

**MINUTES
OF A
MEETING OF THE ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL
HELD IN THE ARUN CIVIC CENTRE
ON 19 JULY 2023 AT 6.00 PM**

Present: Councillors Mrs Cooper (Chair), Walsh (Vice-Chair), Ayling, Batley, Bicknell, Birch, Blanchard-Cooper, Mrs Bower, Bower, Brooks, Butcher, Mrs Cooper (Chair), Cooper, Edwards, Elkins, J English, Goodheart, Greenway, Gunner, Hamilton, Harty, Haywood, Huntley, Jones, Kelly, Lawrence, Lloyd, Long, Lury, May, McDougall, Nash, Needs, Northeast, O'Neill, Oppler, Partridge, Patel, Pendleton, Penycate, Purser, Stanley, Tandy, Turner, Wallsgrove, Dr Walsh (Vice-Chair), Warr, Wiltshire, Woodman, Worne, Worne and Yeates.

The following Members were absent from the meeting during consideration of the matters referred to in the Minutes indicated:- Councillor Bence, Councillor Madeley and Councillor McAuliffe161 (Part)].

150. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Councillors, representatives of the public, press and officers to the meeting.

151. MEMBER OF STAFF JULIE HOGGATT

The Chair stated that it was with great sorrow that she had to commence the meeting by announcing some very sad news which was the sudden death of Julie Hoggatt who had passed away on 20 June 2023.

Julie had first joined the Council on 27 November 2017 and had held numerous roles during her time at Arun, starting as TFN Development Worker, then becoming an Economic Regeneration Officer before becoming the Council's Cost of Living Programme Manager.

The Council's condolences were extended to Julie's family, friends and colleagues.

Having received tributes from Councillors Gunner and Stanley, the Council then undertook a minute's silence to her memory.

152. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Bence, Madeley and McAuliffe and from Honorary Alderman Norman Dingemans.

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153. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

154. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair confirmed that no questions had been submitted for this meeting.

155. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS WITH PECUNIARY/PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS

The Chair confirmed that there were no questions for this meeting.

156. PETITIONS

The Chair confirmed that no petitions had been received.

157. MINUTES

The minutes from The Annual Meeting of the Council held on 31 May 2023 were approved by the Council as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair at the end of the meeting.

158. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair confirmed that Members had been circulated a list of engagements attended since 31 May 2023.

The Chair commended the Armed Forces Day events that had been held in both Bognor Regis and Littlehampton which she confirmed had been very moving.

The Chair also referred to her Civic Reception that had been held on 14 June 2023 to launch her civic year and to announce her chosen charity. This was AJ's legacy and was in memory of Alex Bryant for the Antony Nolan Trust. The Chair confirmed that Gemma, Alex's widow, had some very exciting events planned which the Chair would be supporting with the first being a Sports Day taking place on 22 July 2023 at the White Meadows Primary School with the Chair opening the event and spending time supporting the event. Plans were also in place organising a joint function for later in the year.

159. URGENT MATTERS

The Chair confirmed that there were no urgent items for this meeting.

160. EXTENSION OF APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSON

The Group Head of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer presented this report outlining that the Council had three Independent Persons appointed to support the Standards Committee, this was a statutory requirement under the Localism Act 2011.

Usually, such appointments were approved by Full Council having been previously reported to the Standards Committee to approve the appointments and associated processes.

It was confirmed that John Thompson's appointment as an Independent Person had expired on 18 July 2023. The remaining two Independent Persons' appointments would expire in July 2024. As there was not a meeting of the Standards Committee scheduled prior to this meeting, it had been necessary to bring this report straight to Full Council without it first previously being reported to the Standards Committee so that Mr Thompson's appointment could be extended now to allow the Council to undertake a full recruitment process for all three Independent Persons during 2023/2024 covering the next four year term.

Full consultation had been undertaken with the Chair of the Standards Committee, Councillor Huntley and all three Independent Persons.

The recommendation was then proposed by Councillor Huntley and seconded by Councillor Pendleton.

The Council

RESOLVED

That agreement be given to extend the appointment of John Thompson as an Independent Person up to and including 14 July 2024.

161. PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE - 8 JUNE 2023

The Chair of the Planning Policy Committee, Councillor Lury, presented recommendations from the meeting of the Planning Policy Committee held on 8 June 2023.

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Councillor Lury alerted Members to the first set of recommendations at Minute 40 [First Homes Local Allocations Policy] which he formally proposed. The recommendations were then seconded by Councillor Yeates.

