

BEXHILL-ON-SEA TOWN COUNCIL

To all Members of Bexhill-on-Sea Town Council

You are summoned to attend a meeting of **BEXHILL-ON-SEA TOWN COUNCIL** to be held in the **Council Chamber, Bexhill Town Hall** on **Wednesday 9th June 2021 at 6.30pm** when it is proposed to transact the following business.

Linda A Butcher FSLCC
Proper Officer and Interim Town Clerk

AGENDA

1. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Members of the public are welcome and encouraged to attend. The first ten minutes of the meeting will be available for the public to express a view or ask a question on relevant matters on the agenda. The public and press are also welcome to stay and observe the rest of the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES – to receive apologies for absence

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are invited to make any declaration of personal or prejudicial interests that they may have in relation to items on the agenda and are reminded to make any declarations at any stage during the meeting if it then becomes apparent that this may be required when a particular item or issue is to be considered.

4. MINUTES (attached)

- 4.1. To resolve that the minutes of the 1st Annual Statutory Council Meeting held on Wednesday 19th May 2021 be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
- 4.2. Matters outstanding from these minutes (not listed as separate agenda items)

5. APPOINTMENT OF TOWN CLERK

- 5.1. Report from Interim Town Clerk

6. REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

- 6.1. Ward District Councillors
- 6.2. Ward County Councillors
- 6.3. Town Councillors

7. OFFICER'S REPORT

- 7.1. Calendar of meetings and costs
- 7.2. Policy Documents

8. FEEDBACK FROM WORKING GROUPS ON STANDING ORDERS, FINANCIAL REGULATIONS, COMMITTEE STRUCTURES and OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

9. PROPOSALS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 9.1. Bexhill Town Youth Council – Item requested by Cllr Connor Winter, report to follow
- 9.2. Bexhill Town Council's response to the Climate Emergency – item requested by Cllr Ben Izzard – report in the following pages.
- 9.3. Communications Committee – item requested by Cllr Claire Baldry – report in the following pages.
- 9.4. Training – item requested by Cllr Viv Taylor-Gee – report in the following pages.
- 9.5. Hello Bexhill – item requested by Cllr Viv Taylor-Gee – report in the following pages [this item would best be served within the Communications item above]
- 9.6. Recovery Team – item requested by Cllr Viv Taylor-Gee – report in the following pages.
- 9.7. Neighbourhood plan – item requested by Cllr Viv Taylor-Gee – report in the following pages.
- 9.8. Audit Team – item requested by Cllr Viv Taylor-Gee – report in the following pages.
- 9.9. Bexhill, a fair rent town – item requested by Cllr Viv Taylor-Gee – report in the following pages

10. URGENT MATTERS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN FOR NOTING and/or INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 10.1. To note that the date of the next Council Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 16th June 2021 at 6.30pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bexhill-on-Sea. MEETING TO BE CONFIRMED IF NEEDED

Scroll down for reports

5. APPOINTMENT OF TOWN CLERK

5.1. Report from Interim Town Clerk

The interview process was arranged for Tuesday 1st June in the Cooden Beach Hotel for six short-listed candidates. Unfortunately, prior to the day, two candidates had withdrawn and then on the day one failed to arrive {it was later learned that this candidate had accepted another appointment over the previous week-end}.

The Interview Panel (Cllrs Baldry, Harding and Wray) plus one other member of the Staffing sub-committee (Cllr Taylor-Gee), witnessed presentations during the morning from the three candidates. These were followed by an informal lunch to which all Councillors and youth representatives were invited. Unfortunately, not all Councillors responded and there were no young people in attendance so there was a surplus of food. However, the feedback from those that did attend was very positive and the candidates were really impressed with this arrangement.

Following the three formal interviews, the Panel shared their views and scores and came to a unanimous conclusion who should be offered the post. The Interim Town Clerk was asked to make the necessary telephone calls, written offer and, if accepted, apply for references.

