

MINUTES
of
A Meeting of New Romney Town Council
Held in the Assembly Rooms, New Romney
on Wednesday 7th February 2024
Commencing at 6.45pm

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

Town Ward:

Councillors: J Davies, P Carey and L Phillips

Coast Ward:

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

In Attendance:

Town Clerk	-	Mrs C Newcombe
KCC Councillor	-	Cllr Hills
FHDC Councillor	-	Cllr Wimble

IN THE CHAIR

The Mayor – Councillor J Rivers

In the absence of the Mayor's Chaplain, who had conveyed his apologies for absence to the Town Mayor, the formal business of the meeting commenced **@6.45PM.**

504/2023-24 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received and noted, as follows:

Councillor Meredith	-	for personal reasons
Councillor Rev Cn McLachlan	-	for personal reasons
Councillor Houston	-	for personal reasons

Apologies were also subsequently received from Councillor Hodges who had a medical appointment.

505/2023-24 **DISPENSATION TO PARTICIPATE**

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

506/2023-24 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

@6.46PM Councillor Hiscock 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 518/2023-24 refers.)

507/2023-24 **REPORT OF THE KENT COUNTY COUNCILLOR**

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

508/2023-24 **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.

FHDC Councillor Wimble's written report for January 2024, which included details of meetings attended and planning matters, and his written report for February 2024, which was circulated at the meeting, were duly received and noted.

509/2023-24 **ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING**

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

510/2023-24 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

None.

511/2023-24 **RE-CONVENING OF MEETING**

Not applicable.

512/2023-24 **MINUTES**

The Chairman presented the minutes of the **Full Council Meeting** held on **10th January 2024**, copies of which had been previously circulated to all Councillors and it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor O'Hare

SECONDED BY: Councillor Carey

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that the minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 10th January 2024 be approved and signed as a true and correct record.

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

513/2023-24 **MAYOR'S REPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS**

There were no Mayoral reports on this occasion.

514/2022-23 **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 10th January 2024

- 1) The Town Council nomination on respect of a KALC Community Award for 2024 has been duly submitted.
- 2) Confirmation that the Council has approved the use of an area of Coney Banks for Beehives has been duly conveyed to the relevant party and arrangements for a meeting to discuss terms and conditions are in hand.
- 3) The matter of a proposed community party event, which was due to be further considered at this meeting, has now been postponed to the next meeting of Full Council due to the addition of an important contractual matter which will require the full attention of the Council. The relevant party has been informed of this change.

Additional Items of report

None.

Town Clerk

30th January 2024

Further Items of Report

The Clerk verbally reported that there had been a recent spate of vandalism at the rear of the Assembly Rooms and that this had culminated on Monday of this week with two fluorescent lighting tubes being smashed across the bonnet and windscreen of a vehicle belonging to a Town Council employee. It was further reported that this matter had been reported to Kent Police and that the local Police Officer had agreed to maintain a passing watch over the Assembly Rooms car park.

515/2023-24 **CAPITAL PROJECTS REPORT**

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

(ii) The Community Hall, Sports Pavilion and Nursery Project Update Report was duly received and noted and it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Terry

SECONDED BY: Councillor Coe

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that consideration of confidential reports associated with this item of business be deferred into confidential session.

(iii) Having duly noted that in March 2019, New Romney Town Council had passed a resolution to name the proposed community facilities as the 'Imbert Hall' in respect of a first floor community hall and the 'New Maude Pavilion' in respect of a ground floor sports pavilion and having also noted that this project had subsequently evolved, now consisting of two adjacent buildings that will provide a wide range of community facilities and services, thus requiring a more unified name as a whole, it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Phillips
SECONDED BY: Councillor Terry

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that (i) the resolution passed under minute reference 737/2018-19 regarding the naming of the proposed community facilities to be delivered at Station Road Sports Ground be hereby rescinded and (ii) the proposed new facilities be formally named as ‘The Maude Community Centre’

516/2023-24 **STANDING ORDER NO.14**

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

517/2023-24 **STANDING COMMITTEES**

(i) Councillor Thomas presented the minutes of the **Finance & General Purposes Committee** budget meeting held on **17th January 2024**, which were duly received and noted.

(ii) Councillor Coe presented the minutes of the **Planning and Environment Committee** meeting held on **24th January 2024**, which were duly received and noted.

518/2023-24 **RFO’S FINANCIAL REPORTS FOR 2023-24**

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

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Thomas
SECONDED BY: Councillor Terry

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

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

December 2023	Receipts:	Payments:
NatWest Current Account:	£102,742.26	£52,742.26
Unity Trust Current Account:	£0.00	£343.20
Lloyds Bank Business Account:	£1,053,938.78	£22,857.80
NatWest Business Reserve Account:	£4,108.84	£101,567.86
Petty Cash:	£0.00	£70.01

Lloyds Bank Corporate Card:	£317.28	£169.42
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Lloyds Bank Instant Access Online Saver	£571.36	£0.00
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519/2023-24 **COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES' REPORTS**

There were no Council Representatives' reports on this occasion.

520/2023-24 **NOLAN PRINCIPLES & CODE OF CONDUCT**

Having duly noted the Code of Conduct adopted by New Romney Town Council, including the Nolan Principles identified therein, and having also duly noted that every Member of the Town Council had formally signed a declaration to abide by the afore-mentioned Code of Conduct, including the Nolan Principles referred to within that Code of Conduct , it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Rivers

SECONDED BY: Councillor Coe

RESOLVED – that it be formally confirmed that adherence to the adopted Code of Conduct and the Nolan Principles identified therein are applied in an equitable manner in respect of all New Romney Town Council Members.

