



Leigh-on-Sea Town Council
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Chairman: Cllr Bernard Arscott | **Vice Chairman:** Cllr Sandra McCurdy

Town Clerk: Helen Symmons *PSLCC*



Minutes of an extra council meeting of Leigh-on-Sea Town Council.
Wednesday 13th September 2023 in Leigh Community Centre,

70. CHAIRMAN AND HOUSEKEEPING ANNOUNCEMENT

Chairman Cllr Arscott
Councillors Agdeve, R Arscott, Bowry, Cartey, Flewitt, Garston, Gilston, Hart, Lambert, Lloyd, McCurdy, Mulroney, Robinson, Sutting, Watt
Also present. Locum Clerk, Administration Assistant and fifty-two members of the public.

71. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies.

72. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Mulroney declared interest as a city councillor and heritage trail trustee

Cllr Fluett declared that his partner is city councillor, and declared a non-pecuniary interest in the proposed vote of no confidence.

At this point, it was noted that the Council should consider webcasting future meeting

Cllr Hart proposed the vote of no confidence be moved and considered after minute 76. Seconded by Cllr Fluett and carried unanimously.

73. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING ON 25th JULY 2023

The minutes were unavailable and will be approved at the next meeting.

74. PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS (on agenda items)

The suspension of the Clerk a serious matter, can the council confirm the timeline and additional costs involved.

A resident asked what has happened to questions raised at previous meetings.

It was suggested that Cllr Fluett had referred to residents as trolls. In response he denied this; his comment was that the only winners were the trolls who wish for the council and community to fail. No apology was offered as the allegation was unfounded

75. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (for which written notice has been received)

None.

76. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS (for which written notice has been received)

Councillors noted an allegation of fraud and malpractice at the wharf.
Councillors were requested to provide an explanation for the suspension of the clerk

Councillors were asked to provide reassurance that they are a fully functional council. The Chair confirmed that the Councillors are functioning fully.

Cllr Hart had three statements.

He supported the ban on disposable vapes.

He wants an update on the bus item.

He asked fellow councillors to stop sniping at each other in the press.

Councillors and residents were promised written answer to questions in 14 days.

The items moved forward by resolution were considered here

77. SOUTHEND CITY COUNCIL

City Cllr Longstaff introduced himself. Referring to the trees of Southend, the City Council is working to approve a methodology for officers, and planting more trees via grant funding streams which are yet to be identified. He spoke in favour of co-operation between the town and city council.

The Cliffs parade site has a badger problem which requires careful handling as they are a protected species. Mesh and gates will be used to monitor them.

The Operation Union antisocial behaviour project has reduced the number of problems in Old Leigh.

The 20mph speed restriction programme is being rolled out, and the work is being done in stages

City Cllr Cartey reported on mysterious letters being received by Leigh residents, all concerning the fraudulent use of local addresses by offshore companies to establish spoof businesses.

An additional light will be put in Burnham Road, and the hedges will be trimmed to improve night lighting.

Public waste bins are being emptied more frequently to address littering problems.

Fireworks event – the pier will be kept open to allow for another sightseeing location.

Park warden in Belfairs Park are now collecting fees and securing the park.

78. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

No update this month. Will update for next month

COMMITTEES / PDGS AND REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

79. COMMITTEES

To receive the Minutes of Committees for 2022/23, presented by the Committee Chairman.

a) Planning, Licensing and Highways Committee noted.

b) Community & Culture Committee

No meeting

c) Finance and Governance Committee
Meeting 31st July - minutes not available.

d) Staffing Committee – minutes not available.

80. STRATEGIC PLAN PDG

Verbal report – the survey was drafted and only one of the councillors responded. The programme will be reactivated.

81. YOUTH PROVISION PDG

Verbal report – two councillors attended and visited one of the youth club evenings. More councillors will attend a later meeting.

82. REPRESENTATIVE REPORTS

Two Councillors attended meeting to consider sewage treatment. One spoke in support the information delivered; one spoke against. Further research will be necessary

Eastwood police meeting – speeding along Broadway, two new police have been appointed to monitor and ticket offenders. Parking and traffic management is an issue.

Attended meeting of Airport consultative group. The minutes of which will be circulated along with invitation to online presentation for all councillors

Attended bus route liaison meeting to be consider

At this point, it was noted that Cllr Fluett expressed concern about the lack of support from the Office Staff as it was making it difficult for his committee to progress the work of the council.