The Council

RESOLVED – That

- (1) The 'Interim Affordable Housing Policy' statement (to accommodate First Homes Policy) be adopted to include the local connections criteria, as set out under Paragraph 4.7;
- (2) Should the criteria be further update by the Housing and Wellbeing Committee on 20 June that delegated authority be given to Officers to amend the criteria in accordance with Paragraph 4.8; and
- (3) The amended Policy be uploaded to the Council's website and reviewed annually.

Councillor Lury then turned to the next recommendation at Minute 41 [Middleton-on-Sea Application for Designation of a Neighbourhood Area] which he formally proposed. The recommendation was then seconded by Councillor Yeates.

The Council

RESOLVED

That the specified area is designated without modification, as the Middleton-on-Sea Neighbourhood Area, for the reasons set out in the application and in light of the results of the public consultation which did not receive any representations.

Councillor Lury then alerted Members to the final set of recommendations at Minute 43 [Arun Local Plan Update] where he formally proposed all nine recommendations. The recommendations were then seconded by Councillor Yeates.

The first Councillor to speak was Councillor Stanley who confirmed that he wished to propose an amendment to Recommendation 9 to read as set out below [deletions have been shown using ~~strike through~~ with additions shown in **bold**]:

“The **Chair of the Planning Policy Group Leaders** write a joint letter to government about the current situation in Arun and the issues it was experiencing due to current planning policy **to be co-signed by Group Leaders**”.

This amendment was seconded by Councillor Wallsgrove.

The Chair invited debate on the amendment.

This saw many mixed views being expressed. Those speaking against the amendment had concern that a letter from the Chair of the Committee would not deliver a consistent cross-party message in terms of the difficulties being experienced. It was felt that a letter containing co-signatures would undermine the original philosophy put forward by the Committee and that a clear cross-party message was needed. It was felt that a letter from all Group Leaders would set out a more powerful message to Government and would hopefully be more effective. Disappointment was expressed that Group Leaders had not been consulted on the amendment prior to the meeting.

Those speaking in support of the amendment could not agree with the concerns being expressed by those opposing the amendment. This was because all Group Leaders would still be signing the letter confirming their support to the concerns being raised with the content of the letter being sent to all Group Leaders to approve. There would be thorough consultation on the content of the letter providing each Group Leader with the opportunity to add content or suggest amendments. The important factor was that all wanted a positive outcome from this hoping that the Government would react to the issues being faced in the district.

Councillor Wallsgrove as seconder to the amendment confirmed that the cross-party working that had been expressed by so many speaking on the amendment would still be in place. It was hoped that the strong message that the letter would convey would result in positive action. The residents of the district were continually concerned about planning permission being granted by appeal; that housing numbers would continue to rise and without adequate infrastructure. She urged Councillors to support the amendment and work together so that concerns of residents could be confirmed with the Government hopefully accepting that the housing numbers did not work for the district.

Councillor Stanley, as the proposer of the amendment, confirmed that the amendment was suggesting that the chair of the relevant committee, which was the person that the council had nominated to chair the Planning Policy Committee, would compose the letter which would then be co-signed by Group Leaders who would all have the opportunity to provide feedback on the content of the letter.

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Voting on the amendment then took place and it was declared CARRIED.

The Chair then returned to the substantive recommendations and invited debate.

Many Members firstly spoke against the recommendations, these were Members who had voted against the recommendations at the Planning Policy Committee. This was because there were many other Councils who had suspended progressing their local plans because Central Government was changing the process as specified in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) with the outcome of these changes not being expected until September 2023. It was therefore their view that voting for the recommendations now was premature, as the Council needed to know what the commitment would be under the new processes in place to produce a Local Plans.

The problems encountered in producing the existing Local Plan were highlighted and concern raised that similar problems in having to repeat consultation on housing numbers could happen again if the decision was made now to commence a review of the Local Plan. Another area of concern was the 6,500 unimplemented strategic planning permissions in the district. This meant that the required infrastructure to support such development had not been delivered and this issue remained to be solved.

It was stated that if Members chose to vote for the recommendations, they would be voting for up to 11,250 extra houses. In addition to this, it would also mean a nibbling away of the district's strategic gaps, the strategic gaps between settlements would be eroded. The vision objectives here had failed to get through the previous council and were now becoming back with almost no debate and there were concerns that needed to be addressed. Examples provided were the commitment to 15 minute cities and 20 minute neighbourhoods which many residents were worried about. Similarly, there were references about towns and the rural economy but no mention of rural villages; no mention of sewage dispersion or protecting greenfield areas.

