

UNADOPTED

POLEGATE TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Monday 15 October 2007 in the Council Chamber, 49 High Street, Polegate at 7.30 p.m.

Present: Cllr. J. Rogers (Mayor), S. Barber, Mrs C. Berry, Mrs J. Bigsby, G. Carter, M. Cunningham, J. Harmer, Mrs D. Joy, R. Martin, Mrs M. Piper, S. Shing, Mrs J. Voyce, T. Voyce and T. Wright

3 members of the public, 2 members of the press
Cllr. Nick Ellwood – Mayor of Hailsham
Louise Baxter (East Sussex Trading Standards)

7714 Apologies

None

7715 Declarations of interest

There were none.

7716 Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 17 September 2007

Cllr. Mrs C Berry reserved minute number 7685 and asked whether Cllr. Harmer had provided a written statement to the office regarding the allegation of racial prejudice. Cllr. Harmer confirmed that he had produced a written statement which he handed to the Clerk for retention in the office.

Cllr. Watkins reserved minute numbers 7686 and 7687. Minute number 7686 refers to Council's resolution to write to the relevant authorities requesting clarification as to the future of the flat at Joan Hughes Court. In response to Cllr. Watkins question, the Clerk confirmed that a letter had been sent to the relevant authorities but no reply had been received as yet.

Minute number 7687 – Cllr. Watkins thanked Council for his co-option.

Cllr. Carter reserved minute number 7692 paragraph 3 concerning reporting outstanding items to council. The Clerk confirmed that this was in hand and would be ready for circulation to councillors shortly.

7717 Matters arising from the minutes of the Council Meeting held on 17 September 2007

There were none.

7718 Notification of any items to be dealt with as urgent

There were none

7719 Agenda Item numbers 13 (Number 51 Bus Service) and 18 (Neighbourhood Watch Update)

In order to allow Cllr Ellwood and Louise Baxter to address Council it was resolved to bring these two items forward.

7720 Number 51 Bus Service – Response to Hailsham Town Council’s request for help to maintain this service

It was resolved to suspend standing orders to allow Cllr. Ellwood to address Council.

STANDING ORDERS SUSPENDED

Cllr. Ellwood described the background to the decision taken by Eastbourne Buses to suspend the service and explained that this was a direct result of the reduction in funding percentages for concessionary fares. Before the reduction Eastbourne Buses received approximately 80% in cash terms of the concessionary fare compared to around 51% after the reduction. An appeal has been lodged with the Department of Transport to have the subsidy restored to its previous levels which will allow for the service to continue; this is unlikely to be heard until January/February of next year. Cllr. Ellwood said that it would cost approximately £1,500 per month to subsidise the service so that it could be maintained and Hailsham Town Council felt that it is important to keep the service going because if it is withdrawn prior to the appeal being heard (and there is a strong likelihood that the appeal would be successful) history shows that it is unlikely that it would be reinstated. Any monies paid by Councils now to maintain the service would probably be recoverable from the D.O.T once the appeal had been heard, provided it was successful.

STANDING ORDERS REINSTATED

The Mayor thanked Cllr. Ellwood for his input. Following discussion on the merits of maintaining the service for the benefit of Polegate residents it was resolved to make a one-off contribution of £200 for the month of October. It was further resolved to review the position at November’s council meeting.

7721 Neighbourhood Watch Update – Cold calling zones

It was resolved to suspend standing orders to allow Louise Baxter from East Sussex Trading Standards to address Council. Cllr. Mrs Bigsby read out a précis of the meeting that had taken place to investigate the viability of such a scheme. The scheme would require a subsidy of £400 and would involve public consultation which Cllr. Mrs Bigsby would organise at no cost to the Council.

Cllr. S Shing left the meeting at 8:03 pm

Louise Baxter then explained in some detail how the scheme works and how it raises awareness amongst residents of cold calling, encouraging them to report more instances to the relevant authorities.

STANDING ORDERS REINSTATED

The Mayor thanked Louise Baxter for her input. Following discussion on the merit of introducing such a scheme in Polegate it was resolved that Cllr. Mrs Bigsby should organise a public consultation meeting and that any decision to fund the introduction of a scheme in Polegate would be deferred until the results of the consultation were known.

7722 Opportunity for Public Comment

It was resolved to suspend standing orders in order to allow members of the public the opportunity to comment on any items on the agenda.

STANDING ORDERS SUSPENDED

A member of the public commented that he was pleased to see that Council were considering making copies of agenda papers available for public viewing prior to the relevant council meeting as this would allow the opportunity for more considered comment. He urged Council to adopt the suggestion. There being no other members of the public wishing to comment the Mayor reinstated standing orders.

STANDING ORDERS REINSTATED

The Mayor thanked the member of the public for his comments.

7723 Making Papers available at public meetings

Following discussion on the merits of making non-confidential agenda papers available for public inspection it was resolved that 2 copies of the agenda papers should be made available in the Council chamber at the time of each public meeting and that a further copy should be held in the office for inspection on request, during office hours, from the time the public notice is issued up to and including the day of the relevant meeting.

7724 Risk Assessment Policy

Council considered a Risk Policy Statement and Risk Assessment Schedules designed to help monitor, control and mitigate perceived risks. Such a management tool would also form the basis for the internal audit programme and would facilitate a greatly improved risk management regime. It was resolved to adopt the Risk Policy Statement and Risk Assessment Schedules with immediate effect.

