

Minutes of the COUNCIL PRECEPT meeting held in the ANZAC ROOM, Meridian Centre, Peacehaven, on  
Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2018 at 7:30pm

Members

<b>Councillors:</b>	Wayne Botting	Jackie Harrison-Hicks
	Daryll Brindley	Andy Loraine
	Rachael Coles	Ron Maskell
	Jean Farmiloe	Dave Neave
	Reg Farmiloe (Vice Chair)	Amber Robertson
	Brian Gosling (Chair)	Robbie Robertson
	Job Harris	Melvyn Simmons
	Ann Harrison	Andy Smith

Present:

<b>Councillors:</b>	Rachael Coles	Jackie Harrison-Hicks
	Jean Farmiloe	Ron Maskell
	Reg Farmiloe (Vice Chair)	Dave Neave
	Brian Gosling (Chair)	Amber Robertson
	Job Harris	Robbie Robertson
	Ann Harrison	Melvyn Simmons

**ESCC Cllr's:**

In Attendance

Claire Lacey – Town Manager  
Louise Steele – Locum RFO

**GENERAL BUSINESS**

**C288 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Good evening residents, Councillors and Officers. Thank you for coming to the Full Council and Precept meeting of this evening 23rd January 2018.

Firstly may I remind you of the Health and Safety Announcement, we are not expecting any evacuations, although if we do, the alarms will sound and you will be required to leave the building by the closest available route. We will meet on the grass area in the South Service Car Park. We need to inform you that this meeting is being recorded and a copy of the legislation is on your seats.

I need to report to you that Cllr. Dave Neave and Cllr. Wayne Botting have left the Conservative Group. They will remain as Independent Councillors in Peacehaven, representing our residents.

Cllr. Lynda Hallett has resigned from the Town Council as a West Ward Councillor and as such a Casual Vacancy has been advertised. Information is available from the Elections Office at Lewes District Council. I would like to personally thank Lynda for the 15 years of hard work she has provided on behalf of residents in the town.

I would like to congratulate Cllr. Andy Smith for today becoming a Grandfather again, to a healthy baby boy. Mother and son are doing well. I am sure you will excuse his absence and understand Cllr. Smith will be spending this evening on babysitting duty with his lovely grandchildren.

Now I have another bit of news, Peacehaven Town Council School Youth Mayor. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of this month, myself, Sandra, Debbie Donovan and Matt were invited by the schools head to interview two young

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students to become Youth Mayor and Deputy Youth Mayor, they had been through a process run by the school to determine which of the students would be suitable and they decided on Fatma and Harvey.

They both gave a very impressive interview and were both keen to represent the youth of the town, so they were told to decide which of them should be our Youth Mayor and Deputy and it gave me great pleasure this morning to present Fatma with the Young Mayors chain.

They are both aware that this will have to be passed by Council but I feel sure you will all support me in this as I am sure you will agree they will be of great benefit to our town.

I must point out we were approached by the school over this and the headmaster is confident that these two young students are the voice of the future.

We will now move forward to Public Questions.

## C289 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

### Alan Sargent - West Ward (Chair of Residents Association)

I would like to say that I am here representing the Residents Association and will read this out on their behalf, although it is not my personal view.

I refer to item 10 – Precept, the local press is flagging a big hike in council tax by LDC and ESCC together with Katy Bourne, Police Commissioner screaming for more monies to retain current police levels. This all points to a perfect council tax financial storm. On top of this, what could turn into a hurricane is this Council is forecasting a budget overspend of £220,114 (50% approximately) on this year's budget. Also this additional expenditure will only leave £39,154 in reserve.

It is also stated that there are concerns that the Internal Auditor will comment adversely.

Unfortunately this has only come about by lack of financial management control by Councillors and Officers. I refer to the following Policy and Finance meetings held on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2017, 11<sup>th</sup> July 2017, 5<sup>th</sup> September 2017 and 21<sup>st</sup> November 2017. Nowhere in the financial reports are there any front summary sheets identifying total expenditure to date, comparison against forecast, identifying budget overruns and how they are being acted upon.