Cllr Hart would not support the criticism, noting that support was lacking because the tasks were not part of the job.

The Locum Clerk supported the council staff, noting that he had always had good support from the staff.

It was agreed that a staffing review would be required to make sure the correct people were in the right places.

OTHER DECISION ITEMS

83. MOTION SUBMITTED BY CLLRS HART AND BOWRY- REVISIONS TO STAFF HANDBOOK

Proposed Cllr Hart seconded Cllr Bowry. With three in Favour and thirteen against, the motion failed.

A recorded vote was requested. In favour Cllrs Bowry, Mulrone, Hart. Against Agdeve, B Arscott, R Arscott, Cartey, Flewitt, Garston, Gilston, Lambert, Lloyd, McCurdy, Robinson, Sutting, Watt.

The Council were advised that the clerk is on holiday and the investigation is in the hands of an independent consultant. In response to a question about the timeframe, it was reported that this was a confidential matter.

An additional motion to request that the outstanding issue with the town clerk is resolved in the next seven working days from return from holiday was proposed Cllr Hart seconded Cllr Bowry. With three in favour and thirteen against, the motion failed

84. MOTION SUBMITTED BY Cllr HART AND MULRONEY– VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE.

Following an address from Cllr Mulroney expressing concern about the Council’s lack of action and partisan politics the motion was seconded by Cllr Bowry who supported the proposal and supported the reinstatement of the Clerk. With three in favour and thirteen against, the motion failed.

At this point, the Chairman proposed that the Council invokes standing order 11 and adjourn the meeting for 15 minutes. The motion was proposed by Cllr Arscott seconded Mcurdy and carried thirteen to three.

At this point, a resident appealed for a more moderate approach and asked the council adopt a more collaborative approach.

After fifteen minutes, the meeting continued.

85. DISPOSABLE VAPES

The council will consider offering its support to the campaign to ban disposable vapes. Cllr Carthey reported that a government ban will be announced shortly.

86. BUS ROUTE

The proposal to retain the 21 bus route was considered. A motion to support the retention of the route was proposed by Cllr Hart seconded Cllr Bowry and carried unanimously.

87. TO NOTE THE COMPLETION OF THE EXTERNAL AUDIT AND APPROVE PUBLICATION.

The review of the AGAR has been completed by PKF Littlejohn LLP. In their opinion, the information provided is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met. [A Notice of conclusion of audit](#) was published on the website on 3rd August 2023.

88. TO APPROVE EXPENDITURE

Before the payments were approved Cllr Agdeve noted that there were several items that looked unusual and he recommended that the council carried out a forensic audit to identifying any potential fraud which may be taking place.

Cheque	Expenditure	Payee	Purpose
		Expenditure - Cheques	
BK TRS	£1246.76	Southend City Council	Rent for LCC
BK TRS	£274.93	DJE Creative	LTC Flag & Allotments sign

BK TRS	£1740.00	Underhill Tree Consultancy	Tree survey allotments
BK TRS	£319.48	The Montine Food Company Ltd	Café supplies
BK TRS	£57.93	Amazon	Stationery & extension lead
BK TRS	£57.26	Viking Direct	Stationery
BK TRS	£28000.00	Payroll	July payroll
BK TRS	£1900.00	Mashfords Gardening & General Maintenance	Hanging baskets & Skate Park grass cutting
BK TRS	£51.19	Amazon	LCC maintenance items
BK TRS	£820.00	The Art Ministry	Easter & Coronation crafts and LTC Grant Award
BK TRS	£218.99	The Montine Food Company Ltd	Café supplies
BK TRS	£109.16	Essex Supplies (UK) Ltd	Cleaning materials
BK TRS	£1446.98	Turtle Engineering Ltd	2 x Bleed kits and cabinets (sponsored by Davis Construction)
BK TRS	£275.00	Entertainer	Punch & Judy Shows
BK TRS	£3471.13	Zurich Municipal	Annual insurance premium
BK TRS	£20.34	Staff member	Reimburse for Lucky Dip sweets
BK TRS	£654.00	PFS Group Ltd	Emergency lighting remedial works
BK TRS	£192.00	Evac + Chair Intl	Maintenance contract
BK TRS	£16.99	Amazon	Strand Wharf maintenance
BK TRS	£110.00	Verde	Coffee supplies
BK TRS	£309.60	Tormax UK Ltd	Automatic doors maintenance
BK TRS	£189.36	Essex Supplies (UK) Ltd	Cleaning materials
BK TRS	£164.95	Hometech Centre Ltd	Works related to internet connection
BK TRS	£66.00	Kieran Lucas Contractors Ltd	Callout to Strand Wharf bollard
BK TRS	£144.55	The Montine Food Company Ltd	Café supplies
BK TRS	£7200.00	Close Invoice Finance Ltd (Southern Asset Mngmt)	Structural testing of lighting columns
BK TRS	£280.00	Southend Estuary District Explorer Scouts	Minibus hire Community Transport
BK TRS	£69.18	Couno Office Solutions	Photocopying
BK TRS	£168.00	Hirer	Room hire refund
BK TRS	£51.98	Amazon	Weedkiller Skate Park
BK TRS	£19.93	Mark One Hire	Acrow prop hire
BK TRS	£1638.00	PKF Littlejohn LLP	External audit fee
BK TRS	£166.32	James Todd & Co Ltd	Payroll processing
BK TRS	£54.00	Hirer	Refund hall hire
BK TRS	£105.00	J Milne	Baked goods café

