

**COUNCIL**

18 December 2023

Minutes of the Council meeting held at the Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea, on Monday 18 December 2023 at 6:30pm.

Present: Councillors Mrs V. Cook (Chair), J. Barnes (MBE), Mrs M.L. Barnes, C.A. Bayliss, A.E. Biggs, S. Burton, F.H. Chowdhury, C.A. Clark, S.J. Coleman, B.J. Coupar, G.R.M. Delany, B.J. Drayson, K.M. Field, N. Gordon, P.J. Gray, T.O. Grohne, L. Hacking, A.P. Hayward, T.M. Killeen (MBE), M.C. Legg, C.R. Maynard, R.A. McCourt, A.S. Mier, D.B. Oliver, P.N. Osborne, C. Pearce, A. Rathbone Ariel, H.L. Timpe and C.J. Winter.

Present remotely: Councillors T.J.C. Byrne, C.A. Creaser, A.K. Jeeawon and R.B. Thomas (Vice-Chair).

Advisory officers present: Chief Executive, Director - Place and Climate Change, Interim Monitoring Officer and Democratic Services Manager.

Also present: 3 members of the public in the Council Chamber and 15 members of the public via the live webcast.

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C23/55.      **MINUTES**

The Chair was authorised to sign the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 18 September 2023 as a correct record of the proceedings.

C23/56.      **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A.E. Ganly, Mrs E.M. Kirby-Green, S.B. McGurk, S.M. Prochak (MBE) and J. Stanger.

C23/57.      **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Coupar      Agenda Item 7 – Personal Interest as a Council appointed Director of the Council’s wholly owned Housing Company, Rother DC Housing.

Field      Agenda Items 7 and 9 – Personal Interest as an elected Member of East Sussex County Council.

Maynard      Agenda Items 7 and 9 – Personal Interest as an elected Member of East Sussex County Council.

Thomas      Agenda Item 7 – Personal Interest as the Chair of the Council’s wholly owned Housing Company, Rother DC Housing.

Timpe            Agenda Item 9 – Personal Interest as a Director of Old Town Occasions Limited which manages the Manor Barn, Bexhill on Sea.

C23/58.        **CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS**

The Chair made the following announcements:

- Since September, the Chair had met many people who gave so much time and energy to support charities and agencies across the district and she thanked them from the bottom of her heart, this would be a poorer area for so many people if it were not for them.
- In September, the Chair had attended the High Sherriff's service and reception for Sussex volunteers including an amazing charity that supported prisoners and their families, Rother Voluntary Action, Little Gate Farm as well as the emergency services.
- The Chair represented Rother District Council at the annual judges' service at St Annes church in Lewes. A procession of Mayors Chairs and Judges was impressive as they crossed the road into the small ancient church.
- In her role she chaired meetings of the Rother Rural Trust, which offered support to families in the rural areas who were enduring hardship and attended board meetings and networking events run by Rother Voluntary Action (RVA). In addition, the Chair attended the Annual General Meeting of the RVA where awards were presented to volunteers across the district including Battle, Northiam, Robertsbridge and Rye. Councillors had the opportunity to nominate local people for awards such as these and groups that made a difference to their wards, as a nominee for the Kings Award for Volunteers.
- One such voluntary group was Family Support Work and at the reception in Rye Town Hall, the Chair was pleased to learn that although numbers of families being referred by schools, doctors and Churches had increased, the early intervention had made a difference in many families.
- The Chair had attended several meetings concerning 1066 Marketing, and liaised with English Heritage, receiving updates on planned improvements to sites across the South East, and she was pleased to advise that many of them were green and ecologically sound.
- The Chair continued to support the Little Gate Farm charity and was very grateful to Council officers and staff who made and sold cakes to raise monies for this charity and Super Santa who raised just under £500. Several Councillors purchased tickets for the 10-year anniversary dinner dance at the Relais in Little Common in October and their contribution helped raise an astounding £10,000.

