



BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

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MINUTES AND REPORT OF THE TOWN MEETING OF THE ELECTORS OF BOGNOR REGIS HELD ON MONDAY 28TH MARCH 2011

PRESENT (BRTC)

Cllr Mrs S Daniells - Town Mayor (in the chair)
Cllr E Anderson
Cllr J Brooks
Cllr G Burt
Cllr D Eldridge
Cllr S Kerrigan
Cllr J Passingham
Cllr K Scutt
Cllr Mrs J Warr
Cllr P Wells

(Note: Cllrs Brooks, Mrs Daniells, Mrs Warr and Wells are also Arun District Councillors and Cllr Wells is also a West Sussex County Councillor)

IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs G Frost (Town Clerk)
Mrs S Holmes (Minutes Secretary)
Mrs R Hambleton (Minutes Secretary)
One representative of the press
Seventy (approximately) 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 29th March 2010
Audited Accounts to 31st March 2010
Proposed Expenditure for the year 2011/2012
Schedule of Councillors' Attendance at Meetings

The Meeting opened at 7.10 pm

1. WELCOME BY THE TOWN MAYOR AND INTRODUCTION OF COUNCILLORS PRESENT

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that this was an opportunity for electors to hear what the Council had been doing over the past year and for Councillors to hear the views of the electors. Any points raised would be noted and passed on to the new Council after the May Election. The Mayor pointed out that there could be no political references during the meeting, due to the purdah imposed in the lead up to the Elections. Town Councillors in attendance were then introduced.

2. **TO APPROVE AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN MEETING OF ELECTORS HELD ON MONDAY 29TH MARCH 2010 AND ANY MATTERS ARISING**

The Minutes of the Town Meeting of Electors held on Monday 29th March 2010 were considered and agreed as a true record, and signed by the Town Mayor as presiding Chairman. There were no Matters Arising.

3. **TO RECEIVE THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNCIL**

The Town Mayor gave her report – copy attached to Minutes.

4. **TO RECEIVE THE ACCOUNTS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL YEAR ENDING 31ST MARCH 2010**

The Chairman of the Policy & Resources Committee, Cllr G Burt, reported on the Accounts of the Town Council to year ending 31st March 2010. He reported that the Council received no grant from Central Government and relied on the Precept for its income but nonetheless had heeded the request from Central Government not to impose an increase this year. The Reserves are still quite healthy. The cost of the loan to purchase the Picturedrome will be paid for by the Council Tax over the next 25 years. The Council's Building Fund is being used to undertake the repair works needed. The staffing budget has also been reduced due to two senior members of staff leaving (one to another job and one into retirement). A staffing review had been undertaken and a re-structuring had taken place.

Following a question from the public as to why the existing cinema operator had not been offered the lease, Cllr Burt explained that as Mr Cunard was also a Town Councillor it was felt that in the interest of transparency the Council should seek expressions of interest from other operators. This was also to protect Mr Cunard as, should he be confirmed as the new tenant, it would be shown this was on merit and not due to his Council connections. Cllr Burt also explained that the income from various parts of the building would provide income to cover the running costs.

The Accounts were duly noted and accepted.

4. **TO CONSIDER RESOLUTIONS OF WHICH WRITTEN NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN BY FRIDAY 25TH MARCH 2011**

The following **Resolution** had been received:

'This meeting deplores the tendency for councils to blame each other and instructs the Town Council to work more closely with other Parish councils, Arun District Council and the County Council to develop the town's attractiveness as a seaside resort.'

Proposed by Jean Coles and **Seconded** by S Jones.

This Resolution was debated at some length by the Meeting. Comments included: having a Town Council that included all of the 6 parishes in the greater Bognor Regis area; that the Town Council already worked with Arun and County Council but it's job was to look after the Town; that Bognor Regis did not get the same support from Arun as Littlehampton does; that should the Town Council seek to withdrawn from Arun, this was a move away from that being proposed by Central Government, which is encouraging the sharing of resources. Following the debate, the amended proposal was put forward:

'This meeting deplores the tendency for councils to blame each other and instructs the Town Council to work more closely with other Parish councils to develop the town's attractiveness as a seaside resort'

A vote was taken and the result was 35 Yes and 2 No. Accordingly the amended Resolution was passed.