BK TRS	£36.00	Secom plc	Call out alarm
BK TRS	£774.08	The Montine Food Company Ltd	Café supplies
BK TRS	£180.00	Southend City Council	Premises licence annual fee
BK TRS	£7671.00	Kieran Lucas Contractors	Various works at LCC re steel column and minor repairs
BK TRS	£429.55	British Telecom	Btnet broadband
		Expenditure – Imprest Items	
	£16.10	Tesco	Café supplies
	£10.65	Tesco	Café supplies
	£11.60	Tesco	Café supplies
	£12.99	Zoom Communications	Subscription
	£169.02	Makro	Café supplies
	£11.85	Tesco	Café supplies
	£2.50	Best wishes	Volunteer card
	£6.25	The Factory Shop	Lucky dip
	£21.35	Tesco	Café supplies
	£48.28	EE	Mobile broadband
	£16.25	Tesco	Café supplies
	£453.01	Makro	Café supplies
	£9.95	The Factory Shop	Office items
	£12.99	Canva	Subscription
	£12.99	Zoom Communications	Subscription
	£12.99	Canva	Subscription

FOR NOTING / CONSIDERATION

89. TO CONSIDER ITEMS FOR A FUTURE PDG

90. COUNCIL BANK ACCOUNT BALANCES AS AT 5TH SEPTEMBER 2023

Current Account	£14,922.39
Imprest Account	£947.03
Payroll Account	£10,475.06
Savings Account	£204,725.04
Public Sector Deposit Fund	£542,246.85

Cllr Suttling has completed the reconciliation checks for April, May, and June, with July and August in hand. Cllr B Arscott has commenced the finance check for the first quarter, but it is yet to be completed. Bearing in mind the concerns expressed about potential fraud, the payment list was noted.

DATE OF NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING: Tuesday 28th November 2023

DISCIPLINARY AND APPEALS PANELS - PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE STAFF HANDBOOK

The Proposer and Seconder of this motion wish to advise Council, lest there be any doubt, that they are not part of any group on the Council and act independently of any group or each other. This motion however, is common ground between them.

We are mindful that actions against staff have a detrimental effect on those involved in terms of their wellbeing and morale and it is the duty of the Council (the Staffing Committee) to ensure that any member of staff subject to such action is given full support for their wellbeing during the process. There will also be consequent effects on other members of staff and the operation of the Council and Community Centre and the livelihood of its users. It is in the best interests of all that such processes should be dealt with swiftly and above all fairly.

MOTION IN RESPECT OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE STAFF HANDBOOK IN RELATION TO ACTION AGAINST THE TOWN CLERK OR OTHER MEMBER OF STAFF

To refer consideration of amendments to the Staff Handbook outlined below for the protection of the office of the Town Clerk and any incumbent thereof and all staff members, to all councillor working party for consideration and report back with recommendations.

Background

The Staff Handbook rules that if the Town Clerk is the subject of any disciplinary/appeal consideration which may lead to suspension or dismissal, the matter is initially dealt with by the Staffing Committee. Complaints against other members of staff are initially dealt with by the Town Clerk but may eventually also come before the Staffing Committee. The procedure below should be considered as an amendment to the Staff Handbook in both instances.

