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MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL HELD IN THE ARUN CIVIC CENTRE ON 9 NOVEMBER 2022 AT 6.00 PM

Present: Councillors Cooper (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Baker, Batley, Bennett, Bicknell, Blanchard-Cooper, Bower, Brooks, Buckland, Caffyn, Chapman, Chace, Clayden, Cooper, Coster, Daniells, Dendle, Dixon, Edwards, Mrs English, English, Goodheart, Gregory, Gunner, Hamilton, Haywood, Hughes, Jones, Kelly, Lury, Madeley, Needs, Northeast, Oliver-Redgate, Oppler, Pendleton, Purchase, Rhodes, Roberts, Stainton, Stanley, Thurston, Walsh, Warr and Yeates.

[Note: The following Members were absent from the meeting during consideration of the matters referred to in the Minutes indicated:- Councillor Jones - Minute 394 (Part); Councillor Oliver-Redgate - Minute 394 to Minute 398 (Part); Councillor Rhodes - Minute 406 to Minute 411; Councillor Yeates - Minute 410 (Part) to Minute 411].

394. WELCOME

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

395. FORMER MEMBER OF STAFF, FRANK WHEATLEY AND FORMER COUNCILLOR DAVID BOTTING

The Chair stated that sadly she had to commence her first Full Council meeting by announcing the death of former member of staff Frank Wheatley who had worked in the Council's Finance Section as a Senior Accountant and had passed away on 20 October 2022.

The Chair also confirmed that the Council had been informed on 7 November 2022, that former Councillor David Botting has passed away on 2 November 2022 following a long battle with ill health. It was announced that former Councillor Botting had first become a Councillor in 2007 representing the Wick and Toddington Ward with Councillor June Caffyn.

As former Councillor Botting had been a Liberal Democrat Councillor, Councillor Walsh, as Leader of the Liberal Democrat, spoke and provided a tribute to his memory.

The Chair passed on the condolences of the Council to Mr Wheatley and former Councillor Botting's family and friends. The Council then undertook a minute's silence to respect both of their passings.

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396. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence had been received from Councillors Elkins, Huntley, Smith, Staniforth and Worne and from Honorary Aldermen, Mrs Stinchcombe and Mr Dingemans.

397. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Declaration of Interest Sheet set out below confirms those Members who had made a declaration of their personal interest as a Member of a Town or Parish Councillor or a West Sussex County Councillor, as confirmed in their Register of Interest as these declarations could apply to any of the issues to be discussed at the meeting.

| Name | Town or Parish Council or West Sussex County Council [WSCC] |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Councillor Tracy Baker | Littlehampton |
| Councillor Kenton Batley | Bognor Regis |
| Councillor Jamie Bennett | Rustington |
| Councillor Paul Bicknell | Angmering |
| Councillor Billy Blanchard-Cooper | Littlehampton |
| Councillor Jim Brooks | Bognor Regis |
| Councillor Ian Buckland | Littlehampton and WSCC |
| Councillor David Chace | Littlehampton |
| Councillor Mike Clayden | Rustington |
| Councillor Andy Cooper | Rustington |
| Councillor Alison Cooper | Rustington and WSCC |
| Councillor Sandra Daniells | Bognor Regis |
| Councillor Roger Elkins | Ferring and WSCC |
| Councillor Paul English | Felpham |
| Councillor Steve Goodheart | Bognor Regis |
| Councillor Pauline Gregory | Rustington |
| Councillor June Hamilton | Pagham |
| Councillor Shirley Haywood | Middleton-on-Sea |
| Councillor David Huntley | Pagham |
| Councillor Henry Jones | Bognor Regis |
| Councillor Martin Lury | Bersted |
| Councillor Claire Needs | Bognor Regis |
| Councillor Mike Northeast | Littlehampton |
| Councillor Francis Oppler | WSCC |
| Councillor Jacky Pendleton | Middleton-on-Sea and WSCC |
| Councillor Vicky Rhodes | Littlehampton |
| Councillor Emily Seex | Littlehampton |
| Councillor Martin Smith | Aldwick |
| Councillor Samantha Staniforth | Bognor Regis |