521/2023-24 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

@7.05PM, having duly considered the nature of matters to be discussed, it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Thomas

SECONDED BY: Councillor Hiscock

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that due to the sensitive contractual and/or personal information about to be considered, which may serve to compromise contractual negotiations and / or which may serve to identify one or more individuals, it is not in the public interest that the Public and Press remain and they, therefore, be temporarily excluded and are now instructed to withdraw.

KCC Councillor Hills and FHDC Councillor Wimble left the meeting at that time.

522/2023-24 **MAUDE COMMUNITY CENTRE PROJECT – CONTRACTUAL MATTERS**

The Chairman of the Project Steering Group provided background to the current status of the project and highlighted the project design that had now been granted Planning Consent as well as the proposed 48 week programme of works and the potential impact on use of the main football pitch during the construction period.

Having noted these matters and having then given due consideration to the Confidential Report on Tenders submitted by the appointed Project Management Company and the Clerk's supporting confidential report, which identified the range of funding matters associated with delivering this project, it was:

(i)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Phillips

SECONDED BY: Councillor Davies

RESOLVED – that Kent Structures Ltd be formally identified as the preferred contractor for delivery of the Maude Community Centre project and it be hereby confirmed that the Design and Build Contract be awarded to the identified contractor*.

*The Design and Build Contract in the amount of £3,291,506.24 was, therefore, awarded to Kent Structures Ltd.

Councillor Carey voted against the motion and requested that his vote be recorded.

(ii)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Carr

SECONDED BY: Councillor Terry

RESOLVED – that Synergy Construction and Property Consultants be authorised to issue a Letter of Intent to the preferred contractor*.

*A Letter of Intent was, therefore, to be issued to Kent Structures Ltd.

Councillor Carey voted against the motion and requested that his vote be recorded.

(iii)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Thomas

SECONDED BY: Councillor Hiscock

RESOLVED – that the Town Clerk/Proper Officer be authorised to sign the relevant Design & Build contract, with a value of £3,291,506.24 (excluding employer's contingency, employer's consultant fees, employer's FF&E and VAT) -to be subsequently drawn up by Synergy Construction and Property Consultants on behalf of New Romney Town Council; this to be witnessed by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council.

Councillor Carey voted against the motion and requested that his vote be recorded.

(iv)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Coe
SECONDED BY: Councillor Hiscock

RESOLVED – that the re-allocation of £40,000.00 from General Reserves into the CHSPN Reserve Fund for additional project funding be hereby authorised and a further sum of £30,000.00 of General Reserves be formally identified and ring-fenced as additional project contingency funds, should they be required.

Councillor Carey voted against the motion and requested that his vote be recorded.

(v)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Davies
SECONDED BY: Councillor Phillips

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that the Town Clerk and/or Deputy Town Clerk be authorised to make all day to day decisions required to maintain the progress of the Maude Community Centre project in consultation with the Chairman of the Council and/or the Chairman of the Project Steering Group.

(vi)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Davies
SECONDED BY: Councillor Thomas

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that whereby any such aforementioned decision involves additional project costs, those additional costs must not exceed allocated contingency (in the amount of £156,600.00) by more than £30,000.00 – that being the sum set aside as additional project contingency funds, should they be required.

(vii)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Coe
SECONDED BY: Councillor Terry

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that the Responsible Financial Officer be authorised to settle all relevant invoices and/or applications for payment, on receipt, having first been reviewed and certified by Synergy Construction and Property Consultants and/or the RFO having first ascertained that all is in order.

(viii)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Thomas

SECONDED BY: Councillor Hiscock

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that the Responsible Financial Officer be authorised to make any and all such transfers of funds between New Romney Town Council banking providers as may be required to settle project invoices as and when received, including any such transfers that may exceed amounts routinely authorised in accordance with adopted Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and other Delegated Authorities, due to the requirement for extreme expediency of payments.

(ix)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Phillips

SECONDED BY: Councillor O'Hare

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that the Responsible Financial Officer shall be required to continue to present monthly project financial update reports to Full Council during the duration of the construction [period and through to completion in order that the Council retains an overview of total spending versus remaining funds.

(x)

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Thomas

SECONDED BY: Councillor O'Hare

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that the Town Clerk, together with the Chairman of the Council and the Chairman of the Project Steering Group, be authorised to draft and issue a relevant press release, to be released into the public domain only after the relevant construction contract has been signed.

523/2023-24 **ON-GOING MATTERS**

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

524/2023-24 **PERSONNEL MATTERS**

@8.31PM, in light of the fact that the Chairman was to report on a sensitive personnel matter, the Clerk left the meeting and the Chairman recorded the details of his verbal report to Council.

It was reported to those present that all actions identified within the resolutions of the last meeting of Full Council and recorded in the relevant minutes under Personnel Matters had been completed.

It was further reported that, in light of questions raised about the status of a confidential HR report, and in order to ensure that the stance taken at the previous meeting had been legally correct, specialist legal advice to check the position regarding confidentiality had been sought and received and it had been confirmed that, due to the nature of the report, it cannot be released to any party under any circumstance , including any Councillor other than the three Councillors appointed to the Grievance Panel.*

The afore-mentioned points of report were duly noted.

*Legal advice received actually confirmed that it would be an 'actionable breach' of Data Protection Regulations to do so.

@8.33PM the Town Clerk re-joined the meeting.

525/2023-24 **LAND AND TENANCY MATTERS**

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

526/2023-24 **CONCLUSION OF PRIVATE SESSION**

@8.34PM it was:

PROPOSED BY: Councillor Rivers

SECONDED BY: Councillor Coe

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY – that the confidential session be hereby concluded.

The Chairman thanked the Councillors and Clerk for their attendance and the meeting then concluded **@ 8.35PM.**

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

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