- The Chair represented the Council at St Mary's Church in Battle laying the wreath at the memorial there, Councillor Thomas represented the Council in Bexhill and Councillor Creaser represented the Council at St Mary's Church in Rye. The Chair and Councillor Thomas attended a Prayer breakfast at the Winter Gardens in Eastbourne hosted by the High Sherriff where Dr Krish Kandiah spoke sincerely and warmly about his experiences as a foster carer.
- A rather surprising engagement was at the Emmanuel Centre in Battle where the Chair was invited to speak about how her faith helped with her role as a councillor and as a Chair.
- In November, the Chair attended the Rother all-staff event at the De La Warr Pavilion and judged the competition for best home baked cake which was a courgette and lime cake decorated with raspberries and cream and she was pleased to present the prize to Elinor Drew. Each Council department had made a video describing their role and introducing their team. The Chair hoped that these could be shown to Members, as it would help to see what they do in a different light.
- The Chair was honoured to be invited to Retrotech a small industrial unit in Northiam where Mr Black and his team restored war planes and were currently building a plywood Mosquito plane which should be in the air in 2027! Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal was in attendance, and the Chair was honoured to be presented to her as Rother's Chair.
- The Chair had attended two Mayoral Carol Services at Eastbourne and at Seaford and three Christmas Concerts, at Wadhust with Battle Community Singers and Bodiam Concert Band, Bexhill Choral Society and the most amazing concert with 100 school children from Bexhill, Hastings and St Leonards singing together with the Hastings Advanced String Orchestra and an absolutely amazing percussion band from Hillview Academy in Brighton. Create music with East Sussex County Council in partnership with the De la Warr Pavilion.
- In the new year, the Chair hoped to receive some invitations from some of the more northerly and westerly areas too.
- The Chair wished all Members a very happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year.

C23/59.

#### **MEMBER QUESTION TIME**

1. Pursuant to Paragraph 12 of the Council Procedure Rules the following question was put by Councillor Thomas and answered by Councillor Oliver.

**Question:** Would the Leader of the Council outline, for the benefit of Members of the Council and the public, the good work being

done by the District Council, both directly and through partners, to welcome and support refugees?

**Answer:** The Council can demonstrate a strong and longstanding commitment to working with partner organisations and the community to support refugees to resettle in Rother. Since its inception in 2016, Rother has been an active participant in the UK Resettlement Schemes. Our participation includes welcoming refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and, in more recent years, Ukraine. The Council will continue to support the wider community to remain active and willing participants in the UK Resettlement Scheme. We will also continue to fulfil our role in facilitating Home Office colleagues with their programme of asylum seeker placements throughout the various regions of the UK.

**Supplementary Oral Question:** Would the Council confirm an application to the Sanctuary Network be considered?

**Answer:** Rother will continue to build upon our track record for successfully resettling refugees within our emerging Corporate Plan, alongside its related Equalities and Diversity Policy, as well as the wider resettlement activity within the anti-poverty, housing, homelessness and community safety approaches.

The Council feels very strongly that we should continue to support refugees in Rother and will explore joining the Sanctuary Network and how we continue this good work through the Rother Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group.

2. Pursuant to Paragraph 12 of the Council Procedure Rules the following question was put by Councillor Osborne and answered by Councillor Bayliss.

**Question:** Can the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Development reassure local Ward Members in Eastern Rother and Rye that following the closure of Pontins in Camber Sands the Council will remain in contact with Britannia Hotels and either encourage or work towards a solution to what could be a very serious issue with a large site becoming derelict and unused.

Whilst it is not in the best of condition, Pontins has provided cheap holidays for many visitors and their spend helps the local economy in both Camber and Rye.

**Answer:** The Council recognises the importance of the Pontins Holiday Park as a local employer and holiday destination. As freeholder, we have reached out to the owners of Pontins to discuss their proposals for the future of the site, but have yet to receive a response. The Council are writing further correspondence in relation to concerns about the condition of the site and its facilities and would hope to hear something early in the new year.

In relation to jobs, we have had confirmation from the Department for Work and Pensions that the company have notified them of their intention of making staff redundant which is disappointing given the time of year and approach to Christmas. We are also in contact with Rye Chamber of Commerce in response to their offer to work with us and other agencies to source alternative employment opportunities.

I can assure Members in Rye and Eastern Rother that we will do all we can to minimise the impact on the local economy and trust that the site eventually comes back into use as a holiday park.

C23/60. **REPORT OF THE CABINET ON MATTERS FOR DETERMINATION BY COUNCIL**

1. It was moved by Councillor Oliver and seconded that the reports of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 9 October, 6 November and 11 December 2023, as set out in the Agenda, be approved and adopted.