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Councillor Matt Stanley | Bognor Regis |
| Councillor Will Tilbrook | Littlehampton |
| Councillor Isabel Thurston | Barnham & Eastergate |
| Councillor Sue Wallsgrove | Barnham & Eastergate |
| Councillor James Walsh | Littlehampton and WSCC |
| Councillor Jeanette Warr | Bognor Regis |
| Councillor Amanda Worne | Ford and Yapton |
| Councillor Gillian Yeates | Bersted |

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

398. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair confirmed that thirteen public questions had been submitted for this meeting. She announced that with this number of questions together with the responses that would be provided, the fifteen minutes allocated for Public Question would be extended to allow all questions from the public to be asked and responses provided. However, once all responses had been provided, she would end Public Question Time at that point and would not allow supplementary questions.

The questions have been very briefly summarised below:

- (1) From Mrs Smith to the Chair of the Planning Committee, Councillor Chapman regarding ongoing issues surrounding planning application AL/121/16/PL, enforcement matters and a boundary fence
- (2) From Mrs Smith to the Chair of the Planning Committee, Councillor Chapman, regarding planning application AL/121/16/PL and enforcement matters
- (3) From Mrs Smith to the Chair of the Planning Committee, Councillor Chapman, regarding planning application AL/121/16/PL and enforcement matters
- (4) From Mrs Smith to the Chair of the Planning Committee, Councillor Chapman, regarding planning application AL/121/16/PL and enforcement matters
- (5) From Mr Cosgrove to the Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee, Councillor Gunner regarding the Levelling-Up project for the Regis Centre, Bognor Regis
- (6) From Mr Cosgrove to the Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee, Councillor Gunner, regarding Levelling-Up project for the Regis Centre, Bognor Regis and project deadline issues
- (7) From Mr Cosgrove to the Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee, Councillor Gunner, regarding the regeneration of the Regis Centre and Hothampton
- (8) From Mr Fennell to the Chair of the Planning Policy Committee, Councillor Bower, regarding the use of farmland for development and the need to priorities brownfield sites,

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- (9) From Parish Councillor Hamilton-Street to the Chair of the Planning Committee, Councillor Chapman regarding planning processes and compliance,
- (10) From Parish Councillor Hamilton-Street to the Chair of the Planning Committee, Councillor Chapman regarding development and developers
- (11) From Mr Wild to the Chair of the Planning Committee, Councillor Chapman regarding protected species at Outerwyke Farmhouse, Felpham Way, Felpham
- (12) From Mr Wild to the Chair of the Planning Committee, Councillor Chapman regarding protected species at Outerwyke Farmhouse, Felpham Way, Felpham
- (13) to the Chair of the Planning Committee, Councillor Chapman regarding protected species at Outerwyke Farmhouse, Felpham Way, Felpham

The Chair then drew Public Question to a Close.

(A schedule of the full questions asked, and the responses provided can be found on the Public Question Web page at: [Public question time | Arun District Council](#)).

399. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS WITH PECUNIARY/PREJUDICIAL INTERESTS

There were no questions for this meeting.

400. PETITIONS

The Chair confirmed that a petition containing 2,263 signatures had been delivered to the council on the afternoon of 24 October 2022.

This petition was asking the Council to protect services provided to the public at the Bognor Regis Town Hall. Subject to the usual validation checks taking place, the Chair confirmed that this petition would be presented to Full Council on 18 January 2023 for debate.

401. MINUTES

The Minutes from the meetings of Full Council held on 14 and 29 September 2022 were approved as a correct record with the Chair confirming that she would sign these at the end of the meeting.

402. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair confirmed that a list of events attended would be provided ahead of the next meeting of Council, but she wished to highlight some events that she had attended recently in her capacity as Vice-Chair of the Council, these were:

- 11 September 2022 – representing the Council at West Sussex County Council’s proclamation of the accession of King Charles III in Chichester with the High Sheriff of West Sussex
- 2 October 2022 – Arundel Mayors Platinum Jubilee service in Arundel Cathedral
- 7 November 2022 – NSPCC’s Sussex and Mid Sussex Branch’s AGM at Arundel Castle.

