



BOGNOR REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

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MINUTES AND REPORT OF THE TOWN MEETING OF THE ELECTORS OF BOGNOR REGIS HELD ON MONDAY 20TH MARCH 2006

PRESENT (BRTC)

Cllr Mrs J Warr, Town Mayor (in the chair)
Cllr S Allen
Cllr D Eldridge
Cllr J Hayward
Cllr S McDougall (also a West Sussex County Councillor)
Cllr Mrs S Olliver
Cllr R Probert
Cllr Ms White
Cllr K Scutt

(ADC)

Cllr I Harding
Cllr P Wells
(Note: Cllrs Mrs Olliver, Mrs Warr and Scutt are also Arun District Councillors)
One Representative of the Press

IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs K Gill (Town Clerk)
Mrs G Frost (Deputy Clerk)
Mr P Beckerson (Projects & IT)
Mrs H Knight (Minutes Secretary)

COPIES OF DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE FOR THE PUBLIC

Notice and Agenda for the Meeting
Minutes of the Town Meeting of Electors held on 8th March 2005
Audited Accounts to 31st March 2005
Balances and Expenditure to 14th March 2006
Proposed Expenditure to 2006/2007
Schedule of Councillors' Attendance at Meetings
Reports from Cllr White as representative to 3 Outside Bodies
Report from Sussex Police Authority

District Councillor Jan Cosgrove and Town Councillor R Nash had asked that their apologies be noted.

The Meeting opened at 7.30pm

1. TO APPROVE AND SIGN THE MINUTES OF THE TOWN MEETING OF ELECTORS HELD ON MONDAY 8TH MARCH 2005 AND ANY MATTERS ARISING

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Minutes of the Town Meeting of Electors held on Monday 8th March 2005 were agreed and signed by the Town Mayor as presiding Chairman.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 8TH MARCH 2005

A Councillor drew attention to the fact that at last year's meeting, members of the public had requested that the Town Council pursue the matter of purchase of the Town Hall.

3. TO RECEIVE THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNCIL

The Mayor thanked the Chairman of Policy & Resources for the work that he had put into the accounting and budget for this year and also the staff involved in this area, whose support to Councillors was much appreciated.

Speaking about notable events and achievements over the past year, the Mayor commented on the Council's pride at having won the Silver Gilt in the South & South East In Bloom competition for 2005, which we would be entering again this year with the addition of entry into the Britain in Bloom competition.

The Mayor commented on the recent welcome return of the clowns to Bognor Regis and the success of the Clowns Parade, which large numbers of people watched despite the cold weather. Thanks were given to Cllr Mrs Sylvia Olliver for instigating the event by opening discussions between the clowns and Butlins, and to the members of staff involved in the negotiations.

The Mayor handed over to Mr Paul Beckerson, who gave a detailed update on the projects being carried out under the SRB Project funding, the majority of which would be completed by autumn 2006.

Continuing her report, the Mayor said that she was very happy that the Council budgeting had enabled quality events to be put on in the town, bringing in the tourists that the local businesses and shops depended on.

In concluding, the Mayor spoke of the sad and difficult decision Councillors had recently had to make not to purchase the Town Hall. She emphasised that the public were of the utmost importance in the decision made, bearing in mind that they would ultimately bear the financial burden of increases in the precept that would be caused, as well as the constraints put on future administrations were the Town Hall to have been purchased.

4. TO RECEIVE THE AUDITED ACCOUNTS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL YEAR ENDING 31ST MARCH 2005

The Chairman of Policy & Resources Committee reported on the Accounts of the Town Council to year ending 31st March 2005. It was noted that these had not yet been ratified by the auditors but that this was a matter of standard procedure and there were no irregularities. The unaudited accounts for year ended 31st March 2005 were duly noted.

5. TO RECEIVE DETAILS OF BALANCES AND EXPENDITURE UP TO A DATE AS NEAR AS POSSIBLE TO 31ST MARCH 2006

Details of the balances and expenditure to 14th March 2006 were duly noted and the Chairman of Policy & Resources Committee said that he would be happy to answer any questions.

6. TO RECEIVE OBSERVATIONS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL ON THE PROPOSED EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR 2006-2007

The Chairman of Policy & Resources Committee reported on the proposed expenditure for 2006-2007 and advised that at the end of this year the Council would be in a good position financially. The overall flexibility within the budget would ensure that the precept in future years would be kept to a minimum.

The Chairman then detailed some of the events the Council had agreed to support financially, both in partnership with volunteer groups and as Council run events. These included Bognor Birdman, POCAG and the Pevensy Festival, the Christmas Lights (taken over for the first time by the Town Council), Bognor Regis Town Football Club, Rox Music Workshops and a week long Music Festival to be run by the Council. The majority of the music and festival style events were taking place in the deprived areas of the town. The important part played by the Council's staff was acknowledged and the Chairman thanked the excellent team who the Council could be proud of for their unstinting efforts and support. The forthcoming year would see the continuation with some of the projects already underway, such as SRB work and the In Bloom competitions.