Julie Miller was offered and accepted and references have been requested. When Julie confirmed her acceptance and this was acknowledged via email, she submitted her resignation to her current full-time employer and has confirmed that she is free to commence with Bexhill Town Council on Monday 5th July 2021. In the meantime, ESALC will be providing a draft contract of employment covering all the relevant aspects.

6. REPORTS FROM COUNCILLORS

6.1. Ward District Councillors

6.2. Ward County Councillors

6.3. Town Councillors

6.3.1. Town Mayor, Cllr Paul Plim and Linda Butcher, the Interim Town Clerk met at the Scout building in Wainwright Road on 25th May 2021. Items discussed included the difference between the Charter Trustee Mayor position and that of the Town Mayor. Cllr Plim was advised that his Chairman's Allowance is £5,000 for the current financial year.

Cllr Plim asked for Press Releases to be put on a future agenda for the Council. However, this item is part of the Town Clerk's responsibilities and to enable Councillors to understand this matter more fully a copy of the Town Clerk's job description was sent to all Councillors [point 12].

It was confirmed that following the interviews an item must be on the agenda for the 9th June to confirm the appointment of the Town Clerk as this is something that only the Council to undertake.

Cllr Plim wished to have a low-key handover of the essential items from the former Charter Trustees Mayor and so it was agreed that all Councillors from all three tiers would be invited to the green in front of the Town Hall at 5.30pm on Wednesday 9th June for this to take place.

Cllr Plim hoped to be able to include some representatives from the local Scouts to join too. With regard to the Bexhill flag, Cllr Plim volunteered to speak to the Mace Bearer to find out who owns it and whether it can be used by the Town Council. He suggested that in time the Town Council would hopefully have its own logo and would also investigate having a Town Crier. In the meantime, the Town Mayor wishes to continue with the services of the Mace Bearer and the member of staff has been spoken to on this matter and has agreed to continue.

The Interim Town Clerk advised the Town Mayor that Hugh Merriman MP wishes to build a relationship with the new Town Council and it was hoped to arrange a meeting in the near future.

Bexhill is a Fair Trade town and it is hoped the Town Council will reflect this within its policies.

It was acknowledged that Members of the Town Council need training and the Town Mayor suggested that perhaps RDC would be able to offer Planning Training. The Interim Town Clerk suggested this could be investigated further, along with other suppliers, for example ESALC [East Sussex Association of Local Councils] which offers training in all aspects of town council life.

7. OFFICER'S REPORT

7.1. Calendar of meetings and costs

There will need to be at least one change to the calendar of meetings previously sent out in that the Council meeting scheduled for Wednesday 18th August cannot be held in the Council Chamber of the Town Hall because there is a Public Enquiry booked in for that day. The Council will need to consider whether it changes the date or the location of that meeting. Council Chamber £40 per hour or £90 per hour with broadcasting.

7.2. Policy Documents

There are so many ideas/proposals going round at the moment (see below) that the Council needs to focus on specific priorities and I have no doubt the permanent Town Clerk will be able to guide Members through these matters. In the meantime, I am attaching some policy documents to assist you in the short term:- Media and Communications Policy, Freedom of Information Policy and Information Management Policy – these should all be read in conjunction with the Town Clerk's Job Description.

8. FEEDBACK FROM WORKING GROUPS ON STANDING ORDERS, FINANCIAL REGULATIONS, COMMITTEE STRUCTURES and OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

No written reports have been received prior to the agenda being published but these can be submitted to all Members via email prior to the meeting, or the reports could be just a brief verbal report.

9. PROPOSALS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 9.1. Bexhill Town Youth Council – Item requested by Cllr Connor Winter, but report to date.
- 9.2. Bexhill Town Council's response to the Climate Emergency – item proposed by Cllr Ben Izzard.