403. URGENT MATTERS

The Chair confirmed that there were no urgent matters for this meeting to consider.

404. ADOPTION (MAKING) OF THE LYMINSTER AND CROSSBUSH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2020-2031

The Director of Growth presented his report to the Council confirming that a successful Neighbourhood Planning Referendum on the Lyminster and Crossbush Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) 2020-2031 had been held on 11 October 2022 where 86.88 per cent of voter had cast a ‘yes’ vote.

It was highlighted that if more than 50 per cent of those voting on the day voted ‘yes’, then the local planning authority under Section 61E(4) of the 1990 Act, needed to ‘make’ (adopt) the Plan.

The recommendation in the report to ‘make’ the Lyminster and Crossbush NDP 2020-2031 was then proposed by Councillor Bower, as Chair of the Planning Policy Committee and this was then seconded by Councillor Hughes as Vice-Chair of that Committee.

Having received thanks from Councillors to Lyminster and Crossbush Parish Council and to the Council’s Principal Planning Officer,

The Council

RESOLVED

That the Council ‘makes’ the Lyminster and Crossbush Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2031 and it becomes part of the Development Plan for Arun District Council.

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405. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SERVICE COMMITTEES, REGULATORY AND STANDARDS COMMITTEES AND FROM WORKING PARTIES

The Chair confirmed that there were no recommendations to present to this meeting.

406. MOTIONS

The Chair confirmed that a Motion had been submitted for this meeting from Councillor Oppler. The detail of the Motion is set out below:

This council agrees to:-

- 1) Invite the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to carry out a review of:-
 - a) The number of councillors needed at Arun, but with a specific focus of reducing members by a maximum of twenty.
 - b) The warding arrangements in the Arun district.
- 2) Instruct officers to carry out an assessment of how much an individual member costs the council. This should include the basic allowance, IT provision, and all hidden officer support.

The Chair invited Councillor Oppler to present his motion. Councillor Oppler outlined that during this time of financial hardship, many of Arun's residents were looking at ways of cutting down on their financial expenditures and were closely examining what they could cut out and what they might really need for the future.

Councillor Oppler stated that residents were also facing year-on-year council tax rises, and many were on fixed incomes, so these increased were becoming an ever-increasing struggle. Since the last boundary review, Arun District Council had cut hundreds of members of staff from the council; departmental budgets had continued to contract year on year; and residents and staff had had to pay the price for these reductions. The last boundary review undertaken in 2012 had missed a golden opportunity to significantly reduce the number of councillors, with it settling for a total reduction of two Councillors out of the then fifty-six. Councillor Oppler stated that when he had been Deputy Leader of the Council, he had looked into progressing this matter, however, it had coincided with the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and so having received guidance from the then Chief Executive and in looking at staff resources at that time, it had not been possible to move considering such proposals forward.

Councillor Oppler believed that the timing was now right to progress this work and he suggested that the Council should seek advice from other Councils, such as Chichester District Council, who had achieved a positive outcome from reviewing Councillor numbers. Councillor Oppler felt that it would be pertinent to focus on a reduction of between 36 and 40 Councillors and he outlined that there was software

available through a company called Express Mapping that could help facilitate reviewing Councillor numbers and ward mapping. Councillor Oppler felt strongly that this was something that this Council should consider but more importantly he referred to the fact that staff and residents had had to make sacrifices over the last few years and that by reducing the number of Councillors the Council could make significant savings. Councillor Oppler provided some examples one of which was that if the council were to reduce the number of councillors by twenty, the council would save well in excess of £100,000 per year.

In concluding his motion, Councillor Oppler highlighted the need to start this work now as the review process was not quick and the advice he had received conformed that any review could take between two and two and a half years to complete and implement. He therefore needed to confirm that if his motion was approved, it would not affect next year's elections.

