

MINUTES
of
A Meeting of New Romney Town Council
Held in the Assembly Rooms, New Romney
on Wednesday 10th January 2024
Commencing at 6.45pm

PRESENT: The Right Worshipful the Mayor of New Romney,
Councillor John Rivers

Town Ward:

Councillors: J Davies, P Carey, D W Wimble, L Phillips and
Rev Cn S McLachlan

Coast Ward:

Councillors: P Thomas, J Hiscock, P Coe, K Terry, A Meredith,
L, Glover, S O'Hare and E Carr

In Attendance:

Town Clerk	-	Mrs C Newcombe
KCC Councillor	-	Cllr Hills
2 Members of Public		

IN THE CHAIR

The Mayor – Councillor J Rivers

In the absence of the Mayor's Chaplain, Cllr Rev Cn McLachlan led those present in prayer.

@6.46PM the business of the meeting commenced.

449/2023-24 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received and noted, as follows:

Councillor Hodges - who was unwell

450/2023-24 **DISPENSATION TO PARTICIPATE**

No new applications for Dispensation to Participate had been processed by the Town Clerk.

451/2023-24 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

@6.47PM All Councillors present declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) in respect of the setting of the Annual Precept, confirming that they have been granted dispensation to participate and vote in respect of this matter. (Minute Ref: 465/2023-24 refers.)

Councillor Hiscock also declared a personal interest in Town Council finance reports due to her employment of a contractor who is also employed by the Town Council. (Minute Ref 463/2023-24 refers.)

Councillor Thomas declared an Other Significant Interest (OSI) in respect of Agenda Items 14(ii) and 23. (Minute Refs 462/2023-24(ii) and 471/2023-24 refer.)

452/2023-24 **REPORT OF THE KENT COUNTY COUNCILLOR**

The written report from the Kent County Councillor, which included updates relating to flooding and highways matters, was duly received and noted.

@6.53PM Councillor Glover joined the meeting.

453/2023-24 **REPORTS OF THE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS**

FHDC Councillor Thomas' written report, which included details of meetings attended, local response to recent surface water flooding and Ward Grants awarded to date, was duly received and noted with questions having first been put and answered.

FHDC Councillor Wimble's written report, having been circulated at the meeting, included details of meetings attended and response to recent local flooding. The report was duly received and noted.

454/2023-24 **ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING**

It was not necessary to adjourn the meeting as no public questions or statements had been received in writing.

455/2023-24 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

None.

456/2023-24 **RE-CONVENING OF MEETING**

Not applicable.

457/2023-24 **MINUTES**

The Chairman presented the minutes of the **Full Council Meeting** held on **13th December 2023**, copies of which had been previously circulated to all Councillors and it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Coe
SECONDED BY: Councillor Davies

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 13th December 2023 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

Councillors Glover, Phillips and Wimble abstained from voting as they had not been present at the afore-mentioned meeting.

The afore-mentioned minutes were duly signed by the Chairman of the Council.

458/2023-24 **MAYOR'S REPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS**

(i) The Mayor's report regarding civic engagements attended since the last meeting of Full Council was duly received and noted.

(ii) No additional communications of note had been received by the Town Mayor.

459/2022-23 **TOWN CLERK'S REPORT**

The Town Clerk's report was received and noted and read as under:

Actions completed since the Full Council meeting held on 13th December 2023

1) In accordance with the formal Town Council resolution (Minute Ref: 425/2023-24(ii)), all required documentation was submitted to the **Public Works Loan Board**, allowing New Romney Town Council to draw down on a £1 million pound loan for the purpose of part-funding the Community Hall, Sports Pavilion and Nursery Project. The afore-mentioned funds were transferred to the Council on Thursday 21st December 2023. The PWLB loan repayment schedule was received and the loan will mature on 21st December 2063. On 14th December 2023, the Loan Agreement Date, interest rates had actually decreased, resulting in a small reduction on the fixed payments amounting to approximately £4,000.00 per annum less than anticipated.

Additional Items of report

1) Permission has been granted for **use of an image of a printed proclamation** for Suppressing of Pirates (document ref: NR/ZPr447) within a TV documentary to be broadcast on the NDR and ARTE channels. Permission was subject to crediting New Romney Town Council (as the owner and official depositor of the archived document).

