

Minutes of the Meeting of Full Council held in Rickards Hall on 30 October 2023 at 7:30 pm

Present: Cllrs. Jon Aldridge, Angela Baker (*Vice-Chairwoman*), Sarah Compton, Michael Gemmell Smith, Alan Layland, Nicola Martindale, Stuart McGregor, Vince Parker, Angela Read, Jeff Streets, Stephen Sumner, Bob Todd (*Chairman*)

In attendance: Town Clerk, Community Warden and Minutes Clerk. There were no members of the public or press present.

Meeting opened 19:31

The Chairman welcomed Kevin McGovern, new Community Warden, to the meeting and congratulated him on his appointment.

1 To Receive Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received, noted and accepted from Cllr, McArthur; Cllr Streets had been delayed.

19:32 Cllr S Compton joined the meeting.

2 Declaration of Interests or Predetermination

Cllr S Compton – Agenda items 12 and 15.2, being secretary of the Rugby Club

3 Public Questions and Statements

19:35 Meeting was adjourned for agenda item 3.

19:35 Meeting was reconvened

4 To receive, adopt and sign the minutes of the Council meeting held on 11 September 2023 (2023-017/01-06)

Resolved: that the minutes of the Council meeting held on Monday 11 September be duly signed by the Chairman as a true and accurate record (23-017/01-06)

5 To receive County and District Councillor Reports

5.1 County Councillor

County Councillor McArthur's apologies had been received – no report.

5.2 District Councillors

Cllr Layland reported that at a meeting on 17 October it was agreed Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) would allocate an extra £2.7million to enable the planned development on Spitals Cross estate to proceed. Cllr Baker had attended the same meeting.

Cllr J Morgan had submitted apologies for absence.

6 To adopt the following reports/minutes of meetings

19:34 Cllr A Read joined the meeting.

Members noted that due to staffing resources some minutes were yet to be published but had been included to note the meetings.

6.1 Planning Committee meetings 25 September 2023-019/01-02; 16 October 2023-021/01-03

Resolved: to adopt the minutes of meetings 25 September 2023-019/01-02; 16 October 2023-021/01-03

6.2 Finance Committee 24 July 2023-xx/01-02; Finance & Governance Committee 09 October (minutes to be published)

Resolved: to adopt the the minutes 24 July 2023-012/01-02 (and noted the October meeting).

6.3 Personnel Committee meetings 05 September 2023-016/01; 19 October 2023-XXX (tbc)

Resolved: to adopt the the minutes of 05 September 2023-016/01 (and noted October meeting).

6.4 Open Spaces Committee 18 September 2023-18/01-tbc

Noted: the minutes would be presented to the next Open Spaces Committee (6 November) and full Council.

6.5 Forward Planning Steering Group 23 October 2023-xx/01-xx (tbc)

Noted the meeting held on 23 October, and the recommendations were under agenda item 7.3.

7 To receive recommendations from Committees

7.1 To receive recommendations from Finance & Governance Committee

7.1.1 To note: AGAR has received a clean audit by the external auditor and the note the Notice of Conclusion of Audit was published 27 September

Members were pleased to note the receipt of the external Auditor's report and clean audit had been reported to the Committee 09 October, and published on the Council's website.

7.1.2 To note: Governance Risk Assessment Annual Review

Members noted Cllrs Sumner, Compton and the Town Clerk had reviewed the Governance Risk Assessments (October). Committee had approved these and were now published on the website, under Polices page/Risk Assessments. Members had no comments, and,

Resolved: the Governance Risk Assessments for October 2023.

7.1.3 To approve the updates to the Terms Of Reference

Committee had received some procedural updates to the Terms of Reference, and recommended to full Council to confirm and adopt the updates. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to confirm and adopt the updates and amendments to the Terms of Reference.

Cllr J Streets joined the meeting

7.1.4 Adult Safeguarding Policy: To receive and approve draft policy

Committee had received a draft safeguarding policy which it recommended to full Council to adopt. This was prepared following a recent review of the Games Club, when it came to light that the Council did not have a specific safeguarding policy. Last month, the Town Clerk, RFO and the volunteers of the Games Club all had DBS checks carried out. As grant funder for the Club, Involve Kent has also reviewed the draft policy.

Resolved: to confirm and adopt the safeguarding policy.

7.2 To receive recommendations from Personnel Committee 19 October

19:33 Cllr Streets joined the meeting.

7.2.1 To ratify the appointment of the Grounds Apprenticeship - Kai Day

Members unanimously,

Resolved: to ratify the appointment of Grounds Apprentice Kai Day.