The Monitoring Officer was asked to confirm if the former Electoral Review Sub-Committee could be reformed to oversee the review. The Group Head of Law & Governance & Monitoring Officer confirmed that the Corporate Support Committee had responsibility for boundary reviews already confirmed in its Responsibility for Functions in the Constitution. It would be for that Committee to undertake and oversee the review work making recommendations to Full Council as to what the final decision should be.

Councillor Walsh then seconded the motion.

The Chair then invited debate. Those to speak first confirmed that whilst they could agree the underlying principle of the motion, the motion set out parameters without an evidence base. Given the November 2022 electoral register the average number of electors that each Councillor represented was 2,372 which when applied to each Ward highlighted that the Beach Ward was over-represented by 18.68% whilst the Angmering & Findon was under-represented by 17.65%. Based on this data alone, there was a case for rewording. There had always been a cost to democracy that had to be balanced against the equity of a fair seat distribution throughout the district. The whole rewording process could take 3-4 years judging by the last review so there could be no change to the council's size or seat distribution until at least 2027. There was a process that was laid down by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England which the council would need to follow. To initiate the process, Councillor Bower confirmed that the council needed to amend the motion replacing recommendations (1) and (2) and so he formally proposed the following amendment (additions have been shown in **bold** with deletions shown using ~~strikethrough~~):

- (1) Carry out an assessment of the costs of doing a local government boundary review and provide recommendations to the Policy & Finance Committee on the resourcing implications of such a review;**
- (2) Set up the appropriate processes and timetable for carrying out such a review, and report this back to Full Council;**

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(3) Once the above steps are complete, invite the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to carry out a review of:

- (a) The number of councillors needed at Arun, but with a specific focus of reducing members ~~by a maximum of twenty~~
- (b) The warding arrangements in the Arun District

This Council also agrees to:

- (4)** Instruct Officers to carry out an assessment of how much an individual member costs the council. This should include the Basic Allowance, IT provision and all hidden officer support;
- (5) Once the number of Councillors is determined, instruct the Constitution Working Party to review the number and frequency of Committees in light of a reduction in Councillors; and**
- (6) Invite the Independent Remuneration Panel to review Councillor allowances in light of the above changes, once confirmed.**

Councillor Gunner then seconded this amendment.

In response to this detailed amendment being received, the Chair proposed a five-minute adjournment to allow the wording of the amendment to be shared to the meeting and circulated to Councillors. This was approved by the Council.

Upon the meeting reconvening following the adjournment, the Chair then invited debate on the amendment. Councillor Oppler, as the proposer to the motion, indicated that he would be happy to accept the amendment proposed.

Before inviting further debate, the Chair sought confirmation from Councillors Oppler and Walsh, as the proposer and seconder of the original motion, in terms of whether they were content to have the motion, as amended, as the substantive motion. Having received this confirmation from Councillors Oppler and Walsh, the Chair confirmed that she would now invite debate on this substantive motion.

Debate on the amendment then took place. There were some Councillors who felt that they could not support the motion reflecting back on the previous review and the problems experienced. Most Councillors spoke in support of it but questioned its timing, asking why it was being pushed forward now when this should have been considered much earlier following the 2019 Elections to allow any recommendations from the Boundary Commission for England to be considered ahead of next year's District Elections. Comments were made that this review should also focus on the efficiency and effectiveness of Councillors and not just about the number of Councillors that the Council should have.

Councillor Walsh, as seconder of the motion, welcomed the support shown surrounding the sentiment of the motion. It needed to be recognised the financial savings such a review could bring to the council whilst at the same time making it more efficient and democratically accountable. He hoped that all councillors would support it, as amended, recognising the cost of living crisis that residents were currently experiencing.

Councillor Oppler, as proposer of the motion, thanked Opposition Councillors for their willingness to work together in producing an amended motion that hopefully all Councillors could support.

