

## SOUTHBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Full Council meeting of Southborough Town Council held on Thursday 29 September 2022 at 7.00 p.m. at the Southborough Civic Centre, 137 London Road, Southborough Kent TN4 0NA.

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**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillors Ms Hill (Chair) Blackwell, Bullion, Elliott, Francis, Harris, Lane, Lewis, Munn, and Poile.

**OFFICER PRESENT:** Paul Gosling (Finance Officer)

**Members observed a one-minute silence to pay respects to HM Queen Elizabeth II following her death on 8th September 2022**

1. **PROCLAMATION OF KING CHARLES III** – Members **NOTED** the proclamation.
2. **APOLOGIES AND REASON FOR ABSENCE** – Councillors Clay, Kinghorn, Mrs Kinghorn, Prance, and Wharton (Family Commitments) Lewis -Grey (Work commitments)
3. **DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY AND OTHER SIGNIFICANT INTERESTS** – none declared.
4. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION** – There were no Members of the public or Members of the press present.
5. **MINUTES** - The minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the 28 July 2022 were **APPROVED**.
6. **COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS** – Members **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes from the following meetings.

Planning and Transportation	01 August & 05 September 2022
Open Spaces and Environment	05 September 2022
Finance and General Purposes	26 September 2022

7. **TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS** – Members **NOTED** the Mayoral engagements that were verbally reported.

Councillor Harris entered the meeting at 7.30pm.

8. **CHRISTMAS FAYRE AND LIGHTS SWITCH ON 3.12.22**- Members **AGREED** to have a slightly taller and fuller Christmas tree for the Town square.
9. **BOUNDARY COMMISSION** - Members **APPROVED** the following statement to be submitted to the Boundary Commission:

*STC rejects in their entirety the LGBCE draft recommendations relating to Southborough and High Brooms which would sever the community of High Brooms from Southborough, annex it to a new borough ward called Tunbridge Wells North, and result in revised warding arrangements for STC.*

## **History and Community**

(Cf: <https://highbroomssociety.wordpress.com/2012/11/05/history-of-high-brooms-tunbridge-wells-tunbridge-wells-civic-society-jan-2012/>)

*High Brooms and Southborough have been regarded as a single entity since medieval times, see for example the Wikipedia entry, which opens with ‘Southborough is a town and civil parish in the borough of Tunbridge Wells in Kent, England. It lies immediately to the north of the town of Tunbridge Wells **and includes the district of High Brooms....***

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southborough,\\_Kent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southborough,_Kent)

*Southborough separated from Tonbridge (not Tunbridge Wells) in 1871, when its own board of health was formed. In 1894 it was recreated to become an urban district, with its own elected council to manage its affairs (Southborough Urban District Council). By that time High Brooms had developed, following the High Brooms Brickworks commencing operations in 1862.*

*High Brooms has always formed a distinct community, its characteristic buildings of top-quality red brick from the eponymous brickworks springing up as a company town over a relatively short period between 1880 and 1900. Starting with workers' accommodation, it quickly developed to house the staff, their chapel, schools, shops, businesses, and St Matthew's Church. The later Barnett's Wood housing estate, between the railway line and Powdermill Lane (also slated, in the LGBCE draft, to be annexed to TW North), was built to meet local housing demand and London overspill. One of its roads was named Lambersart Close in 1997, to celebrate five years of the town twinning of Southborough **and High Brooms** with Lambersart in France. This bond of friendship is overseen and encouraged by the Southborough **and High Brooms** District Overseas Friendship Association (SHDOFA) who organise regular visits to Lambersart. Exchanges always involve members from both Southborough and High Brooms. In short, the Lambersartois regard their friends from Southborough & High Brooms as coming from one single community.*

## **Geography**

*Contrary to the opinion derived from a tour by LGBCE personnel, there is not ambiguity in this area about ‘where Southborough [or, more accurately, High Brooms] ends and RTW starts’.*

*Residents do not see High Brooms as merging into Tunbridge Wells, but rather that Tunbridge Wells does not start until beyond the railway bridge roundabout branching into Silverdale Road.*

## **The new Civic Centre**

*Following lengthy negotiations over many years, the sale of part of the town's playing fields enabled the opening in 2021 of the new £13M Southborough Civic Centre. This comprises not only the STC offices, but also its community hall, meeting rooms (including the Brickworks and Lambersart rooms), the KCC run library, the local GPs' 'state of the art' medical centre (an NHS 'Vanguard' project), and the chemist's shop. All the local amenities, from the playgrounds in High Brooms to the cemetery and Common in Southborough, are administered by STC, and the residents of High Brooms pay the parish precept for the upkeep and maintenance of the entire parish. As such, they regard all of these as 'their' town amenities, making full use of the Civic Centre, library and GP surgery. High Brooms families belong to the football clubs using the pitches and the new pavilion behind the Civic Centre; they rent STC's allotments, also under LGBCE proposals to be separated off in 'new Southborough'; and may choose to be buried in Southborough cemetery. Children*