2) The metal detectorist exploring **Coney Banks in Church Road** with the consent of the Town Council has unearthed some interesting finds to date:

14th Century Artefacts

- Medieval strap end
- Medieval sword pommel
- Medieval rowel spur

20th Century Artefacts

- Small bronze 1914 George V commemorative medal

460/2023-24 **CAPITAL PROJECTS REPORT**

(i) The Community Hall, Sports Pavilion and Nursery Project Update Report was duly received and noted.

(ii) The Community Hall, Sports Pavilion and Nursery Project Financial Report was duly received and noted.

461/2023-24 **STANDING ORDER NO.14**

No questions had been submitted in accordance with Standing Order 14.

462/2023-24 **STANDING COMMITTEES**

(i) Councillor Thomas presented the minutes of the **Finance & General Purposes Committee** budget meeting held on **11th December 2023**, which were duly received and noted.

(ii) Councillor Rivers presented the minutes of the **Personnel Committee** meeting held on **20th December 2023**, which were duly received and noted and it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Hiscock

SECONDED BY: Councillor Davies

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that consideration of recommendations identified under minute reference: 434/2023-24(iii) be deferred to private and confidential session.

(iii) Councillor Coe presented the minutes of the **Planning and Environment Committee** meeting held on **3rd January 2024**, which were duly received and noted.

463/2023-24 **RFO'S FINANCIAL REPORTS FOR 2023-24**

(i) The Clerk presented final payments and receipts and final bank reconciliation for the month of **November 2023**, which were duly received and noted and it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Davies

SECONDED BY: Councillor Thomas

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that the finance reports for the month of November 2023 be hereby received and approved.

Payments and receipts for the month of **November 2023** being in the amounts as detailed below:

November 2023	Receipts:	Payments:
NatWest Current Account:	£152,718.89	£202,718.89

Unity Trust Current Account:	£5,910.95	£346.95
Lloyds Bank Business Account:	£202,211.60	£57,579.37
NatWest Business Reserve Account:	£4,510.42	£151,544.49
Petty Cash:	£300.00	£69.93
Lloyds Bank Corporate Card:	£316.11	£272.84
Lloyds Bank Instant Access Online Saver	£552.90	£0.00

(ii) The Annual Summary Report regarding the LGPS (Local Government Pension Scheme) Kent Pension Fund was duly received and noted.

464/2023-24 **COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES' REPORTS**

There were no Council Representatives' reports on this occasion.

465/2023-24 **PRECEPT REQUIREMENT 2024-25**

Having duly considered the draft budgetary requirement for 2024-25 and the resulting Precept requirement for 2024-25, it was:

(i)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Davies
SECONDED BY: Councillor Terry

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that additional contributions to Reserve Funds and 2024-25 Budgets from the 2024-25 budgetary requirement and resulting Precept be hereby approved, in light of a reduction in anticipated PWLB (Public Works Loan Board) repayment costs by £4,083.00, as below:

- **Play & Miscellaneous Equipment Reserve Fund + £1,000.00**
- **ICT Replacement Reserve Fund + £500.00**
- **Festivities Reserve Fund + £500.00**
- **Festive Lighting Reserve Fund + £500.00**
- **St. Martin's Field Charity Budget 2024-25 + £1,583.00**
- **Total: £4,083.00**

(ii)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Davies
SECONDED BY: Councillor Thomas

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that New Romney Town Council’s net budget requirement for 2024-25, in the amount of £396,952.00, be hereby confirmed and approved.

(iii)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Davies
SECONDED BY: Councillor Coe

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that New Romney Town Council’s Precept requirement for 2024-25, in the amount of £396,952.00 be hereby confirmed and approved.

(iv)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Thomas
SECONDED BY: Councillor Carr

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that the Town Clerk be authorised to submit the formal Precept demand to Folkestone & Hythe District Council by the due deadline and, in consultation with the Chairman of the Council, to issue a relevant press release.

The Clerk was thanked for the detailed and clear report that supported the Council in considering this matter.

466/2023-24 **KALC COMMUNITY AWARD SCHEME**

Having duly considered potential nominations for the 2024 KALC Community Award Scheme, it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Terry
SECONDED BY: Councillor Thomas

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that New Romney Town Council shall nominate Mrs Frances Wire for a posthumous KALC Community Award.