The Chairman reported that £10,000 had been budgeted for a soon to be created Bognor Regis Regeneration Co-ordinator post in partnership with other authorities. It was vital for the Council to invest in this post in order to maintain a voice in the future regeneration of the town.

A Councillor queried the intentions regarding the future of the Buildings Fund and sought assurance that it would remain intact. Responding, the Chairman stated that there were no immediate plans to spend the fund but that any possible projects arising would be considered by all Councillors in the proper way.

7. TO RECEIVE ANY WRITTEN REPORTS FROM THOSE APPOINTED TO REPRESENT THE TOWN COUNCIL ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

It was noted that Sussex Police Authority, who had been invited to attend the meeting, were unable to send a representative but had provided a report, copies of which were available.

Cllr M White reported to the meeting regarding the three groups she is representative to and in response to a question about the opening times of the No 18 Club, explained that funding and security issues affected to this.

Cllr M White spoke on behalf of District Cllr J Cosgrove, who sent his apologies but wished to thank the Town Council for its involvement in the salvation of the Alexandra Theatre, which with much hard work from volunteers was envisaged as being open again in June.

8. TO RECEIVE ANY OBSERVATIONS FROM COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS FOR THE AREA

In his absence, District Cllr J Cosgrove asked the meeting to note his concerns regarding; severe parking problems, the lack of enforcement of the 20mph limit and general problems with Home Zone. He considered that these serious issues needed addressing with West Sussex County Council with the full support of Arun District Council and Bognor Regis Town Council. He was also concerned over the building of so many flats in Bognor Regis without the associated infrastructure.

Cllr K Scutt (ADC) reported regarding Marine Ward, which he has represented for eight years. Last year he had stated that matters to do with deprivation were slowly progressing but he felt now that instead things were going backward. The parking situation had worsened, with many cars now parking on double yellow lines and disregarding legislation. According to a police survey, Marine Ward is by far the most violent in the district and also it appeared suffered the most ill-health, with life expectancy four years below the average for the Chichester, Bognor and Midhurst area covered by the Western NHS Primary Care Trust. He considered this may be attributable to the fact that the ward seems to get left out of regeneration plans and housing mostly consists of flats with no parking and insufficient supporting infrastructure, very little area being available for children to play. It appeared also that the majority of houses under multiple occupation and available for people receiving benefits were within Marine Ward.

Cllr P Wells (ADC) reported regarding Hotham Ward. He added his thanks to the Council for the superb Clowns event and hoped this could be built on. The omission of the town carnival would be a sad loss this year and he hoped something could be done to revive the event in the future. He was very concerned at traffic problems with the whole area of Bognor Regis often becoming gridlocked, a situation that desperately needed resolving. On the positive side, the forthcoming redevelopment of the Regis and Hothamton sites would hopefully bring benefits to the town and the restoration of Hotham Park was progressing well. He brought attention to a meeting being held the next day at Arun District Council regarding the closure of public toilets.

Cllr I Harding (ADC) reported for Marine Ward. Cavendish Road and Devonshire Road had at last been cleaned after long delays and he had been assured a minimum of three cleans per year will take place. He advised that he was on the Bognor Regis Steering Group and reported that matters were progressing well and has also been appointed Chairman of the Tourism Working Group developing a tourism strategy for the district.

The boating lake at Hotham Park would be reinstated and he suggested that during autumn/winter it could be used as an open air ice skating rink.

Cllr S McDougall (WSCC) reported as the County Councillor on various issues: Housing and the infrastructure deficit were issues of great concern. Many houses were multiple occupancy and/or flats with associated parking problems. The South is generally considered to be an affluent area by Government and this is reflected in the initiatives handed down. Grass cutting in the area is something he gets most complaints about and the number of cuts is to be increased from seven to eleven this year. Bus services are due to be increased due to the uptake of free bus passes. Elizabeth House has been approved for conversion to a sixty bed nursing home, taking overspill from Kings Haven in Pagham. The new Bognor Regis Community College Vocational Studies Centre has opened, bringing beneficial resources to the area. The deterioration of surfaces in the Home Zones area was noted and would be brought to the notice of County.

9. TO CONSIDER RESOLUTIONS OF WHICH WRITTEN NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN BY FRIDAY 17TH MARCH 2006

None had been received.

10. TO DEAL WITH ANY OTHER QUESTIONS

Councillors were asked whether the Town Council would be giving financial assistance to the theatre in view of the cancellation of funding aid last year. The Chairman of Policy & Resources Committee explained that EMR rollover and Town Force allocation had been agreed and that the clerk is looking into what accounts would be required from the theatre in order to hand over any grants. No set of audited accounts would be available since this was a new organisation running the theatre but the Council would need to be satisfied that all was financially in order first.

The Mayor in summing up thanked everyone for attending, staff for their hard work and envisaged that all Councillors would work together during the coming year for the overall good of the town.

The Meeting closed at 8.40pm