

## FULL COUNCIL

16 DECEMBER 2015

Present: The Right Worshipful the Mayor (Councillor Bruce Dowling) in the Chair, Councillors Rogers, Batsford, Cartwright, Charlesworth, Chowney, Clark, Cooke, Davies, Forward, Howard, Poole, Pragnell, Roberts, Sabetian, Scott, Sinden, Street, Turner, Webb, Westley, Wincott, Beaver, Charman, Lee, Fitzgerald, Beaney, Atkins, Edwards, Clarke and Dowling

Apologies for absence were noted for Councillor Hodges.

Apologies for lateness were also received from Councillors Beaver and Cooke.

**21. TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 21 OCTOBER 2015 AND THE EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2015**

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 21 October 2015 and the extraordinary Council meeting held on 25 November 2015 be signed by the Mayor as a correct record of the proceedings**

**22. QUESTIONS (IF ANY) FROM: -**

Questions to the Leader, Deputy Leader and other Lead Members were asked and answered in accordance with rule 12.1 as follows:-

Questioner and Councillor	Subject	Reply Given By Councillor
Atkins	<u>Rocklands Caravan Park</u> the Save Ecclesbourne Glen Group requested that Councillors were present when the plots for caravan sites at Rocklands Caravan Park were re-measured. This request was declined, will the Leader of the Council reconsider this decision? Councillor Chowney replied that it would be inappropriate for members to be involved in what was a technical matter between the council and the applicant. The council's constitution included a protocol for relationships between members and officers, this type of involvement by members would contravene that protocol.	Chowney
Rogers	<u>Coastal Revival Fund</u> will the lead member provide an update on a recent bid to the Coastal Revival Fund? Councillor Poole said that the council had successfully secured £50,000 from the fund. The funding would be used to support the	Poole

**FULL COUNCIL**

**16 DECEMBER 2015**

	<p>refurbishment of Bottle Alley, including linking the new lighting scheme with that of the pier. The restoration of Bottle Alley would coincide with improvements to the promenade at White Rock and the opening of the pier and a new BMX venue in the former White Rock Baths.</p>	
Pragnell	<p><u>Rocklands Caravan Park</u> will the Leader of the Council provide an assurance that the new caravan licence for Rocklands Caravan Park will include all of the relevant regulations? Councillor Chowney replied that he had confidence in the officers involved in processing the licence, that the arrangements would be completed correctly.</p>	Chowney
Westley	<p><u>Voter Registration</u> will the lead member provide an assurance that the council will continue to do all it can to maximise the number of residents who are registered to vote? Councillor Cartwright explained that individual electoral registration had been introduced as part of the 2013/14 annual canvass. A number of electors who had not responded during annual canvass that year were carried forward to the new system. Throughout 2014/15 efforts had been made to contact these electors through correspondence and a further door-to-door canvass in order to ensure their entry on the register of electors was up to date. It was found that many of the electors who had been initially carried forward were no longer resident at their registered address and their entries were subsequently removed. Entries may also be removed from the register following a review, if this ascertains that they have left their registered address. The overall electorate in 15 of the town's wards had fallen following the 2015 annual canvass. However, in Central St Leonards ward the electorate had increased. Councillor Cartwright explained that the council had given consideration to further options to promote voter registration, although the extent to which these activities could be carried out would depend on the level of funding from central government.</p>	Cartwright
Edwards	<p><u>Rocklands Caravan Park</u> how much has the council spent, including officer time, on resolving issues at Rocklands Caravan Park?</p>	Chowney

**FULL COUNCIL**

**16 DECEMBER 2015**

	<p>Councillor Chowney agreed to circulate an estimated cost to members by email.</p>	
Clark	<p><u>Business Rates</u> does the Leader of the Council agree that the re-valuation of commercial properties for the purposes of business rates and the transfer of the liability for business rate appeals from central government to local authorities will place further financial strain on the council and undermine plans for economic growth in the area?</p> <p>Councillor Chowney agreed with Councillor Clark's comments. He added that this issue affected all local authorities, and would be taken up by the Local Government Association. Councillor Chowney acknowledged that it was difficult to predict the cost of rateable value appeals, this created additional challenges in allocating the councils reserves. The council achieved an income of £57.9 million from rateable properties, £18.5 million of which was currently under appeal. The reserve to meet appeals in the next financial year had already been increased to reflect the ongoing uncertainty facing the council.</p>	
Clarke	<p><u>Hotel Accommodation</u> Hastings has significantly less hotel accommodation than other seaside towns, which could be resulting in loss of income to the town. What can the council do to address this? Would the Leader of the Council consider setting up a cross-party working group to explore this issue further?</p> <p>Councillor Chowney agreed that it was important to encourage visitors to the town to stay over night. He commented that a significant proportion of the hotel stock in Hastings had been converted to residential accommodation in previous years, which had not happened to the same extent in other towns. The council was due to adopt a supplementary planning document, which reiterated the council's existing policy in terms of the retention of visitor accommodation. Councillor Chowney said that it may be possible to set up a working group to examine this issue further, but it would be necessary to determine the scope of and activities first.</p>	Chowney