467/2023-24 **EVENT PROPOSAL**

Having duly considered a proposal to resurrect a community music event on St. Martin’s Field and having come to a consensus that more information was required , it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Rivers
SECONDED BY: Councillor Terry

RESOLVED – that the afore-mentioned Event Proposal be deferred to the next meeting of Full Council for further consideration.

468/2023-24 **LAND USE ENQUIRY**

Having duly considered a request to use an area of Town Council land known as Coney Banks for siting and management of bee hives and

having established that the tenant farmer had confirmed that this would be of no concern in respect of sheep grazing on this site, it was:

(i)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor McLachlan

SECONDED BY: Councillor Wimble

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that [subject to NRTC terms and conditions of use to be communicated by the Clerk] use of an identified area of Coney Banks for installation and on-going management of bee hives, be hereby approved.

(ii)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Rivers

SECONDED BY: Councillor McLachlan

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that a peppercorn rent in the amount of £5.00 per annum be charged in respect of the afore-mentioned activity.

@7.44PM one member of public left the meeting.

469/2023-24 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

@7.46PM, having duly considered the nature of matters to be discussed, it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor O'Hare

SECONDED BY: Councillor Davies

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that due to the sensitive personal information about to be considered, which may serve to identify one or more individuals, it is advisable in the public interest that the Public and Press be temporarily excluded and they are now instructed to withdraw.

KCC Councillor Hills and one remaining member of public left the meeting at that time.

470/2023-24 **ON-GOING MATTERS**

The Clerk confirmed that there were no matters of report on this occasion.

471/2023-24 **PERSONNEL MATTERS**

@7.46PM, in light of the fact that output recommendations following a formal grievance procedure were about to be considered, and in light of their respective roles within the procedure, the Town Clerk and Councillor Thomas left the meeting.

The recommendations of the Personnel Committee, which were put to Council as a result of detailed review of an independent third party

grievance investigation report, were then considered by the Council and the outcome of deliberations was recorded by the Chairman.

@8.15PM, during consideration of the afore-mentioned item of business, Councillor Wimble left the meeting.

Having duly considered this matter, it was:

(i)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Hiscock

SECONDED BY: Councillor Coe

RESOLVED – that New Romney Town Council hereby confirms that a Grievance Complaint has been upheld by an independent, third party investigator, finding that Councillor Wimble has been rude and aggressive towards an NRTC Officer and caused additional work pressure on the relevant Officer over vexatious requests. This has been deemed to be an act of bullying.

Voting:

FOR 9

AGAINST 1

ABSTAIN 2

(ii)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Meredith

SECONDED BY: Councillor Rivers

RESOLVED – that New Romney Town Council confirms that Councillor Wimble is in contravention of the Vexatious Communications Policy and, as a result, shall be barred from direct communication with the relevant NRTC Officer for a period of five months (to the end of the current civic year).

Voting:

FOR 9

AGAINST 1

ABSTAIN 2

(iii)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Meredith

SECONDED BY: Councillor Coe

RESOLVED – that New Romney Town Council confirms it has been concluded by the independent report that, in addition to the finding of bullying of a Council Officer, which is in contravention of the adopted Code of Conduct, Councillor Wimble also knowingly published, in the public domain, inaccurate information. Consequently, Councillor Wimble shall be reported to Folkestone & Hythe District Council’s Monitoring Officer for breaching the Councillor Code of Conduct and Standards*.

Voting:
FOR 9
AGAINST 0
ABSTAIN 3

*The Chairman of the Council being the designated person in respect of submitting the formal Code of Conduct Complaint.

@8.48PM the Town Clerk and Councillor Thomas re-joined the meeting.

472/2023-24 **LAND AND TENANCY MATTERS**

The Clerk confirmed that there were no matters of report on this occasion.

473/2023-24 **CONCLUSION OF PRIVATE SESSION**

@8.49PM it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Rev Cn McLachlan

SECONDED BY: Councillor Terry

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that the confidential session be hereby concluded.

The Chairman thanked the Councillors and Clerk for their attendance and the meeting then concluded **@ 8.49PM.**

NB: All documents referred to herein are available at the Town Hall for perusal on request, except for those documents of a sensitive / legal nature discussed in private session, including documents relating to staff matters which remain Private and Confidential in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

Minutes prepared by the Town Clerk

This page has
been left
blank
intentionally