset.

A member of the public asked what would become of the Town Hall if the Town Council did not acquire it. Cllr. Nash, who is also the Deputy Leader of Arun District Council, noted that if Bognor Regis Town Council does not proceed with a purchase, Arun District Council may market the building elsewhere and is unlikely to retain it for long-term use. It was further suggested that demolition could be a possibility. Reference was also made to the potential for a new unitary authority to require a presence in Bognor Regis, with the Town Council potentially acting as landlord.

9. BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL'S PROGRAMME OF EVENTS FOR THE YEAR

Cllr. Nash left the Meeting

The Vice-Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee, Cllr. Wells, gave a brief report on some of the upcoming free events planned for 2026, which he stated were all available to view on the Town Council's website.

Residents were pleased at the many events mentioned for 2026, and it was clarified that the Laser Show, which had been scheduled for February and cancelled due to weather, was being rescheduled for October.

10. OPEN FORUM WITH QUESTIONS TO COUNCILLORS/ATTENDEES

The Mayor invited members of the public to put any relevant questions to the Council.

With no questions being put forward, the Mayor thanked all those present for attending.

The Meeting closed at 8.31pm

Good evening and welcome to Bognor Regis Town Council's Annual Town Meeting of Electors for 2026.

This evening is dedicated to you, our Electorate. It's your opportunity to guide the discussion in whatever direction matters most to you — to raise issues and ask questions about the topics that affect you and our Town. Your elected Town Councillors are here tonight and will do their very best to provide answers wherever they can.

You will shortly hear from the Area Manager of the new Premier Inn Hotel, situated just next door, who will be providing an update on, and take questions regarding their presence in the Town and how they hope to enhance the local community.

Serving as Mayor has been a true privilege, and it's so rewarding to see the progress we are making as a Town, particularly with significant projects now moving forward. Your Town Councillors are as committed as ever to ensuring a strong, successful future for Bognor Regis, that benefits all.

We have, as always, given careful consideration of the continued economic pressures on local people, when setting the budget for this coming year, and we will have some more specifics to share with you, later in the evening.

This year really has been so enjoyable, and I'm honoured to have been invited to so many wonderful engagements. At the beginning of my tenure, I had the pleasure of attending the Bognor Regis Armed Forces Day event, commemorating the 80th Anniversary of VE Day, an important event for our Town and all around the Country. The 'Out of this World' Carnival and 'Drive through Time Motor Gala' were certainly highlights of the summer and toward the latter part of the year, The Bognor Regis Puppet Party, Southdowns Music Festival and of course the Town Council's 'Big Switch at 6', during which the brand-new Christmas lights were illuminated for the first time, were all particularly enjoyable. Most recently, the 'Inspiration' train came to Town, with a spectacular celebration of Britain's rich railway heritage, marking two centuries since the dawn of the modern railway age and I have also enjoyed many recitals, concerts, awards ceremonies and openings along the way.

It's been a true privilege to have supported two amazing charities, throughout my year – Stonepillow and My Sisters' House. Both local charities do so much for those most in need in our local community and it's been eye-opening getting to know even more about their work over these past few months. I hope to raise further funds to support them, in these last weeks in my role.

A big thank you to the Deputy Mayor, Cllr. Paul Wells, and all my fellow Town Councillors and staff for supporting me, and of course, thank you to everyone who has been kind enough to have invited me to their engagements. Every one of them has been a genuinely rewarding experience, and it has been wonderful to connect with people from all parts of our community who are so dedicated to their work and passionate about making Bognor Regis an even better place to call home.

Before we begin tonight's proceedings, I wanted to pay a small tribute to Cllr Bob Waterhouse, who we very sadly lost, just a few weeks ago. Bob was a well-respected and dedicated Councillor and friend, serving on the Town Council since 2021. As Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee, Bob strove to make a difference to the electorate he so dutifully served. His kindness, compassion, determination and ability to see from other points of view, made him an excellent Town Councillor, colleague and friend. We, of course, pass on our condolences to

his loved ones at this very difficult time.

Thank you to you all for being here, to contribute to this year's Annual Town Meeting of Electors. We are looking forward to hearing from you all.

Members of Bognor Regis Town Council unanimously decided to set the council precept at £1,104,229 at the Full Council meeting held on 5th January 2026. This represents an increase of 4.76% that amounts to an additional charge of £2.31 per annum, based on a Band D property.

The Council made this decision knowing that any increase would be unwelcome in the general economic environment of today which continues to be difficult for many people. However, with this moderate increase, the Council will be able to run the full range of services and events that are important to the residents of Bognor Regis.

We have used this increase to provide further funding for the local youth work organisations and will continue to offer a variety of free entertainment both by running our own events and supporting outside bodies to run events by providing financial contributions.

Details can be found on the Town Council website
www.bognorregis.gov.uk