Following further debate, the Council

RESOLVED – That

- (1) The Council carries out an assessment of the costs of doing a local government boundary review and provides recommendations to the Policy & Finance Committee on the resourcing implications of such a review;
- (2) The Council sets up the appropriate processes and timetable for carrying out such a review, and reports this back to Full Council;
- (3) Once the above steps are complete, invites the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to carry out a review of:
 - (a) The number of councillors needed at Arun, but with a specific focus of reducing members
 - (b) The warding arrangements in the Arun District

This Council also agrees to:

- (4) Instruct Officers to carry out an assessment of how much an individual member costs the council. This should include the Basic Allowance, IT provision and all hidden officer support;
- (5) Once the number of Councillors is determined, instruct the Constitution Working Party to review the number and frequency of Committees in light of a reduction in Councillors; and
- (6) Invite the Independent Remuneration Panel to review Councillor allowances in light of the above changes, once confirmed.

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407. GENERAL QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS [BY ADVANCE NOTICE] [30 MINUTES]

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 seven questions had been received.

The Chair confirmed that eight questions had actually been submitted in line with the constitution with Councillor Coster's second question (Question 8) having been accidentally omitted from the schedule. The Chair confirmed that Councillor Coster would be invited to ask his question to the Chair of the Planning Committee, Councillor Chapman at the end of Member Questions.

Eight questions had been submitted as bullet pointed below:

- (1) From Councillor Stanley to the Chair of the Environment Committee, Councillor Edwards, regarding the Place St Maur, Bognor Regis;
- (2) From Councillor Stanley to the Chair of the Environment Committee, Councillor Edwards, regarding the Place St Maur, Bognor Regis;
- (3) From Councillor Stanley to the Chair of the Environment Committee, Councillor Edwards, regarding the Place St Maur, Bognor Regis;
- (4) From Councillor Stanley to the Chair of the Environment Committee, Councillor Edwards, regarding the ice rink at the Place St Maur, Bognor Regis and why this was now going to be held at the London Road Lorry/Coach Park
- (5) Councillor Stanley to the Chair of the Planning Committee, Councillor Chapman regarding the parking of vehicles on a new development
- (6) Councillor Coster to the Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee, Councillor Gunner regarding Article 2 of the Constitution
- (7) Councillor Oppler to the Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee, Councillor Gunner regarding the Charing of meetings
- (8) Councillor Coster to the Chair of the Planning Committee, Councillor Chapman regarding trees and tree preservation orders and the Planning Committee

Supplementary questions and responses were asked and provided to some of the questions asked.

A copy of the Member Question schedule would be uploaded to the Full Council web page following the meeting.

408. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS

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

- Councillor Madeley had replaced Councillor Pendleton on the Environment Committee
- Councillor Bower had replaced Councillor Madeley on the Corporate Support Committee

409. REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Gunner, proposed the following change in the Council's representation to the Bognor Regis Regeneration Board.

This was that Councillor Pendleton had replaced Councillor Edwards. It was also proposed that Councillor Gunner would become a substitute Member.

Councillor Pendleton then formally seconded this change in representation.

The Council

RESOLVED

That Councillor Pendleton would replace Councillor Edwards as this Council's nominated representative on the Bognor Regis Regeneration Board, with Councillor Gunner becoming a substitute Member.

410. EXEMPT BUSINESS

Having been proposed by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Cooper, the Council

RESOLVED

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and accredited representatives of newspapers be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act by virtue of the paragraph specified against the item.

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411. APPOINTMENT TO THE POST OF GROUP HEAD OF FINANCE AND SECTION 151 OFFICER (EXEMPT - PARAGRAPH 1 - INFORMATION RELATING TO ANY INDIVIDUAL)

The Chief Executive presented a report asking the Council to approve the appointment to the position of Group Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) following the interim arrangement that had been approved by the Council and had been in place over the last year.

Following questions, requests were made to have placed on record the Council's thanks to the Interim Group Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer, for her hard work, commitment and dedication over the past year. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Gunner, in conveying his thanks to those Members of the Interview Panel for their work in the recruitment process then proposed the recommendations in the report which were then seconded by Councillor Pendleton.

The Council

RESOLVED – That

- (1) It confirms the appointment of Antony Baden to the post of Group Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) in accordance with the Council's constitution; and
- (2) That it agrees to the extend the contract of the Interim Group Head of Finance until the permanent postholder can start in the role to ensure that the statutory role of the Section 151 Officer is covered.

(The meeting concluded at 8.29 pm)