There are no financial risk assessments and there are no minutes recording monthly meetings held by the Chairs with the Town Manager and RFO to review expenditure progress.

At the P&F meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2017 under budget monitoring I raised the question concerning 30 major items exceeding their budget allocation excessively and asked if the Chairs had reviewed the appropriate overruns. I am still waiting a written response.

To have a Town Council budget overrun of this magnitude shows a lack of control, discipline and budget awareness by Councillors and Officers. In the commercial real world this would be P45 time and I suggest that the Chairs of the P&F and L&A Committees fall on their swords and resign from these two positions.

In addition in the words of SALC solicitor Ian Davidson during a training course the role of Town Clerk (Manager) as the Proper Officer is to "Manage resources and the Council's income and expenditure, to

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## C289 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME continued

maintain financial records, to administer finance for audit, to organise and maintain the Council's insurances, to balance the accounts and prepare them for audit".

With a small Council the Clerk may also be the RFO or with a larger Council such as Peacehaven an RFO is employed. However the ultimate financial responsibility rests with the Town Clerk (Manager) Proper Officer.

In conclusion this Council should not agree to agenda item 10 paragraphs 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 without a mean and lean review of the proposed expenditure prior to agreeing the precept. It should be remembered that the majority of income comes from Council Tax which is levied on the residents (the voters). The Council is only the caretaker and administrator of the monies.

*Cllr. R Robertson enquired of the resident when he had attended the SALC training event*

Mr. Sargent responded that this had been in excess of three years ago

## C290 TO CONSIDER APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr. W Botting – noted (work commitments)

Cllr. D Brindley – noted (family commitments)

Cllr. A Loraine – noted (trains from London not on schedule – unable to attend)

Cllr. A Smith – noted (family commitments)

S Landers (Admin Clerk) – accepted (illness)

## C291 TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST FROM MEMBERS

Due to the nature of agenda item 10 Council Precept, Cllrs. J Harris, J Farmiloe, R Farmiloe, A Harrison, B Gosling, J Harrison-Hicks and R Coles, all expressed an interest as residents of the Town of Peacehaven.

Their disclosure was accepted by Members.

The Chair requested at his discretion, bringing forward Agenda Item 10 – Annual Precept 2018-19 (Revised Estimates 2017-18 & Budget 2018-19)

This was upheld by Cllr. J Harrison-Hicks and J Farmiloe

All Agreed

## REPORTS

### C292 ANNUAL PRECEPT 2018-19

The Council **AGREES** the revised estimates for 2017-18 and the drawing of up to **£210,614** from reserves to balance the budget in 2017-18

Cllr. M Simmons proposed

Cllr. R Farmiloe seconded

Majority Agreed Cllr. D Neave abstained

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The Council **AGREES** a budget for 2018-19 of **£428,340** and for officers to submit a detailed budget at the Policy & Finance Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2018

Cllr. R Coles proposed  
Cllr. A Harrison seconded

**Majority Agreed**

Cllr. D Neave abstained  
Cllr. M Simmons against

The Council **AGREES** to set a **PRECEPT** for the financial year **2018-19** of **£428,340 (3%)**

Cllr. J Harrison-Hicks proposed  
Cllr. M Simmons seconded

**Majority Agreed**

Cllr. D Neave abstained  
Cllr. R Robertson against

**Debate:-**

The RFO presented the following to Council:-

The Budget Monitoring report for first nine months of the year (to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2017), an analysis of the projected revenue overspend 2017-18 and planned use of reserves, a statement of variation showing changes between 2017-18 budget and the proposed budget for 2018-19, detailed budget working papers showing revised estimates for 2017-18 and the proposed budget for 2018-19 on a line by line basis and statements of projected movements in reserves for 2017-18 and 2018-19.

Included in the presentation the RFO led Council through 30 pages of detail, pointing out that p 67 to 70, along with p 99 and 100 were most significant.