## FULL COUNCIL

16 DECEMBER 2015

Charlesworth	<p><u>Ecclesbourne Glen</u> when will the footpaths in Ecclesbourne Glen be re-opened following earlier landslips?</p> <p>Councillor Chowney commented that the continued instability of land in Ecclesbourne Glen meant that it was necessary for the footpaths to remain closed at this time. He explained that Ecclesbourne Glen was a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), in part because of its unstable geology, this meant that it would be difficult to carry out significant interventions to stabilise the land and reinstate the footpaths. The council would continue to seek a long term solution, based on advice from Natural England.</p>	Chowney
Turner	<p><u>Rail Engineering Works between Wadhurst and Tunbridge Wells</u> will the Leader of the Council write to Network Rail to highlight that the 50 minute delays caused by engineering works between Wadhurst and Tunbridge Wells are unacceptable?</p> <p>Councillor Chowney noted that the MP for Tunbridge Wells had written to Network Rail about the works. Following complaints received by Network Rail about planned engineering works taking place at the weekend, the works between Wadhurst and Tunbridge Wells had been scheduled to take place between 9.00pm and 5.00am on Monday and Tuesday evenings. Councillor Chowney acknowledged that customers travelling to and from London later than usual during the Christmas period had been disrupted by the work and agreed to raise this matter with Network Rail.</p>	Chowney
Lee	<p><u>Save Ecclesbourne Glen Group</u> why have certain emails from the save Ecclesbourne Glen Group not received a response from the lead member?</p> <p>Councillor Davies said that the emails he had received from the Save Ecclesbourne Glen group were in connection with Rocklands Caravan Park. Councillor Chowney was co-ordinating the response to this sensitive issue on behalf of the council and, as the matter pre-dated his time as portfolio holder, Councillor Davies intended to engage with the community on the future of Ecclesbourne Glen.</p>	Davies

FULL COUNCIL

16 DECEMBER 2015

Cooke	<u>Planning Department</u> what actions can the council take to improve public confidence in the Planning Department? Councillor Chowney replied that the independent Planning Advisory Service (PAS) had produced a report on the council's Planning Department, which had concluded it was providing a good service and there was no need for a further action plan of improvements.	Chowney
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**23. MOTION (RULE 14)**

Councillor Forward proposed a motion, as set out in the resolution below, which was seconded by Councillor Chowney.

**RESOLVED (by 22 votes for, 8 against) that this council agrees that:**

- **the Housing and Planning Bill is currently being debated in Parliament, and if passed would threaten the provision of affordable homes for rent and buy through:**
  - **forcing 'high-value' council homes to be sold on the open market;**
  - **extending the right-to-buy to housing association tenants; and**
  - **undermining section 106 requirements on private developers to provide affordable homes;**
- **there is no commitment in the Bill that affordable homes will be replaced like-for-like in the local area;**
- **whilst measures to help first-time buyers are welcome, the 'starter homes' proposals in the Bill will be unaffordable to families and young people on ordinary incomes in most parts of the country; will not preserve the taxpayer investment; and will be built at the expense of genuinely-affordable homes to rent and buy;**
- **the Bill undermines localism by taking 32 new wide and open-ended powers for the Secretary over councils and local communities, including the ability to override local plans, to mandate rents for social tenants, and to impose a levy on stock-holding councils, violating the terms of the housing revenue account self-financing deal;**
- **the Bill, whilst introducing some welcome measures to get to grips with rogue landlords, does not help with the high rents, poor conditions and insecurity affecting many of England's 11 million private renters – including one in four families with children – and does nothing to help arrest the recent rise in homelessness.**

**This council resolves to:**

**FULL COUNCIL**

**16 DECEMBER 2015**

- **analyse and report on the likely impact of the forced sale of social housing in Hastings, the extension of right-to-buy and the 'starter homes' requirement on the local availability of affordable homes;**
- **use this information to:**
  - **support the Leader of the Council in writing to the local MP and the Secretary of State with our concerns about the Bill;**
  - **make public our concerns, including by publishing the above information on the council's website and through the local press.**

**24. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES**

Councillor Chowney proposed a motion regarding the membership of committees, as set out in resolution below.

**RESOLVED - that the council adopt the following arrangements for the membership of committees: -**

- 1) Councillor Batsford be appointed to the Hastings Joint Parking Board in place of Councillor Davies**

Councillor Chowney also announced that the communities aspect of the Regeneration, Communities and Culture portfolio would be transferred from Councillor Poole to Councillor Forward.

**25. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

The Mayor having called over the minutes set out in the agenda, the under mentioned minutes were reserved for discussion.

**RESOLVED – under rule 13.3 that the reports and the minutes of committees set out in the agenda be received. Minute number 20 of Cabinet on 2 November 2015 and minute numbers 30, 31, 32 and 33 of Cabinet on 7 December 2015, which were matters for Council decision, were approved without being called for discussion. Only those items which were reserved were discussed, as follows: -**

Meeting	Minute	Councillor
Cabinet, 2 November 2015	18 – Management Response to the Overview and Scrutiny Review of the Council’s Role in Raising Educational Achievement in Hastings and Educational Outcomes for the Town’s Children and Young People	Batsford
Cabinet, 2 November 2015	21 (C) – Council Tax Support Scheme	Turner
Cabinet, 2 November 2015	23 - Former Bathing Pool Site at West Marina	Howard
Cabinet, 7	34 – East Sussex County Council Waste and	Turner

## FULL COUNCIL

16 DECEMBER 2015

December 2015	Minerals Site Plan – Proposed Submission Draft	
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Minute number 21 of Cabinet on 2 November 2015 was a matter for Council decision. The Assistant Director for Financial Services and Revenues submitted a report which sought agreement from the Council that no changes were to be made to the existing council tax support scheme for 2016/17. Councillor Chowney proposed approval of the minute, which was seconded by Councillor Turner, and agreed unanimously.

No motions for reference to an overview and scrutiny committee or reference back to Cabinet were approved in respect of the items reserved for discussion and they were, therefore, received and agreed.

(The Mayor declared the meeting closed at. 8.05 pm)