2. The Chair of the Council having called over the reports, the following Minutes were reserved for discussion:

6 November 2023                      CB23/40 and CB23/41

3. On the Motion of the Chair of the Council, duly seconded, the Council approved and adopted the following reports, with the exception of the Minutes reserved for discussion:

CB23/29 - Rother District Council Owned / Leased Accommodation Policies

CB23/30 - The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA)

CB23/39 - Discharge of Homelessness Duty to a Suitable Private Rented Property Policy

CB23/49 - Climate Strategy 2023

CB23/50 - Street Naming and Numbering Policy

CB23/51 - Coronation Living Heritage Fund

C23/61. **RESERVED MATTERS**

**Cabinet - 6 November 2023**

**CB23/40 – REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING AS AT QUARTER 2 – 2023/24**

**CB23/41 – BLACKFRIARS HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT**

**RESOLVED:** That Minutes CB23/40 and CB23/41 be approved and adopted, as submitted.

(Councillor Coupar declared a Personal Interest in this matter as a Council appointed Director of the Council's wholly owned Housing Company, Rother DC Housing and in accordance with the Members'

Code of Conduct remained in the room during the consideration thereof).

(Councillors Field and Maynard each declared a Personal Interest in this matter as elected Members of East Sussex County Council and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the room during the consideration thereof).

(Councillor Thomas declared a Personal Interest in this matter as Chair of the Council's wholly owned Housing Company, Rother DC Housing and in accordance with the Member's Code of Conduct remained in the room during the consideration thereof).

C23/62. **REPORT OF THE AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

1. It was moved by Councillor Drayson and seconded that the report of the Audit and Standards Committee meetings held on 2 October and 4 December 2023, be approved and adopted.
2. The Chair of the Council having called over the reports, none of the Minutes were reserved for discussion.
3. On the Motion of the Chair of the Council, duly seconded, the Council approved and adopted the following reports:

AS23/28 - Risk Management Update  
AS23/38 - Dispensation Policy

C23/63. **REPORT OF THE LICENSING AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

1. It was moved by Councillor Rathbone Ariel and seconded that the report of the Licensing and General Purposes Committee held on 27 November 2023, be approved and adopted.
2. The Chair of the Council having called over the report, the only Minute was reserved for discussion:

27 November 2023                      LG23/08

3. On the Motion of the Chair of the Council, duly seconded, the Council proceeded to deal with the reserved Minute.

C23/64. **RESERVED MATTER**

**Licensing and General Purposes Committee - 27 November 2023**

**LG23/08 – POLLING PLACES REVIEW**

**RESOLVED:** That Minute LG23/08 be approved and adopted, as submitted.

(When it first became apparent, Councillors Field and Maynard each declared a Personal Interest in this matter as elected Members of East

Sussex County Council and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the room during the consideration thereof).

(Councillor Timpe declared a Personal Interest in this matter as a Director of Old Town Occasions Limited which manages the Manor Barn, Bexhill on Sea and in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct remained in the room during the consideration thereof).

C23/65. **WAIVER OF SIX-MONTH COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE RULE**

Members considered the report of the Chief Executive that sought a waiver for Councillor Sue Prochak in respect of the six-month councillor attendance requirement, in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, on the grounds of ill-health.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that during this period, Councillor Prochak would be replaced on Cabinet by Councillor Killeen who would take on the current Planning Portfolio and associated work and Councillor Field would become Deputy Leader. Councillor Killeen relayed Councillor Prochak's appreciation of support and thanked the Leader and Democratic Services Manager for their understanding and considerable help.

Members wished Councillor Prochak a speedy recovery and acknowledged that her experience and knowledge would be sorely missed.

It was moved by Councillor Bayliss and seconded by Councillor Mrs Barnes that the recommendation be amended by the addition of the following words:

4) the whole Council wishes Sue all the best for a speedy recovery.

**RESOLVED (unanimously):** That:

- 1) Councillor Prochak be granted a waiver in accordance with Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds of ill-health from the date of her last attendance at a formal committee meeting<sup>[1]</sup>;
- 2) the changes to Cabinet, Deputy Leader of the Council and Committee Membership be noted;
- 3) the arrangements for the outside bodies to which Councillor Prochak is appointed be noted, as detailed within the report; and
- 4) the whole Council wishes Sue all the best for a speedy recovery.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Subsequently confirmed as Cabinet on 11 December 2023.

**CHAIR**

The meeting closed at 7:19pm.