Page 67 shows the projected overspend for the current financial year to be £220,114 which is very much the worst case scenario, it is hoped that this position can be improved before the end of the financial year. The analysis of the items which created budgetary pressure included £40,000 of committed expenditure that had not been budgeted for, £131,685 for the costs of the water leak, £40,000 of commitments made after the budget was set and £6,700 of 2016-17 expenditure that had not been accrued for.

The RFO explained to Council how the overspend could be financed from reserves. The sum of £103,375 expenditure on the town's infrastructure (including £86,185 on the costs of new water mains) could be funded from the Capital Receipts reserve. The remainder could be taken from General Reserves although that will reduce those to a dangerously low level and could attract comment from the auditors. The Capital Receipts reserve had increased during the current year and CIL receipts had been transferred to an earmarked reserve.

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For the financial year 2018-19 the RFO pointed out that there had been a significant increase in the tax base due to additional properties being built and possible fewer households in receipt of Council Tax Benefit. Three options were submitted to Council for the level of precept in a table – 2018-19 proposed spend, option to set precept in line with current commitments, 1.8% increase and 3.0% increase in line with inflation. Based against the charge per property at Band D this will be a £9.99, a £1.55 or £2.58 increase per annum per household.

Questions from Council asked advice of the RFO who declared that 'were she to advise, it would be to increase the precept, in line with the rate of inflation'. Officers suggested that the precept was required to be set at this meeting, although they would bring back a more detailed balanced budget at the next P&F meeting 13<sup>th</sup> Feb – this would involve some revenue cuts.

**Councillors debate:-**

Cllr. R Maskell calculated 3% at approximately 5p per week and went on to say he was sad the precept had to increase although unexpected challenges such as the water leak couldn't have been budgeted for in the last financial year so reluctantly was in agreement with 3%.

Cllr. R Robertson appreciated the precept had to increase, although queried what a 2% increase would mean in monetary terms. He stated he would be happy with a 2% increase and proposed it as a suggestion to Council.

Cllr. M Simmons suggested a 5% increase

Cllr. R Farmiloe raised concerns that any increase would be detrimental to pensioners

Cllr. J Farmiloe informed Council that they should bear in mind this was not simply a 3% raise in town precept, they should consider the District and County increase also

Cllr. R Coles queried the difference between 3% and 5% increase

*The RFO informed Members that this would be £2.58 or £4.20 per annum, difference £1.72 or 86p per % and clarified all options to Council*

Initially this was proposed by Cllr. J Harrison-Hicks and seconded Cllr. M Simmons, although secondary votes meant this was proposed a second time by Cllr. J Farmiloe.

Cllr. D Neave abstained from all voting

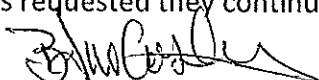
Items were taken individually by the Town Manager and voted on as above

The RFO explained the difference between the options "difference between law and logic" as the difference between the precept and budget. She clarified the precept as having to be set as a cash sum whereas the detail in the budget of how it would be spent can be discussed later. Council went through to vote.

The Chair wished to amend the order of the agenda

Councillors requested they continue from Item 11.

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## C293 REVIEW FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The Council **DOES NOT AGREE** to adopt the revised Financial Regulations (NALC Model)

Cllr. J Harrison-Hicks proposed  
Cllr. J Farmiloe seconded

**Agreed**

**Debate:-**

Cllr. R Coles requested a Working Party to review the Financial Regulations before adopting them.

The Town Manager and RFO both informed Council that these were recommended by the Statutory Officer (RFO) and that they were the nationally recognised model documents provided by NALC.

Councillors agreed to defer until a Working Party had reviewed them.

## C294 WATER LEAK

The Council **AGREES** to accept the quotation from **D.M.H Contractors** to complete the work as quoted costing **£39,650**.

