



# Leigh-on-Sea Town Council

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**Chairman:** Cllr Keith Evans | **Vice Chairman:** Cllr Dr David Bowry  
**Town Clerk:** Helen Symmons PSLCC



MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD AT LEIGH COMMUNITY CENTRE  
TUESDAY 19<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2022

Present: Cllrs: David Bowry, Vinice Cowell, Doug Cracknell, Keith Evans (Chairman), Anita Forde (from minute 31), Paul Gilson, Jill Healey, Emma Mills, Carole Mulroney and James Preston

Also in attendance: Helen Symmons (Town Clerk), 2 representatives from Phab Café, 1 representative from Gold Geese and 1 co-option candidate

Absent: Cllrs: Katie Cohen, Alan Hart and Andy Wilkins

MINUTES

***The meeting opened at 7.30 pm***

## 31. CHAIRMAN AND HOUSEKEEPING ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and undertook the appropriate housekeeping announcements. As Chairman he had been invited and had attended the Southend City Mayor's civic service. He had also attended a Listening Room evening and met with the Financial Conduct Authority which would be reported on later in the meeting. Presentation of past chairman pins were made to Cllrs Healey, Gilson and Cracknell.

*Cllr Forde arrived*

## 32. PRESENTATION TO PHAB CAFE

Immediate past chairman Cllr Cracknell made a presentation to Phab Café for £1,000 being the amount raised during his year as Chairman for his chosen charity.

*The representatives from Phab Café left the meeting*

## 33. INTRODUCTION OF CHAIRMAN'S CHARITY

The Chairman introduced Katie Southgate from Gold Geese, his chosen charity for the year. Katie gave a presentation to Council on the work of the charity and stated how delighted there were to be chosen.

*The representative from Gold Geese left the meeting*

## 34. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs Cohen and Wilkins.

35. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Cllrs Evans and Mulroney declared a non-pecuniary in any agenda item where Southend City Council are mentioned.

36. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING 24<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2022

*Cllr Forde left the meeting*

The minutes of the meeting 24<sup>th</sup> May 2022 were agreed as an accurate record and signed. The Chairman thanked Cllr Bowry as Vice Chairman for chairing the meeting.

37. PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

There were none.

38. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Cllr Gilson and Cllr Cracknell had submitted written questions and the responses as per Appendix 1 were read out

*Cllr Forde returned to the meeting*

39. SOUTHEND CITY COUNCIL

Cllr Mulroney in her capacity as a city councillor advised that she had been in discussions with Rochford District Council regarding their banking hub and could only say that it was not a straightforward process. Consultations for 20mph zones around Glendale Gardens areas will be taking place. It was noted that the proposed scheme involves no loss of parking spaces.

Cllr Evans in his capacity as a city councillor reiterated that many consultations were taking place and encouraged Councillors to complete them as well as encouraging their residents to do the same.

40. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The report was noted and the Chairman thanked the Town Clerk for the update.

<b>COMMITTEES / PDGS AND REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS</b>
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41. COMMITTEES - **Agenda item 11**

- a) The minutes of the Planning, Licensing and Highways Committee were presented by Cllr Cowell as Chairman of the Committee and **NOTED**
- b) The minutes of the Community & Culture Committee were presented by Cllr Mulroney as Chairman of the Committee and **NOTED**. Cllr Mulroney gave Cllr Cowell the opportunity to speak about the Farmers' Market working party meeting recently held. This will be reported in the agenda of the next C&C meeting.
- c) The minutes of the Staffing Committee were presented by Cllr Bowry as Chairman of the Committee and **NOTED**
- d) The minutes of the Finance & Governance Committee were presented by Cllr Bowry as Chairman of the Committee and **NOTED with the following exceptions**

**Minute 8** – Council **RESOLVED** the Council Standards.

**Minute 9** – Council **RESOLVED** the Community Infrastructure levy recommendations

#### 42. ARTS GROUP PDG

The Committee **NOTED** the report and after discussion and following a proposal (Cllr Mulroney, seconded Cllr Gilson) it was **RESOLVED** that C&C Committee will review the structure and terms of reference for the group.

It was agreed that until this was done that Cllr Forde's suggested member just be invited as a guest to attend the meeting the following day.

#### 43. REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

- Cllr Gilson had attended a meeting in Leigh Old Town following the recent driving incident where a dog was killed. He reported the meeting was very positive.
- Cllr Forde had attended a Business Development event at the airport
- Cllr Evans had attended the community police meeting and reported that issues seem to be the same throughout the city. Electric scooters seem to be the chosen vehicle for drug dealing and whilst illegal to drive the police had to seek permission before pursuing. It was reiterated that only by reporting every incident can a picture be built up of issues and where they are taking place. The police have been asked to use the side streets whilst travelling in non emergency situations to be a visible presence.