6 & 7. **WHAT SHOULD THE INCOMING TOWN COUNCIL DO? AND TO DEAL WITH ANY OTHER QUESTIONS**

The Mayor asked that the meeting should put forward suggestions as to what the new Town Council should do. The following issues were raised:

Town Centre

- Big name stores to be encouraged
- More seating in London Road
- Praise for the work done by Town Force, especially the flower displays

Railway Station

- Railway Station something of an eyesore. This area could be developed as a vibrant centre
- Re-instatement of seating at Station

Highways

- Issue of traffic using the pedestrianised area at the junction of London Road and the High Street, and also Sudley Road
- Problem of drop kerbs being too high for safe use by electric wheelchairs
- Traffic outside of Bingo Hall – parking on double yellow lines. Also outside of Morrisons
- Pot holes in local roads, especially Longford Road and by Tesco's (Cllr Wells reported that work is due to start on Longford Road in April)

Seafront

- Provision of all weather facilities
- Provision of Lido
- Improvement to skate park facilities
- Cycling on seafront – dangers this poses. Also, it is unclear as to when cycling is allowed on the Promenade and this needs to be clarified
- Fishing equipment near Felpham something of an eyesore

Parking

- Suggestions for 2 hour free parking
- Problems of parking permits in Marine Drive West
- Lack of traffic wardens to enforce parking restrictions

Other

- Very pleased with the programme of events run in the town. Would it be possible to have more for children, especially in Hotham Park
- Nothing for teenagers to do in the Town
- Provision of static barbeques in Hotham Park
- New Museum – when are new road signs going to be put up for this. (Cllr Burt responded that this is already being looked at by the Council. He thanked Jenny Jones, whose support had allowed the Museum building to be purchased, and also the Local History Society for their work. The Museum was a good example of the Town Council working with local people and organisations)
- Information on local community art group
- Request that the Town Council look at the issue of overhanging hedges causing problems to pedestrians. It was suggested that perhaps an article could go in the next Newsletter
- Comment on the excellent level of classical music provision in the Town
- Comment on the improvements to the Ice House – resident would like thanks to be passed on to Arun
- Although the continued use of the Picturedrome as a cinema was good for the town, could it be considered for other uses. Could the Town Council re-locate its offices to unused space in the building? It would also make a very good community performance / art space

Regeneration

- Concern that the Bognor Regis Regeneration Sub-committee is being amalgamated

with the Littlehampton Regeneration Sub-committee. Would the Town Council ask Arun to re-consider this decision?

The following written questions had been received:

‘Brighter Bognor is very impressed with proposals for a Watersports Centre at Gloucester Road as a jointly funded social enterprise or charitable trust. Does the Town Council support this opportunity for major organisations in the town to collaborate in a significant regeneration initiative?’

- The Mayor confirmed that existing Councillors were fully supportive of this project and she felt sure that the new Council would also support it.

‘Over the past 15 years, how has the Town Council responded to ADC’s offer of a Free Parking scheme, similar to the one which operates in Littlehampton and how has it used its influence with Traders to contribute as do their Littlehampton counterparts?’

- Cllr Brooks responded to this. In previous years a parking scheme had been started in the town, with the Chamber of Commerce involvement, where motorists took a ticket and could then get a refund or special offer in local shops. However, this had not worked well and had been abandoned. The ‘clock’ scheme is now being considered. ADC has said that the Town Council has been offered this and it has been rejected but Cllr Brooks does not remember this situation. There are many different ways of offering free parking for the Town.

‘Is it possible for Councillors’ seating in the Town Hall chamber to be turned through 180 degrees so that members can more readily engage with the public?’

- Cllr Brooks responded to this. He is very keen that this should be done and hopes that the new Council will take a similar view. There is an issue with the furniture though, as it was designed specifically to fit as it does.

‘The first (question) being the Bognor College (University of Chichester), there is expansion going on at the moment to accommodate more students, yet there is no provision for parking for all these extra students. I live on the Glenwood Estate and we are bursting at the seams with students parking on all roads to the rear of the College. Busses, lorries and emergency vehicles have one hell of a job to get through during term time. We have been promised action from the College in the past, but sadly nothing has happened. Please tell me where these extra students are going to park their cars.’

- Cllr Wells reported that he had recently met with the Vice Chancellor, who is keen to get on top of this problem. The Town Council would be working with ADC and also WSCC to try and find a solution.

