

SOUTHBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting of Southborough Town Council held on **Thursday 28th March 2024** at **7.00 pm** at the Southborough Civic Centre, 137 London Road, Southborough, Kent TN4 0NA.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors Hill (Chair), Allen, Elliott, Figgett, Francis, J Francis, Kinghorn, O Kinghorn, Lewis, Poile, Reeves (Deputy Chair), Spickett and Stewart.

OFFICER PRESENT: Catherine Barrett (Assistant Clerk, Speldhurst Parish Council).

1. APOLOGIES AND REASONS FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Bridges – work commitments

Cllr Bullion – family commitments

Cllr Opara – abroad

Cllr Wharton – holiday

2. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY AND OTHER SIGNIFICANT INTERESTS

No member wished to declare an interest.

3. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

There were 3 members of the public present: Bob Willard Watts from Creative Tunbridge Wells (CTW), Dawn Badland from Applause, and Hilary Smith from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC). They attended to speak about item 7 on the agenda, regarding CTW. The Chair requested to move this item forward, to enable councillors to discuss CTW immediately after the public open session. The Chair asked the officer present to write a summary, as follows:

Creative Tunbridge Wells

- Funded by Arts Council England, CTW is a Cultural Compact formed following a mapping exercise carried out by TWBC. It is an organisation designed to help the creative sector, including digital, gaming, copywriting, and creative freelancers. It is here to help the sector grow and to help organisations apply for funding.
- CTW takes its instruction from a steering group made up of Royal TW Together, TWBC, Kent County Council (KCC), and Applause, and it works in 4 ways:
 1. A Convenor – 2 groups have been convened so far: Festivals and Events, and Venues including the Forum, Trinity Theatre, the Assembly Hall, and the Amelia Scott.
 2. An Advocate – as a voice for the sector, helping to open the right doors for groups and organisations.
 3. A Facilitator
 4. A Catalyst – creating opportunities where others wouldn't exist.
- CTW's remit is not just the town but the whole borough. They are keen to feed into the neighbourhood plan and see the potential for a place-making project in Southborough. They want Unity Hall to be the best venue it can be and are eager to start identifying how they can work with the council.

Applause Rural

- The Arts Council had visited Applause, viewed the available spaces in Southborough, discussed the demographics, and felt positive about its potential for a place-making bid.
- Applause had held a monthly Saturday afternoon show at Unity Hall for 6 months. The average audience was 112, a high attendance rate for regional theatre. Overall, the shows had broken even and there had been good engagement from schools.

- Unity Hall is not the only space that can be used in Southborough. Multi-use spaces can be used, and Applause can work anywhere. There is a range of ways to animate the civic centre.

Points of focus in Southborough

- Families, children, and young people:
 - It was felt that future creative events should offer young people the opportunity to develop technical skills such as lighting, using a similar form of community outreach as Trinity Theatre.
 - It was suggested that hiring Unity Hall out to school choirs would be an effective way to encourage parents into the space, and having a mixed-price model for hirers was important for this type of booking.
 - Applause is already working with Southborough and St Barnabas Primary Schools, with plans to involve St Matthew's.
- Existing grassroots organisations:
 - It was agreed that working with local organizations – who are already doing significant work in Southborough - was important. Some local creative groups are already known to Creative TW, and they welcome an introduction to others.
- Care settings and the elderly:
 - Using creativity to foster wellbeing is a major focus for the Arts Council.
 - The possibility of opening up care settings such as Fountains Lodge Bupa Care Home, and speaking to St Andrew's Medical Centre about social prescribing should be explored.
 - West Kent Mind already holds events in the civic centre.
- Southborough Pantomime:
 - It was suggested that the pantomime should be moved into Unity Hall and made a bigger event in the town's calendar. The portable bar had been used successfully for recent bookings, giving sufficient scope to host large-scale events.
- Volunteers:
 - Volunteers are always needed for events and a volunteer bank is a possibility for the future, with the potential to share volunteers more widely across Tunbridge Wells borough for special events.

In conclusion, CTW's role is to help the council realise its plans to grow the cultural sector in Southborough. However, they will need direction and clear communication from the council on what they want to achieve, and their emphasis is on helping organisations achieve their goals for themselves rather than doing it for them.

Members **AGREED** in principle to work with Creative TW and would discuss this further at their next Full Council meeting.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on the 29th February 2024 were **AGREED** and signed as a correct record.

5. COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS

Members **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** the proceedings of the following committees:

Planning and Transportation

04 March 2024

6. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

The Chair verbally updated Members on her recent engagements, including a successful tea party held by the Southborough Lions in the Unity Hall, the Parish Chairs' meeting, events for

International Women's Day, and litter picks for the Great British Spring Clean, which Members **NOTED**.

8. ACCOUNTS

- a) Outstanding Payments – Members **NOTED** a list of FPI payments, the previously signed cheques/ FPI Payments lists, and the FPI Fact Sheet supplied by the Finance Officer.
- b) Financial Statements – Members **NOTED** the income and expenditure reports between 1st February and 29th February 2024.
- c) Financial Summary – Members **NOTED** the financial summary between 1st February and 29th February 2024.

9. FINANCIAL MATTERS

- a) NDP Expenditure – Members **NOTED** the previously supplied spreadsheet for Neighbourhood Plan expenditure.

10. CHANGE IN COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Members **AGREED** a change of membership in the HR Sub Committee, whereby Councillor James Allen would be replaced by Councillor Ian Kinghorn.

11. 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)):

“Meetings shall be open to the public unless their presence is prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons. The public's exclusion from part or all of a meeting shall be a resolution which shall give reasons for the public's exclusion.”

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

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

Full Council Meeting

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- b) **Staff Wages** – Members **NOTED** the staff wages for February 2024 which were previously supplied.
- c) **HR Sub Committee** – Councillor Reeves will verbally update Members over the recent HR Sub Committee Meeting. Members to discuss the points that were raised.
 - 1) Inductions - Members to discuss how to proceed with staff and councillor inductions. New staff already have a 2-day induction process where they are taken all over Southborough and High Brooms. How do Cllrs want to approach an induction for themselves?
Members **AGREED** that the first part of any councillor's induction should take the form of a tour of the area by existing councillors so that staff members were not taken away from their jobs. This should be followed by a short conference with staff and councillors explaining their role, for example, the Finance Officer would explain the budget. This should be an evening event.

- 2) Meet and Greet staff - Members to discuss how best for Cllrs to get to know what the council and its officers do both as part of their job roles and the statutory obligations. In addition to the induction activities listed above, it was **AGREED** that a common day for all office staff to be present in the office was necessary to make two-way communication between councillors and staff easier.
- 3) Appointment of Deputy RFO – Members to discuss and decide on the attached report. Members **AGREED** to appoint the Finance Officer as temporary RFO, either until the Clerk returned to work, or a Deputy Clerk with the relevant skill set was appointed. Members **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE** that Cllr Reeves progress the appointment of a temporary member of staff to assist with workload in the council office.
It was requested that the meeting minutes of the HR sub-committee be circulated.
- d) **Unity Hall Lighting** – Members **AGREED** to take up the offer of an upgrade.
- e) **Town Sign** – Members **AGREED** the new position of the Town Sign. Cllr Kinghorn shared photographs of work-in-progress on the sign and added that this should last at least 25 years once complete.

There being no further business, the Chair thanked Members for their attendance and closed the meeting at 8.38 pm.

CHAIR