#### 44. COMMITTEE VACANCIES **Agenda item 14**

- For the Finance & Governance Committee vacancies it was **RESOLVED**  
Cllr Cowell (Cllr Cowell, seconded Cllr Mills)  
Cllr Gilson (Cllr Gilson, seconded Cllr Cowell)
- For the Staffing Committee vacancy it was **RESOLVED**  
Cllr Healey (Cllr Healey, seconded Cllr Mulroney)
- For the Planning Committee vacancy it was **RESOLVED**  
Cllr Forde (Cllr Forde, seconded Cllr Cowell)

#### 45. COUNCILLOR VACANCIES **Agenda item 15**

Two applications had been received the day before the meeting for the vacancies in Elms and Herschell Wards and both were considered with any candidate attending the meeting being permitted to speak as per the co-option policy.

- Council **RESOLVED** that Leslie Parris be co-opted for the Elms Ward vacancy. He signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and joined the meeting.
- Council **RESOLVED** that Rory Windass be co-opted for the Herschell Ward vacancy. He was not present and so the Town Clerk would contact him to advise.

It was noted that the Highlands by election is contested with 2 candidates standing.

<b>OTHER DECISION ITEMS</b>
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#### 46. MOTION FROM CLLR COWELL, SECONDED CLLR COHEN **Agenda item 16**

Following a proposal (Cllr Bowry, seconded Cllr Cowell) an amendment to the motion was made and **RESOLVED** to sign up to the civility and respect pledge agreeing the statements in the document provided at the meeting. (Appendix 2)

Council **RESOLVED** to sign the LGA public statement of support and share the findings across the council social media channels and sign the civility and respect pledge agreeing the statements

47. HERD IN THE CITY – SCULPTURE ART TRAIL **Agenda item 17**

The Town Clerk gave a verbal report regarding sponsorship of an elephant for Leigh Community Centre. The matter was discussed in detail acknowledging the positive impact for the community centre and the town as well as supporting a charity that has touched so many residents over the years in some capacity. It was noted that the Council could provide activities and events over the 10-week period of the trail and therefore the sponsorship cost could be met from advertising and event budgets over two years with no effect on the precept.

Following a proposal (Cllr Mulroney, seconded Cllr Gilson) Council **RESOLVED** to sponsor an elephant in the Herd in the City project which would be placed outside Leigh Community Centre

48. TO APPROVE EXPENDITURE **Agenda item 18**

Council **RESOLVED** the expenditure

<b>FOR NOTING / CONSIDERATION</b>
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49. COUNCIL BANK ACCOUNT BALANCES

Council **NOTED** the account balances

50. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT **Agenda item 20**

- Council Magazine - Council **RESOLVED** to hold an editorial group meeting to finalise the next edition of the magazine.
- Council Litter Picks - Councillors discussed the alternative scenario and felt it more appropriate. The Town Clerk reminded Councillors to promote their locations and dates to ensure good community engagement and to report litter pick success to the office as per the brief.

51. UKRAINE REFUGEE INITIATIVES **Agenda item 21**

It was **NOTED** that at the first few social clubs, there had been lots of signposting of information with city council representatives attending, telephone numbers swapped between hosts and refugees and help provided by Anna Firth MP with some issues. Over the past 3 weeks, only 2 people had attended the session and therefore Council felt it appropriate to put the club on hold over the school holiday period with a plan to resume it in September if there was still the interest from the Community.

Council congratulated Cllr Cowell on her workshop and the Town Clerk confirmed that the monies raised would be passed to the appropriate charity as recommended by the Government.

***The meeting closed at 9.28 pm***

**Question from Cllr Gilson**

**As I recall LTC took on the lease of the revamped shed in the Library Gardens. We allocated moneys to bring the building up to a standard that it could be used for the benefit of local residence. What progress has been made? Is the building finished and fit for use?**

**I ask this for two reasons, at the folk festival people asked to use it and they were told it was not fit to use. The second is to me more alarming if a project is not completed and in use the moneys used have to be repaid. As we took this on from SBC does that mean we are now liable for that repayment?**

**I picked this up through my fisheries work in the SW where some projects failed.**

The Town Clerk has reported on the progress of taking on the lease from Southend City Council in agendas since the resolutions were made in September and then November 2021.

The most recent update was in March 2022 where the agenda item stated:

Further negotiations have taken place with the City Council. It has been agreed that Southend City Council will undertake the repairs highlighted in the survey. The Town Clerk awaits confirmation to an amendment request to alter the proposed full repairing lease to one that has a financial limit of £3000 cumulative in any one year for new repairs only and that Leigh Town Council would not be responsible for any reoccurring issues that may arise from the already identified survey repairs.

Following the March Council meeting, Southend City Council accepted the amendment negotiated by the Town Clerk (originally it was full repairing) and confirmation was received at the end of June that SCC had instructed their solicitor with regard to the draft lease. Leigh Town Council's solicitor has yet to advise that it has been received by them.