Those speaking support of the recommendations referred to the fact that the council had failed to demonstrate a 5 year land supply since 2019 meaning that developers were securing permissions through appeals. Councillors also needed to listen to the expert advice provided by Officers who were recommending that a review of the Local Plan was required. Councillors therefore had the choice to continue to delay a review or do the responsible thing and take control through the local plan process. The work undertaken by villages in securing neighbourhood plans also needed to be taken into consideration. As the review of the local plan had been suspended, this meant that development was being approved on appeal and without the critical

infrastructure being provided. A way to resolve this was to review the local plan so that it would work hand in hand with neighbourhood plans.

Councillor Yeates, as seconder to the recommendations, outlined that the vision and objectives were high level aims containing green initiatives that were welcomed and since the Council had declared a climate emergency, this was now urgent.

Councillor Lury, as proposer of the recommendations, reminded Members that the voting on the recommendations at the Planning Policy Committee had been cross-party with the Committee voting to approve that the local plan be reviewed. He also reminded Members of the need for the Council to review the Local Plan as it did not have a housing land supply, making the Council extremely vulnerable if the decision was taken again not to proceed in reviewing the local plan. The existing Local Plan was over 5 years old and was no longer functioning. Clear Officer advice had been provided presenting the risks for the council if it chose not to review its local plan and so Councillor Lury urged Members to support the recommendations.

A recorded vote had been requested for all nine recommendations. Those voting for these recommendations were Councillors Ayling, Batley, Birch, Blanchard-Cooper, Brooks, Butcher, Goodheart, Hamilton, Harty, Haywood, Huntley, Jones, Lawrence, Long, Lury, May, McDougall, Nash, Needs, Northeast, O'Neill, Oppler, Penycate, Stanley, Tandy, Wallsgrove, Walsh, Warr, Wiltshire, Woodman, Mrs Worne, Miss Worne, and Yeates (33). Those voting against were Councillors Bicknell, Mrs Bower, Bower, Cooper, Elkins, English, Greenway, Gunner, Kelly, Lloyd, Partridge, Patel, Pendleton, Purser, and Turner (15). Councillors Mrs Cooper and Edwards abstained from voting (2).

The Council therefore

RESOLVED – That

- (1) The Council recommence the preparation of a Local Plan Update;
- (2) The Vision and Objectives (Appendix 1 and 2) be agreed in principle, subject to stakeholder engagement and public consultation as part of a 'Direction of Travel' document to be reported to this Committee in September, prior to commencing Regulation 18 Issues & Options in the spring 2024;
- (3) The Schedule of internal (Schedule A) and external (Schedule B) commissioned Projects (Appendix 3) be progressed to prepare the Local Plan update;

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- (4) The costs of £234,347 for the current financial year 2023/24, as identified in this report, be absorbed within the existing revenue budget and any overspend be reported to Members as part of the budget monitoring reports;
- (5) The Statement of Works Contract be approved as a departure from Standing Orders;
- (6) The plan period for the update be 2023 to 2041 but subject to updated land supply data, the start date (and potentially end date) may be rolled forward as necessary;
- (7) The 'Arun Housing Need Review' study be material evidence for the Local Plan Update;
- (8) Officers update the Local Development Scheme at the next Planning Policy Committee meeting for subsequent adoption by Full Council; and
- (9) The Chair of Planning Policy writes a letter to government about the current situation in Arun and the issues it is experiencing due to current planning policy to be co-signed by Group Leaders.

162. POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE - 11 JULY 2023

The Chair of the Policy and Finance Committee, Councillor Stanley, presented recommendations from the meeting of the Policy and Finance Committee held on 11 July 2023.

Councillor Stanley alerted Members to the first set of recommendations at Minute 132 [Economy Committee – 13 June 2023 – Minute 59 [Bognor Regis Arcade Floor Refurbishment] which he formally proposed. The recommendations were then seconded by Councillor Nash.

In debating the recommendations concern was expressed over the £8m project costs with some Members confirming that they could not support what they saw as being an unviable financial commitment for the Council representing a £25k a year loss. Concerns were also expressed over the quality and standard of housing that would be provided under this scheme.

Those speaking in support of the recommendations reminded Members what the Arcade represented which was an integral part of Bognor Regis' heritage and so it was vitally important to local residents that the council was seen to be supporting and investing in this site. Members were also reminded of the income received for the whole site. A fully redeveloped arcade would command higher rentals and would present a wider profit. Alternative options were not viable which was to sell at a loss. The Council needed sustainable alternatives to prevent the continuing drain on council finances and these proposals presented these.

Members were reminded that the proposals presented the council with -another chance to improve Bognor Regis working alongside other projects that had been successfully completed such as The Place St Maur and the LUF project moving forward for the Regis Centre.

The council's Regeneration Consultant explained what the other options outlined in the report meant for the council.