The last few years has seen unprecedented recognition of the climate emergency. This could should debate our response and consider the motion:

That this council

- 1) Recognises and declares a 'Climate and Nature Emergency' and will raise awareness ensuring all town councillors and staff are knowledgeable about the climate and nature issues we face.
- 2) Pledges to support Bexhill as a town to become carbon neutral by 2030.
- 3) Empowers and enables a committee (when formed) to create a free expert led Community Climate Panel for local people, organisations and business representatives to develop evidence-based ideas and solutions to enable the town to meet its climate emergency targets.
- 4) Explores staffing who could actively seek environment and climate related funding or grants that would help support and implement a climate emergency strategy plan which should be created from the Community Climate Panel's recommendations.

- 9.3. Communications Committee – item proposed by Cllr Claire Baldry

That, as a matter of priority, the Town Council sets up a Communications Working Group to explore options and proposals in order to establish more visible communication with residents. The working group should report to the next full Council meeting with a further motion for approval in order for the permanent Town Clerk to respond to and take action on the working group recommendations also as a matter of priority.

Areas to be covered by the working group initially will be:

Setting up a Town Council website preferably through a local provider.

Writing and distributing a regular Town Council Newsletter.

Setting up a Town Council Facebook page with the new clerk being assigned admin rights.

Working towards the creation of a Bexhill Town Council logo with a possible design competition for local young people.

Interim Town Clerk's guidance – please see reports at items 6.3 and 7.2.

- 9.4. Training – item proposed by Cllr Viv Taylor-Gee

Given how new the procedures and processes of a town council are to most of the town councillors, and to enable business to be carried out swiftly and efficiently for the benefit of the town, it is proposed that the town clerk with two councillors arranges some appropriate training over one half day, to include innovative and experienced speakers.

Interim Town Clerk's guidance – please see reports at items 6.3 and 7.2.

9.5. Hello Bexhill – item proposed by Cllr Viv Taylor-Gee

To ensure that the town and the town council increases its profile, it is proposed that the town clerk with three councillors plus appropriate residents prepares a strategy – Hello Bexhill! This strategy to explore for example, but not limited to:

- Commissioning Bexhill-on-Sea signs where they are lacking, e.g. on the London Road entrance on the A259, securing any necessary permission and the bids to make and erect the signs as soon as possible.
- Asking Rother if we can use say two benches as a pilot scheme for Happy to Chat benches on the prom. These are benches which have a sign on them saying “Happy to chat – sit here if you don’t mind someone stopping to say hello.” This scheme launches in Cardiff and is now international. Bexhill is already known as a friendly town, this would reduce isolation and enhance daily social contact.
- Exploring speedy set up of hanging baskets round the town, with sponsorships and maintenance plans in place.

Interim Town Clerk's guidance – this item would best be served with the Communications item, see item 7.2.

9.6. Recovery Team – item proposed by Cllr Viv Taylor-Gee.

There is £10,000 in the budget for post-COVID recovery. It is proposed that a Working Group be set up to explore the best way to spend this responsibly on appropriate initiatives, in conjunction with community organisations, to report back to Full Council by the end of July.

9.7. Neighbourhood plan – item proposed by Cllr Viv Taylor-Gee.

It is proposed to start work on a neighbourhood plan, exploring its funding, scope and timing. This to be done by the relevant committee.

9.8. Audit Team – item proposed by Cllr Viv Taylor-Gee.

Many residents are baffled by who does what, and who should do what. The Council proposes to create an audit team to monitor how East Sussex and Rother are delivering on their contractual obligations to the town, and work with them to improve communications and results.

9.9. Bexhill, a fair rent town – item proposed by Cllr Viv Taylor-Gee.

Propose that a working group be set up with estate agents, residents groups, landlords and tenants to implement the proposed 10 principles for the Betterment of Bexhill, as a standard to aim for in the town.

Interim Town Clerk's guidance – several of the above items involve financial commitments and would need to be part of any Financial Committee that is eventually set up bearing in mind you cannot delegate spending authorisation to Working Groups.