‘Second point is ASDA, why on earth have they been turned down from developing a field on the A29 and bringing hundreds of jobs into the town, we are desperate for jobs in this town, just look at the unemployment figures. No, I do not want a job, I am retired, I just don’t want to see this town dying. Chichester said ‘yes’, so why can’t we. I do know ASDA are still interested in the site’

- Cllr Brooks replied that all of the ward Councillors had voted for this but had been outvoted by members from outside wards. Sainsbury permission had been given as the site was designated for retail, whereas the Oldlands Farm site was not. ASDA had been offered the Lec site but had turned it down.

Before closing the Mayor asked for some indication as to how people knew about the meeting.
Newsletter – 21 A Boards – 12 BR Observer – 18

The Town Mayor thanked all present for attending and closed the meeting.

The Meeting closed at 8.57 pm

Annual report

I have been very honoured to serve as the Mayor of Bognor Regis this past year. During that time I have represented the council and the town at many and various occasions.

One of my first engagements was to visit one of our twin towns, St Maur Des Fosse, where it was very exciting to see the name of Bognor Regis emblazoned on the town square and inside the town hall! More recently I visited Wiel am Rhine for their Mayor's New Year civic reception, where the Germans (well those who could understand me!) were delighted to hear about what goes in Bognor Regis, and were particularly interested in hearing about the new Butlins hotel and the International Birdman Event. In turn we were delighted as a council to show off the brand new Regis School when a group of Germans came over to Bognor Regis for a twinning reception here.

Closer to home I have been proud to represent your town at many civic receptions, as well as coming along to charity functions, and community organisations to help promote good causes, or to speak about the Town and my role as Mayor. This includes the Guides, the Sea Scouts, the U3A, International Womens' Day, and the Princes' Trust, to name but a few. Indeed it has most been enlightening to talk to all kinds of people from a variety of organisations and schemes, and to find out more about exactly what they do. Needless to say I have been consistently impressed by the efforts and activities taking place which I may not otherwise have been fully aware of.

I would add that I have found that people are consistently positive and passionate about our town, and want to see it flourish and prosper, without losing its' inherent seaside charm. That will be hard to achieve, but it is not impossible if we all work together, and really listen to what the people want.

As well as attending engagements and events organised by others, I have also been present at Bognor Regis Town Council's own events, as have my colleagues on the council, when we are all really delighted to have been part of something for everyone in the community to enjoy and appreciate as well as attracting other people into our Town. It is very satisfying to see something come together after all the planning and stress in the run up to it!

I would now like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank our new Town Clerk, Glenna Frost and her small but exceedingly effective team of officers. Without the officers the Town would not see such events as the carnival and the recent clown convention actually happen, as they do all the hard work while we councillors sit back and come up with the bright ideas! I know that I speak for all of us town councillors when I say thank you to all the officers for your assistance and support throughout this past year.

So what has the council done for you since the last Annual Electors meeting?

Quite a bit... councillors have worked well together as a team, and we have achieved a great deal this past year.

This includes a complete staffing review and restructure, to save money and heighten efficiency. More importantly we appointed a new clerk-only the fourth clerk of the Bognor Regis Town Council

since its inception, so not an everyday occurrence by any means. This so far has meant nothing but positive changes to the way the council runs and operates, and has brought a breath of fresh air to the town hall!

We have continued to wholeheartedly support Town Force who I think of all us appreciate, as we see them daily go about their business keeping our town clean and tidy and performing numerous other tasks.

Some of our smaller achievements include reinstating Olbys Clock to its rightful place, replacing a public bench in Pevensey Ward, and a new one by the Regis Centre, and erecting the new town boundary signs.

We have continued to support other organisations with grants and allocated town force time, and we have maintained our commitment to Tourism, by continuing to stage our very comprehensive Events Programme and publishing the Town Guide.

The most significant achievement however is the one you are sitting in right now, which was the historic purchase of the Picturedrome Cinema, the very first property the council has owned.

There is a full programme of refurbishment planned to restore it to its former glory and the council hopes to be able to confirm shortly that agreement has been reached on a lease with the preferred operator.

I hope that the people of the town now feel confident that it is now in safe hands and that it will continue to be a treasured and much loved asset for the benefit and enjoyment of residents, families and visitors for many years to come.

Finally, I must add that it is with great pleasure that I can also inform you that we are not increasing our part of the council tax this year in spite of purchasing this building, and that we have not cut any services that we currently provide.

Thank you, and we look forward to hearing your suggestions, comments and questions as the evening progresses.