Councillor Nash, as seconder of the recommendations, confirmed that he had been delighted to receive the report. This was because the Bognor Regis Arcade was an iconic building in Bognor Regis loved by its residents. The council had taken the decision to purchase it in 2017 and now had the responsibility of maintaining it ensuring that residents received a good return on the investment made.

Councillor Stanley, as the proposer of the recommendations, reassured Members that the recommendations did present sound financial management ensuring that very thorough checks and balances had been undertaken throughout the whole process. The Council's external auditors, Ernst & Young had also confirmed that they were very happy with financial situation of the council. The proposals for the arcade represented the need to think about the wider impacts. This was a landmark site that would add to the economic prosperity of the town whilst also providing much needed housing [35 houses] to those that needed them most and on a brownfield site. This also formed part of the Council's vision which Members had supported.

A recorded vote on the recommendations had been requested. Those voting for were Councillors Ayling, Batley, Birch, Blanchard-Cooper, Brooks, Butcher, Goodheart, Hamilton, Harty, Haywood, Huntley, Jones, Lawrence, Long, Lury, May, McDougall, Nash, Needs, Northeast, O'Neill, Oppler, Penycate, Stanley, Tandy, Wallsgrove, Walsh, Warr, Wiltshire, Woodman, Mrs Worne, Miss Worne and Yeates (33). Those voting against were Councillors Bower, Cooper, Mrs Cooper, Edwards, Elkins, English, Greenway, Gunner, Kelly, Lloyd, Partridge, Patel, Pendleton, Purser and Turner (15). Councillors Bicknell and Mrs Bower abstained from voting (2).

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The Council, therefore

RESOLVED – That

- (1) The project cost of £7,991.069 (including the Brownfield Land Release Fund grant (BLRF) be added to the capital programme;
- (2) The Council accept the BLRF fund grant if it is offered; and
- (3) Delegated authority is given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Chair of the Economy Committee, to deliver the project including selection of the appropriate delivery vehicle, subject to regular updates being presented to the Economy Committee.

Councillor Stanley then drew Members' attention to the final recommendation at Minute 132 [Economy Committee – 13 June 2023 – Minute 66 – Waterloo Square] which he formally proposed. The recommendations were then seconded by Councillor Nash.

Following short debate, the seconder to the recommendations, Councillor Nash, confirmed that this was a prime site in Bognor Regis that had remained derelict for 7-8 years. There was now the opportunity to develop the site and so he urged Councillors to support the recommendation so that the project could be pushed forward.

The Council

RESOLVED

To approve borrowing of £1million from the Public Loans Work board to fund the purchase of the leases and this to be added to the capital programme.

163. MOTIONS

The Chair confirmed that in line with requirements of the Constitution a motion had been submitted in accordance with Council Procedures 15.1 and 15.2.

The Chair invited Councillor Greenway to present and propose his motion.

Councillor Greenway confirmed that Rustington had 13 defibrillators registered with 'The Circuit' and that Bognor Regis had 27 also registered with 'The Circuit'. Although this sounded like a lot of defibrillators, in the event of an emergency the ambulance service would only direct the public to a registered defibrillator if it was just a few minutes away. This was why it was necessary to register as many defibrillators as possible to increase coverage across the district. Businesses, community groups and other councils were taking action and so this motion sought to register all defibrillators on their premises. For example, the Arun Leisure Centre and the Littlehampton Wave did not have registered defibrillators. Councillor Greenway confirmed that his Motion acknowledged the welcome provision from central government to fund schools with these lifesaving units, meaning that more children would have quicker access in a time of need.

Councillor Greenway asked the Leader of the Council to work with the community to help find suitable places for defibrillators and to look out for funding to help increase the coverage in public places. Councillor Greenway confirmed that he had submitted this motion also to West Sussex County Council where it had received unanimous support. Finally, Councillor Greenway outlined that he had been touched by stories heard in the local and national media in terms of how heart problems had impacted those closer to home. He therefore felt it vital for the council to do all it could to help residents and so he urged Members to support the motion.

The Motion was then seconded by Councillor Lloyd.

Debate then took place with the Council fully supporting what they saw as a well-meaning Motion.

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Councillor Stanley explained that he had received an email recently from William Quince, MP regarding this subject. The Council had already emailed out to all Town and Parish Council Clerks correspondence regarding this subject and encouraging them to look at defibrillators in their local community by registering them. It was highlighted that as many Councillors in undertaking their duties also supported local community groups and businesses, they needed to urge them to register defibrillators with 'The Circuit', and the National Defibrillator Network. Councillor Stanley stated that was also reaching out to Members who sat on the Arun Times Editorial Board to consider the content of this motion at its next meeting to assist in pushing it forward. Looking ahead, 16 October 2023 was "We start heart day" and so it was hoped that by working with the Council's Communications Team this could be promoted using social media to gain some awareness.