7.2.2 To ratify the appointment of the Community Warden - Kevin McGovern

Members unanimously,

Resolved: to ratify the appointment of Kevin McGovern as Community Warden.

7.2.3 To ratify the appointment of the Open Spaces Officer

Members unanimously,

Resolved: to ratify appointment of a new Open Spaces officer, appointment details in negotiation.

7.2.4 To ratify the appointment of a temporary meeting minutes Clerk

Members unanimously,

Resolved: to ratify temporary appointment of a meeting minutes clerk.

The Clerk mentioned that Committee had also recommended expenditure for finance support, of up to £1,000 per month.

7.3 To receive recommendations from the Forward Planning Steering Group

Members noted the report and the outcome of the review of the Strategic Forward Plan, with some projects removed, others moved to operational activities. Funding for projects had been considered, and a recommendation made for Finance Committee to consider in preparing the draft budget.

7.3.1 Annual events - to include a budget of £10k for an annual community event

19:42 Cllr Read left the meeting.

Members supported a proposal to include funding for community events, but for Finance Committee to review affordability alongside other expenditure,

Resolved: to consider including £10k budget funding for annual community events.

7.3.2 To support a budget of £5k to improved cyber security and compliance service improvements and upgrade

Following September Council decision to carry out an appraisal of cyber security and compliance service, Forward Planning Steering Group (FPSG) supported its inclusion in the Forward Plan recommending a budget of £5k to be included.

Resolved: to include a £5k budget to improve cyber security and compliance service.

19:44 Cllr Read re-joined the meeting.

8 To receive reports and any recommendations from working groups; delegated reports; clerk's and officers' reports

8.1 Clerk's Report

Members received and noted the Clerk's report. Of note, the litter clearance for the Bonfire Society's annual parade (4 November) had been booked and confirmed with SDC; there continued to be some unauthorised parking issues in Council car parks; Cemeteries had several plots with unauthorised memorials and not compliant with the cemetery regulations; and Members expressed their disappointment at the closure of the Post Office in Paydens. Members also noted the ongoing issues with two residents who had unauthorised gates and access on the Recreation Ground, these matters remained to be managed by the Council's solicitor and advice being taken and the solicitors instructed accordingly.

9 Matters arising from the minutes for report and not elsewhere on the agenda

9.1 Thursday Market: To receive an update on Christmas activities

Members noted the proposed additional activities at the Market in the lead-up to Christmas which included a 'write your letter and post to Santa' table at market days 30 November, 7 and 14 December and on 21 December, Santa's elves (and Santa may appear if he is not too busy) will be in the market giving out a small gift to anyone who wrote to Santa (with a few spare gifts).

9.2 To receive an update on maintenance work for Rickards Hall

Members noted that the surveyor's report and 10-year maintenance plan for the facility were still awaited. This would help prioritise immediate works to address the damp issues, and to plan for repointing and internal repairs.

9.3 Edenbridge Remembrance Sunday 12th November 2023

Members noted the arrangements for a morning parade from Leathermarket at 10.30 am to the War Memorial for 11.00 am wreath-laying service, and that the parish church would also hold a church service in the afternoon. The organising group with the Council had included the Royal British Legion, the Bonfire Society, the Parish Church, the Scouts, and the Town Band.

9.4 Council vacancies

It was noted no by-election was called for either of two vacancies, now to be filled by co-option. Advertisement for interested candidates would take place in the next few weeks, for presentation to Council.

10 Considerations for budget 2024/25

Members considered the following proposals for inclusion in the draft budget:

10.1 Summer Play Days: To approve a budget of £3,300 for four summer play days

Resolved: to set a budget of £3,300 for four summer playdays.

10.2 Review of 10-year maintenance Plans for Church House and Doggetts Barn, budget of £2,400 for two building surveys with new 10-year plans

Resolved: to set a budget of £2,400 for two surveys, of Church House and Doggetts Barn, with reports and new maintenance plans.

11 Draft Local Plan second phase, Reg 18: To consider engaging a consultant to assist the Council its response and to set a budget for the current year and the next year, 2024-25

Members considered a report on the likely timetable for consultations on Sevenoaks' draft Local Plan for development numbers and locations, and the potential costs of professional consultant support to help prepare Town Council's response to proposals. The draft Local Plan Reg 18 second phase consultation was expected to open 23 November and close 11 January 2024.

Resolved: to allocate £3,000 from the contingency budget in the current financial year, and £10,000 in 2024-25 budget to allow for consultants advice.