Cllr. R Robertson proposed  
Cllr. A Robertson seconded

**Majority Agreed**

**Recorded Vote**

**Agreed** Cllrs. J Farmiloe, R Maskell, J Harris, A Harrison, J Harrison-Hicks, M Simmons  
**Against** Cllrs. D Neave, R Coles

Cllr. D Neave requested it be minuted that he had not been listened to

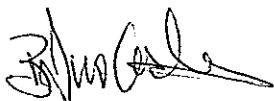
**Debate:-**

Cllr. D Neave declared he was not happy with this report. He stated he had made his feelings clear at a previous Full Council meeting (July 25<sup>th</sup> 2017) and had not yet met with EMCOR to discuss the options. He proposed it be deferred for further investigation. He stated that it had cost in excess of £131,000 so far and there were more suitable options

*The RFO clarified that the £131,000 included the potential expenditure being debated here*

Council declined to vote to defer this item.

The Town Manager introduced the report and drew Councillors attention to 1.6 "It is now necessary to complete the second stage of the works. Whilst the leak at the Sports Park is much reduced it is still a considerable cost to Peacehaven Town Council. An estimate of 20 units of water each day is being lost. This is an estimated value of £40 every day, over £1,000 every month".

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**REQUIRES SIGNATURE**

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**C298 TO RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING NON CONFIDENTIAL COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**Planning & Highways 17<sup>th</sup> October, 14<sup>th</sup> November & 12<sup>th</sup> December 2017**

The CHAIR asked that the Minutes of the above meetings be **ACCEPTED** and the recommendations contained therein be adopted.

Cllr. A Harrison proposed  
Cllr. R Farmiloe seconded

**Accepted**

**Debate:-none**

**Leisure & Amenities 7<sup>th</sup> November 2017**

The CHAIR asked that the Minutes of the above meeting be **ACCEPTED** and the recommendations contained therein be adopted.

Cllr. D Neave proposed  
Cllr. R Coles seconded

**Accepted**

**Debate:-none**

**Policy & Finance 21<sup>st</sup> November 2017**

The VICE CHAIR asked that the Minutes of the above meetings be **ACCEPTED** and the recommendations contained therein be adopted.

Cllr. R Robertson proposed  
Cllr. M Simmons seconded

**Accepted**

The Vice Chair signed the minutes

**Debate:-none**

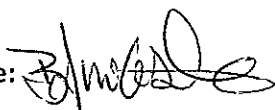
**REPORTS**

**C299 REPORT FROM EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCILLORS**

The Town Manager reported that Cllr. A Smith had sent in his apologies due to family commitments

Cllr. N Enever's report would be presented to the Policy and Finance Committee as part of the response to the Neighbourhood Plan (13<sup>th</sup> Feb 2018)

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### C300 REPORT FROM LEWES DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

Cllr. R Maskell informed Council that the LDC Building company was now in place and that 50 sites for affordable housing were being reviewed. The tender for new build at Ashington Gardens had been accepted for six modular builds, built locally by local people for local people. These developments had all gone through the planning process and would be suitable for disabled tenants.

Cllr. J Harrison-Hicks informed Council she had attended SDNP training.

Cllr. D Neave also attended the SDNP training which he found very informative, with the Core Strategy 2 pushing for 50% affordable housing on 10 or more homes. Contributions to build in the SDNP would incur higher contributions and the Green Policy was about to be brought forward. Information was available on the Core Policy on Carbon, as well as how to go about water harvesting.

Cllr. R Robertson was pleased to note that the new recycling bins were now in use in Peacehaven and that the Council had allocated £50,000 to conduct Traffic surveys on the A259.

### C301 REPORT FROM COUNCILLORS/OFFICERS ON ASSOCIATIONS

Cllr. M Simmons gave a brief report on attending the Residents Association where he had been welcomed and kept well informed.

Cllr. A Harrison had been pleased to attend the Residents Forum.

Cllrs. R Farmiloe and J Farmiloe had also attended Downlands Court and Kempton House and gave updates.

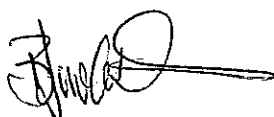
The Chair returned to the final item on the agenda

### NEXT MEETING

C302 TO CONFIRM DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2018 at 7:30pm

Noted

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