7725 Standing committees, working groups and representatives to outside organisations

Council reviewed a schedule detailing the membership of the various standing committees and working groups and the schedule detailing the representatives to outside organisations. Changes to the composition of these committees and groups had been necessitated by the resignation of Cllr. Mrs Scarborough and the co-option of Cllr. Watkins. It was resolved to ratify the composition of each standing committee and working group and to confirm the changes to the list of representatives to outside organisations.

7726 Updates from Standing Committees and Working Groups

Finance - Cllr. Cunningham gave a brief overview of the finance committee working group. Following discussion it was resolved that council should formerly constitute a Finance Committee and that this should be a standing committee of Council. It was resolved that membership should comprise those councillors who had sat on the working group and the chair or leader of each standing committee and working group.

Youth - Cllr. Mrs Bigsby gave a brief update on the recent youth group meeting. It was noted that Cllr. Mrs Bigsby has started work on a Youth Strategy Document to facilitate an application for a funding grant.

Leisure, Allotments and General Purposes – Cllr. Mrs Piper gave a brief update on the recent meeting.

Quality Council – Cllr. Cunningham gave a brief update on the recent Quality Council working group meeting.

Buildings Working Group – Cllr. Barber advised Council that the cheapest quote for rebuilding the boundary wall was that provided by our handyman. It was therefore resolved to accept this quote and to have the work completed in house.

7727 Adoption of minutes from standing committees

It was resolved to adopt the minutes of the Personnel Committee of the 10th September 2007.

7728 Letting of 51 High Street

Council were advised that 4 quotes had been received for letting this property with fees ranging from £750 to £1,250. The expected annual rental income was in the region of £5,500. In view of the relatively high proposed fees associated with placing the property in the hands of an agent it was resolved to market the property in house for a period of time with an advert being placed in the Friday Ad.

7729 Financial Update

Council considered the schedule of accounts for payment and the monthly financial update. In view of the confidential nature of the information contained in these schedules questions were deferred until Council had resolved to go into confidential session.

7730 Town Clerk's Report

Council considered the Town Clerk's report, which had been previously circulated, the contents of which were noted.

7731 High Street lamp columns and sockets

Council was advised of the recent e mail from the festive light installer informing that he would no longer be able to fit the timers and residual current devices (rcds) to the lamp columns in the High Street. In addition there remained an on-going problem of water ingress into the existing externally mounted sockets on each column. A small working group had been formed to consider the best way forward and a local resident with experience in the electrical industry, Mr Frank Northcott, had kindly agreed to assist the working group reach a viable conclusion. The working group had considered a number of options and had concluded that EDF should be asked to provide a quote for resolving the problem of both the sockets and the timer/rcd fitments.

It was resolved to suspend standing orders to allow Mr Northcott to address council and answer any questions.

STANDING ORDERS SUSPENDED

Mr Northcott explained some of the technical considerations that needed to be taken into account when deciding on the most appropriate course of action. It was noted that if the existing sockets are not replaced there is a real possibility that water ingress could cause the festive lights to malfunction. Fitting timers to control the burning hours of the festive lights is also considered to be essential as the lights consume around £47 worth of electricity for every hour they are on. This leaves the question of the rcds. There has been some debate as to the need to fit rcds in view of the height at which the festive lights will be operating. However, as the installation is now being driven by a User Specification rather than the need to fulfil an unspecified statutory requirement it is considered that fitting rcds will prove to be beneficial on two counts as these will allow the sockets to be used for other types of temporary attachments as well as ensuring that the festive lights operate at maximum levels of safety.

STANDING ORDER REINSTATED

On behalf of Council the Mayor thanked Mr Northcott for his comments and for his valuable input into the process.

Council then considered the various options that were being proposed. It was resolved to accept the quote from EDF for fitting replacement sockets and a 'festive light package' consisting of a timer and rcd for all 20 lamp columns in the High Street. The cost of this work will be £3,822 which compares favourably to the original quotes obtained earlier in the year for fitting timers and rcds.

7732 Street light repairs

Council considered the schedule of street light faults that are not covered by the EDF maintenance contract. Those repairs listed as 'urgent' would cost approximately £4,800 to effect. Council had considered this schedule earlier in the year and a decision was deferred until the year end figures were available. The out-turn for the financial year ended 31 March 2007 was break-even and in view of the tight budget set for 2007/2008 it was considered that there were insufficient funds available to effect the necessary repairs. However, from a Health and Safety perspective it was resolved that EDF should be contacted and asked to express an opinion on the risks of deferring the repairs until the next financial year.

7733 Communications from the Town Mayor

There were none

7734 Correspondence

The comments from Wealden District Council regarding the need for an additional dog waste bin in Blackpath were noted. It was resolved to ask Wealden if the problem could be solved by the installation of a larger bin rather than an additional one.

7735 Date of the next cycle of meetings

Full Council	Monday 12 November 2007 at 7:30 pm
Planning	Tuesday 16 October 2007 at 7:30 pm
Personnel	Monday 22 October 2007 at 8:00 pm

7736 Resolution to take business into confidential session

It was resolved that due to the confidential nature of the next business to be transacted the press and public be excluded from the rest of the meeting.