*from both Southborough and High Brooms were chosen to participate in the opening ceremony of the Civic Centre.*

### ***St Matthew's Primary School***

*Children from High Brooms generally attend St Matthew's Primary School, on the west side of Powdermill Lane. (Southborough children go to Southborough School). Under the draft recommendations, the school building stays in 'new Southborough', while the parents and the linked parish church move into 'TW North'. Neither they, nor the school, nor St Matt's High Brooms church, see the benefit of this. Children from the town generally attend their local primary schools and preschools and do not travel into Tunbridge Wells, walking on foot to do so.*

### ***Community Identity***

*Our town has a wide range of grass roots community organisations including the Southborough Society (heritage and amenity, Scouts and Guides, SHDOFA, two football clubs, Southborough Cricket (over 200 hundred years), Barnet's Wood High Weald Project, Community larders (in both the Bethel Chapel and Christ Church), Southborough Working Men's Club, , SHAAS Archaeology Society and the Southborough Wheelers cycling club.*

### ***Councillors & Southborough Town Council***

*Under the draft proposals, nearly 1/3 (5) of STC's 18 councillors would be from the High Brooms part of the parish, which for borough ward 'electoral equality' purposes alone it is proposed to park in the new 'Tunbridge Wells North'. High Brooms is the fourth most deprived ward in the borough, and its residents are disproportionately elderly, on benefits, disabled and users of the Friday 'community larder' at the Bethel Chapel on High Brooms Road. They may travel less outside the ward than residents of Southborough; and it is therefore of rather more concern to them that they should have a Borough councillor who is primarily interested in their concerns, their financial struggles, their access to services and amenities. These residents will continue to pay the parish precept, but will start to question why they do so, when their Borough councillor has at least one foot in more affluent Tunbridge Wells and may have less interest in, for example, promoting public transport links with their GPs in Southborough Civic Centre. They have never been anything other than part of the parish of Southborough and should not become some component of any new unparished portion of 'Tunbridge Wells North', as proposed by the LGBCE.*

### ***Revised Wards***

*For all of the above reasons, STC submits that Southborough and High Brooms should remain a single entity, within the existing parish boundary. As the total of projected electors at 2027/8 is 9,185, STC proposes 2 X two-member wards of approximately 4,600 electors each. They should be named Southborough North and Southborough and High Brooms, with the precise boundary to be determined by reference to electoral data for individual roads.*

*We regard it as far preferable for parished wards, which levy their own precepts and share distinctive community identities, to be represented as such on the Borough Council, rather than be yoked together with any unparished parts of TW town (as proposed by the LGBCE draft recommendation for the SHB/ St John's grouping).*

Members **AGREED** to reject the proposal of voting by thirds as proposed by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council as this had a detrimental effect on how the parish is currently represented splitting apart areas of Southborough and High Brooms. Members **AGREED** it wished to use the all-out voting system.

Members further **AGREED** for the Chair of the Council to sign the letter from Parish Chairs objecting to the proposed voting by thirds currently put forward by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

- 10. REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY EVENT** – Members **AGREED** going ahead with the Event with Councillor Wharton being lead Councillor. Councillors Elliott, Lane, Munn, and Poile would be acting as marshals on the day. The Chair would be speaking to Southborough Guides as a flag bearer and would also check with the local schools to see if one of the children to do a reading.
- 11. ANNUAL EXTERNAL AUDIT** - Members **NOTED** the report of the External Auditor and thanked the Finance Officer for the hard work that had gone into the process.
- 12. TWINNING MATTERS** -Members **NOTED** the reports from SHDOFA. Councillor Lewis reported on the upcoming event on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> October celebrating the Associations 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

### **13. CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS**

It was proposed that during the consideration of the following items, the public and press shall be temporarily excluded (Standing Order 3 (c)): -

These items are considered confidential for the following reason(s)  
Information relating to the financial and personnel affairs of the Council.

- a) Confidential Council and Committee Proceedings** – Members **APPROVED** the following confidential minutes: -

Full Council Meeting	28 July 2022
Open Spaces and Environment	05 September 2022
Finance and General Purposes	26 September 2022
- b) Hearing Loops at Civic Centre** – Members **AGREED** to a fixed hearing loop system being fitted in the main Unity Hall and further mobile loops to be provided in the meeting rooms and office.
- c) Holden Pond** – Members **AGREED** to go with the recommended advice supplied by the Deputy Clerk but asked that more investigation been done on environmental planting and management moving forward so the area was properly managed.
- d) Southborough Civic Buildings Confidential Matters** – There were no matters to be discussed surrounding the Civic Buildings.

The Chair thanked Members for their attendance and closed the meeting at 9.00pm

**CHAIR**