Councillor Stanley confirmed that he wished to make an amendment to Recommendation (3) to read as follows [any deletions have been shown using ~~striketrough~~ with any additions shown using **bold**:

- (1) Promote via the Council's publications (including on social media) the benefits of having a defibrillator in the community and **signposting how they can be used with the British Heart Foundation Guidance** explaining how they can be used in an emergency situation.

This amendment was the seconded by Councillor Brooks.

Councillors Greenway and Lloyd, as the proposer and seconder of the motion, confirmed that they would be happy to accept Councillor Stanley's amendment.

In continuing to debate the Motion, Councillors expressed full support for it. They asked if further work could be undertaken to promote the location of defibrillators at the Civic Centre and the Town Hall and to provide confirmation that training on how to use them had been provided to appropriate staff. A request was also made for further work to be undertaken to providing them at sporting venues.

Finally, Councillor Greenway, as proposer of the motion, thanked Members for their contribution and positive debate. He stated that he agreed with the comments that had been made about training to staff and that this linked positively with what Councillor Stanley had confirmed in that all Town and Parish Clerks had been contacted.

The Council

RESOLVED – That

The Leader of the Council:

- (1) Commits to working with the local community to find suitable places to place defibrillators, acknowledging that they are most effective within three minutes of a person collapsing, and to support finding funding for defibrillators in public places and community spaces;
- (2) Seeks to register defibrillators held within District Council facilities with 'The Circuit', The National Defibrillator Network, supported by the British Heart Foundation; and
- (3) Promotes via the Council's publications (including on social media) the benefits of having a defibrillator in the community and signposting how they can be used with British Heart Foundation Guidance explaining how they can be used in an emergency situation.

164. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

The Chair referred Councillors to the Questions from Members that had been submitted in line with Council Procedure Rule 14.3 and the schedule of questions that had been circulated to the meeting. This confirmed that three questions had been received.

The Chair invited questioners to read out their questions which would be responded to by the appropriate Committee Chair. It was explained that the schedule of questions would be updated to include the responses provided and would be uploaded to the Council's web page within ten working days of the meeting, in line with the Council's Constitution.

Three questions had been submitted as bullet pointed below:

- (1) From Councillor Greenway to the Chair of the Environment Committee, Councillor Wallsgrove regarding graffiti problems.
- (2) From Councillor Gunner to the Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee, Councillor Stanley regarding Council expenditure since 1 June 2023; and
- (3) From Councillor Gunner to the Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee regarding Liberal Democrat election pledges.

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165. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Stanley, confirmed the following changes to Committee Memberships which were noted by the Council:

- (1) Councillor Batley would replace Councillor Jones on the Standards Committee;
- (2) Councillor Walsh would replace Councillor Batley on the Housing & Wellbeing Committee;
- (3) Councillor Long would replace Councillor Needs on the Housing & Wellbeing Committee; and
- (4) Councillor Blanchard-Cooper would replace Councillor Long on the Planning Committee

166. REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Stanley, formally proposed the following changes to representation on Outside Bodies:

- (1) Councillor Walsh to replace Councillor Haywood on the Police and Crime Panel;
- (2) Councillor Long to replace Councillor Needs on the West Sussex and Adult Social Care Committee
- (3) Councillor Lury to replace Councillor Nash on the Coastal West Sussex Planning Board
- (4) Councillor Nash is appointed to the new Littlehampton Town Centre Action Group as Chair of the Economy Committee, with Councillor O'Neill also being appointed as a Member representing the appropriate Ward being the River Ward.

Councillor Nash then seconded these changes.

In inviting debate, Councillor Northeast, as Leader of the Labour Group, confirmed that Councillor Wiltshire would be the River Ward representative for the Littlehampton Town Centre Action Group.

The Council then

RESOLVED – That

The following changes be made to representation on Outside Bodies:

- (1) Councillor Walsh to replace Councillor Haywood on the Police and Crime Panel;

- (2) Councillor Long to replace Councillor Needs on the West Sussex and Adult Social Care Committee;
- (3) Councillor Lury to replace Councillor Nash on the Coastal West Sussex Planning Board; and
- (4) Councillor Nash is appointed to the new Littlehampton Town Centre Action Group as Chair of the Economy Committee, with Councillor Wiltshire being appointed as a Member of the appropriate Ward being the River Ward.

(The meeting concluded at 7.37 pm)