Members noted an initial meeting with the consultant had been arranged for 3 November.

12 Pavilion: To receive a report on recent mould issue at Football Changing room area

20:03 Cllr Compton left the meeting.

Members received a report on a mould issue which had arisen in the football changing room area, including steps taken to investigate the matter to date. Reports were awaited which would help define responsibilities and the Council's position. The Council's insurance company had provided an

independent company to assess the issues and provide a leak expert. After some discussion regarding the way forward, it was,

Resolved: to task the Lease Negotiation Group with continuing investigation of the current function and potential improvement of the ventilation system. Cllr Layland to join the Group bringing his prior expertise to the issue.

Resolved: members agreed cleaning responsibilities were not the Council's as Landlord, and as the report had concluded the mould was not the result of the current issues in the roof void, it was not Council's responsibility. However, it would work with the Club to investigate improved ventilation options.

20:17 Cllr Compton re-joined he meeting.

12.1 To ratify the expenditure for the surveyor to review the Pavilion and 10-years maintenance plan, £1,200.

Following delegated approval (by Town Clerk and Vice-chairman) for engaging a surveyor to review the Pavilion and 10 year maintenance plan, members were asked to ratify the cost. Members unanimously,

Ratified: the expenditure of £1,200 for a surveyor to review the Pavilion and its 10 year maintenance plan.

13 Pavilion replacement windows and new electric shutters: To receive the tenders and confirm contractor

Members considered a report on the results of the public tender process for the project which had £85k CIL funding allocated. From 10 expressions of interest only three tenders were submitted, which the Clerk and the Buildings Manager had reviewed. They recommended the mid-price contractor at £57,176 plus VAT. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to engage rite Doors to carry out the works to the Pavilion windows at £57,176 plus VAT, and to allow 10% contingency in addition for any changes and "making good".

14 To confirm the revised and update byelaws for the Council's open spaces and car parks are now ready for an application to the DLUHC for confirmation and approval

Members noted the report on the 'publication of notice' of intent to apply for confirmation of revised and updated Byelaws which had taken place during August and September, and had been reported to the Open Spaces Committee (September). The next step was to apply to DLUHC for confirmation, so that Council could proceed. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to apply to the DLUHC for confirmation and approval, and to adopt the proposed Byelaws subject to that approval.

15 OTHER BUSINESS including items referred from Committees for decision

15.1 To approve the contract renewal with Worknest for Employment Law & HR Support, Health and Safety Audits for a further 5-years, and the annual expenditure of £2,533, plus Legal Expenses Admin fee cover £55 pa and Legal Expenses Insurance (employment claims) £227.50 for 14 employees

Members considered the contract renewal for Employment Law and HR Support, Health and Safety Audits, for a further five years at an increase of £120.21 pa on the current cost. In addition, there was cover for legal expenses admin fee at £55 pa (no change) and £227.50 pa insurance (saving £31.50) for legal expenses against employee employment claims. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to renew the 5-year contract with Worknest, at £2,533pa, plus £55pa for legal expenses admin fee, and £227.50pa for legal expenses insurance.

15.2 To receive a request to permit a refreshment trader to trade from the Recreation Ground Pavilion Car Park at weekends

20:27 Cllr Compton left the meeting.

The Rugby Club had been unable to provide refreshments for teams from the Pavilion, and the Town Clerk with the Open Spaces Committee Chairman had granted temporary permission until the end of October for a trader to sell coffee and refreshments from the car park off Coomb Field (not part of the Club's lease). Members discussed options for the way forward, but with updated information that the arrangement may soon no longer be needed. Members unanimously,

Resolved: to extend the temporary arrangement, if needed, until May 2024, for one trader to sell refreshments from the Coomb Field car park, to be managed by the Rugby Club, and for the Club to be responsible for ensuring necessary certification, insurance, risk assessment, and litter clearance after each session.

16 Consultations

16.1 The draft High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029 - closes 5 November 2023

Noted.

17 To receive reports from councillors who have attended meetings of outside bodies

Cllr Martindale reported attendance at the WI Hall Management Committee, where assistance for grounds maintenance had been requested. Members noted this had since been costed for groundstaff time, and accepted, for the day's work to be programmed.

Cllr McGregor highlighted the upcoming meeting of the Twinning Association to formally close the activity, on 9 November.

18 To consider any press releases

The adoption of updated Byelaws would be publicised once approved and adopted.

19 Matters for future agendas

Noted – Neighbourhood Plan; draft 2024-25 budget.

20 Date of next meeting - 04 December

Noted.

The Meeting ended at 20:42