Difficulties arise if any members of the Staffing Committee are the source of the action against the Town Clerk or other member of staff, as an inbuilt bias has been created.

The Working Party is tasked with considering the following changes to the Staff Handbook and any consequential policies of the Council.

1. Where a member of the Staffing Committee is party to the compilation and prosecution of a case against either the Town Clerk or a member of staff which would fall to be considered by that Committee, they shall declare a disclosable interest and leave the meeting. If by virtue of this exclusion the meeting becomes inquorate (less than 3) the matter shall be referred immediately to the Finance and Governance (F&G) Committee without comment. No member of both Staffing and F&G Committees shall take part in any F&G consideration by virtue of their disclosed interest.
2. If, however, any residual member of F&G was also party to the complaint against the Town Clerk or a member of staff they shall declare a disclosable interest and leave the meeting. If the meeting, then becomes inquorate (less than 3) the matter shall stand referred immediately to Council without comment.
3. At Council all members of Staffing and F&G Committees who have declared a disclosable interest are precluded from taking part in the proceedings and shall leave the meeting as shall any residual member who was party to the complaint and who shall declare a disclosable interest. If the Council is then inquorate (less than 3) the matter shall stand referred without comment immediately to an independent external adjudicator whose decision will be final, after hearing from all members of the Council, staff and potential external witnesses and subject to any appeal.
4. As a result of a referral to an independent adjudicator and to enable full participation, the substance of any disciplinary action will be disclosed to all members of the Council not privy to the complaint, in confidence to enable them to respond meaningfully.

Proposer – Cllr Alan Hart

Seconders –

Cllr David Bowry

Cllr Carole Mulroney

Cllr Carole Mulroney

Independent non-party councillors.

Notice of Motion - Vote of no confidence in the leadership of Leigh Town Council and Removal of Leader and Chairmen of Committees

That, in the light of the incompetence of the leadership of this Council in failing to attend properly to Council business, failing to arrange Standing Committees, behaviour towards staff and the lack of any evident action or concern for the enrichment of the lives of the residents of Leigh since taking office in May,

a) this Council has no confidence in the current Leader of the Council or Chairs of the Standing Committees and therefore resolves to remove those persons from any and all of those posts and elect a new Leader and Chairs.

b) this Council elects a new Leader and Chairs of Standing Committees forthwith who shall be charged with immediate progression of all outstanding matters and preparation of a programme for the future work of the Council and committees by September 30th, 2023, to be presented at an Extraordinary meeting of the Council in the first 2 weeks of October 2023.

Proposer Cllr Alan Hart

Secunder Cllr Carole Mulroney

Possible discussion items for a PDG

Information boards or plaques throughout the old town and possibly Broadway.

Plaques to give local history clips i.e., Strand Wharf would include Elisabeth's spies and perhaps the pilot service that operated from Leigh. Other boards could give history of John Wesley preaching and the English fleet coming to Leigh to refit after a battle with the Dutch. We could have big boards and some small ones on individual buildings with local history. Information on vessels built in Leigh, or what the building has been.

A statue or character to promote Leigh's Maritime history. Most seaside ports and harbours have something like this.

Parking display signs to alert drivers that there are no spare parking places in the Old Town. There by preventing unnecessary transiting of the old town. Like at Southend directing visitors to nearby parking.

Pay or employ a contactor or gardeners to mow Cliff gardens.

Promote wildflowers by seeding on Belton Hills approaches to Two Tree Island and Cliff gardens in pre-selected areas. (Not expensive).

Look at the possibilities of Leigh lights parade.

Develop the format we had this year for carols in the library gardens, possibly a second venue at Bonchurch park.

Look at Carols on strand wharf or a new site, Bonchurch Park?

Ask Belfairs school band to play at the event.

As there will be no regatta possible an introduction of a "festival of the sea". Bring in a few boats to show to the public.

Create a heritage trail.

Organise a Leigh Litter pick twice a year? Make a big thing of it hot dogs and burgers after at the community centre or other site on completion.

We need more and some new litter bins.

Look at planters in selected areas to brighten outlook.

Wheelchair swing for library gardens or Bonchurch park.

Look at the reintroduction of farmer's market after interest shown by potential stall holders.

Host a meeting with Leigh traders, invite city councillors to attend to discuss working together.

By doing these things we can try and create a community spirit and have some fun. We can not do them all but we can select what is possible.