The Town Clerk understands that a local contractor has been instructed by the city council in respect of the works highlighted in the survey.

Until the lease is completed, Leigh Town Council are not responsible for the building. LTC allocated £5,000 to pay for legal costs and ensure utilities are provided to the building once it is in our possession. Only the survey fees have been paid to date with the remainder of funds in an earmarked reserve.

The Town Clerk along with a Parks officer received an email from the Folk Festival at the end of May asking 'does anyone know who is best to talk to re use of the meeting room in Library Gardens.' She responded

'It is under the control of the Parks team at Southend City Council but Leigh Town Council are taking on the lease of the building. At the present time it needs remedial work undertaken inside which SCC are doing as part of the lease negotiation. This is all currently with solicitors.

We were not permitted to use it at Christmas and so with the planned works and lease not finalised then I doubt whether it would be a possibility to use. Next year hopefully all will be completed and we will have the keys and this is exactly one of the reasons that we are taking on the financial responsibility for it so it can be used for the community as well as being hired out.

There are funding conditions attached to the lease which we have to fulfil linked to the fishing industry so it will be an active building in due course.'

The Town Clerk has no knowledge regarding grant monies used to fund the building. Once LTC are in possession then we will fulfil the funding conditions.

Recently an enquiry was made regarding use of the building for a fishermen training day. Once again, the Town Clerk advised that LTC do not have use of the building as yet and directed them to Southend City Council. However, use of the community centre was offered in the meantime and the Town Clerk has received support from the trainer with regard to meeting the funding conditions in the future, offering to provide links and information to assist once we do have possession.

#### **Question from Cllr Cracknell**

**Could an update be provided to Council regarding the recent discussions LTC had with the Financial Conduct Authority and others regarding the ongoing bank closures within the Town. In lights of recent Barclays Bank announcement, are there any plans for similar 'hubs' to be established by other banks at the Community Centre**

Cllr Evans as Chairman of Council and the Assistant Financial Responsible Officer met on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> August with the Executive Director of the FCA. The team were very personable, interested and supported the comments and observations in the discussions that took place. They had previously met with other local representatives including the fishing community. It was interesting to hear the wider role of the FCA laying out the obligations in holding the financial sector to account.

Key points were:

- There would be a facility to apply for a banking hub if Leigh were to lose all the bank branches. Currently we still have Nationwide so are not eligible but something to bear in mind. Rochford District Council were involved in making that happen.
- Banks currently pay the Post Office to take in their customer pay-ins. Banks do, by the sounds of it, have the option of making it more attractive to the Post Office which may make the PO in turn more flexible with it's restrictions on coin i.e. they will only accept up to 5 bags of coin and they must be full.
- All agreed that there is a real risk that Leigh traders in general may lose trade/footfall to places such as Rayleigh and Rochford who have retained cash banking services.

There have been no discussions with others other than Barclays approached the Town Clerk shortly after the announcement that Broadway branch was closing to hire a room within the Community Centre on a weekly basis for it's pop-up service. This was dealt with as any other booking to the community centre.

The Council currently bank with HSBC who provide no business counter service at all in any of the branches within Southend City. The Town Clerk will be writing to them to complain as the operational effect on the Council is to leave the business for what could be up to 90 minutes with travel and queues at the nearest branch where we can pay in is Rayleigh.

**Civility and Respect Pledge suggested agenda item:**

**'To pass a resolution to sign up to the civility and respect pledge'**

**Definition of Civility and Respect**

Civility means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word.

Examples of ways in which you can show respect are by listening and paying attention to others, having consideration for other people's feelings, following protocols and rules, showing appreciation and thanks, and being kind.

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC), the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC), and One Voice Wales (OVW), believe now is the time to put civility and respect at the top of the agenda and start a culture change for the local council sector.

By our council signing up to the civility and respect pledge we are demonstrating that our council is committed to treating councillors, clerks, employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.

Signing up is a simple process, which requires councils to register and agree to the following statements:

Statement	Tick to agree
Our council has agreed that it will treat all councillors, clerk and all employees, members of the public, representatives of partner organisations, and volunteers, with civility and respect in their role.	✓
Our council has committed to training councillors and staff.	✓
Our council has signed up to Code of Conduct for councillors	✓
Our council has good governance arrangements in place including, staff contracts, and a dignity at work policy.	✓
Our council will commit to seeking professional help in the early stages should civility and respect issues arise.	✓
Our council will commit to calling out bullying and harassment when if and when it happens.	✓
Our council will continue to learn from best practice in the sector and aspire to being a role model/champion council e.g., via the Local Council Award Scheme	✓
Our council supports the continued lobbying for the change in legislation to support the Civility and Respect Pledge, including sanctions for elected members where appropriate.	✓