

Meeting WD03/03
Date 21/05/03

MINUTES of meeting of the WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL held at the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Pine Grove, CROWBOROUGH, East Sussex, on Wednesday 21st May, 2003 (2pm to 4.25pm).

PRESENT: Councillor N.A.D. Buck (Chairman) Councillor J.L.Vincent (Vice-Chairman), Councillors R. Angel, Mrs C.J.Berry, J.L.Blake, R.B.Broughton-Tompkins, B.F.Brown, Mrs. C.J.H.Clark, N.S.Coltman, Mrs D.J.Dear, Mrs P. Doodles, Mrs C.B.Dowling, J.A. Dunk, J.N.Ellwood, Mrs J.M.M.Fox, J.T.Gore, Dr. I.G.Haffenden, R.J.Hodgson, P.S.Holbrook, J.J.Hollins, Mrs P.A.Kennedy, Mrs. M.C.Kirkpatrick, D.A.J.Logan, A.P.Long, Mrs. L.J.McKeever, I.D. McKirgan, R.Martin, Mrs S.D.Martin, I.R.W.Mein, Mrs A.M.Monaghan, Mrs R.C.Moore, Lt. Col. H.P.Munro, Mrs. L.J.Murphy, Mrs L.J.Myers, I.M.Nottage, Mrs N.Oakes, A.R.Parker, R.I.F.Parsons, Mrs D.P.Phillips, Maj. A.P.W.Quin, Dr. B.T.Redman, G.G.Rowe, Mrs I.Scarborough, A.R.Seabrook, S.S.H.Shing, P.J.Sparks, Mrs S.C.Stedman, Mrs S.M.Tidy, A.C.J.Watkins, D.G.White, K.J.Whitehead, A.Whittaker and Mrs. C.F.Wilson.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lord Abergavenny and B.R.West.

At the commencement of the meeting the Chairman of the Council welcomed new and re-elected Councillors to the meeting. He wished them well and said that he hoped they would find their Council duties challenging and totally enjoyable.

22/03 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 26th March, 2003, as printed and circulated be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

23/03 RETIRING CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

"It is tradition within Wealden for the Chairman of the Council to present an annual report on the major events that he has had pleasure in overseeing during the past year's period of office. I am told that by co-incidence this practice was commenced way back in 1976 by my late uncle Air Cdre Harold Russell. The 1977 Chairman's Annual Report was delightfully informal and little more than half a page in length. Well, I can't quite promise you today the same precise brevity, but will try to be as concise as possible. As a result, if I've

missed any particular person or important event out, then it was not because of any lack of appreciation or under-valuing.

Interestingly, one of the main themes in the 1977 report was planning, and the need to ensure that the best of our rural inheritance remained unspoilt. I think that's a feeling shared by all of us. During the past year, Wealden has spent a great deal of time and effort in ensuring the continuation of that legacy, in particular through its conservation and design work; its corporate objectives and planning policies; and, of course, through the Wealden Local Plan Review, which reached First Deposit stage in January of this year. Production of this document was a very major achievement, only made possible through many hours work by a great number of councillors of the previous council, and by the dedication of Mick Oldham and his Policy and Development Team.

This was, however, just one of many achievements in 2002/3, and the year started with one of the most major of achievements - the transfer of management of the Council's Leisure Centres to Wealden Leisure Limited (now known as Freedom Leisure Limited). This bold step by the Council has already started to show dividends by the freeing-up of resources for improved and additional services, and we were delighted to hear that the new company had received the Charter Mark in its first year, thus belying any possible fears of reduced standards. This is a tremendous achievement and I think the 4th year running that they have done so.

Awards have come thick and fast in the past year. Our CROWN (Composting and Recycling Our Own Waste Now) service, already a past Beacon Status award winning service, received an additional £97,000 funding to enhance the Bellbrook Materials Reclamation Facilities, which hopefully will pave the way to expanding this excellent service to the rural parts of the district in the very near future.

Our tenants have been telling the Council for several years, in surveys, how highly they rate our housing management service. We have now had this confirmed to us, by the Government, with receipt of an 'excellent' rating in housing services for 2002/3, which also brought with it an additional £100,000 housing expenditure. This is truly an accolade of the highest order, bestowed on only a very few housing services throughout the country, and almost unique in a council of our size.

National recognition of high quality was also bestowed on our eGovernment programme in the current year. In announcing an award of £200,000 for our eGovernment programme in 2003, the Government congratulated the Council for the excellence of its strategy statement, and commended it as an example for others to follow.

Our Asset Management Plan and Capital Strategy was equally well received by the Government in 2002/3. In fact they liked it so much, that they have absolved the Council from having to submit a plan for the next 3 years. As part of the Council's good housekeeping and accounting practices, this work will still have to be carried out in the coming year, but its nice not to have to worry about Government timetabling and scrutiny for a couple more years. The £100,000

spending authority award for preparation and carrying out the plan will also come in useful.

None of these awards would have been achievable without a dedicated and competent staff to prepare them. We are fortunate to be blessed with an abundance of staff that fall into both these categories. This does not happen by accident, and it was befitting, when we recently retained the Investor in People Award, presented in recognition of the training and support given to both employees and members of the council.

No Chairman's Report could be complete this year without reference to partnership working. Under the past chairmanship of our former Leader, Rupert Thornely-Taylor, Wealden's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) has been heralded by the Government as the example the rest should follow. The partnership was awarded £10,000 National Grid Award money for the innovative way it used council members to carry out survey work in 2002/3, and Wealden received 'Highly Commended' in the Local Government Chronicle's Council of the Year Award- Councillors' Development Category for the same work. The LSP owes much of its success to its past chairman, who worked tirelessly towards its earliest achievements, culminating in the publication of the area's first Community Strategy. He was, of course, Wealden's first Leader under a modernised Cabinet and Leader system, and did much to mould the way that the Council is run today. His decision to stand down is a loss to the Council, and he will be greatly missed.

Through decisions to stand down, re-warding of the district or defeat at the ballot, the Council has lost 22 councillors, since the last meeting. I do not propose to go through the list this afternoon but it is available to anyone interested in referring to those who served with distinction on the last Council.

I am very pleased and grateful to our many donors and supporters to advise that my Golden Jubilee Appeal raised for the Hospices serving the Wealden District a grand total of £107,000. In reaching this fantastic total I would particularly like to thank Valerie Turner and Members of my Jubilee Committee who gave me tremendous support and assistance. Valerie especially was indefatigable in her dedication to the Appeal devoting much of her precious leisure time to ensure all went smoothly – thank you Val very much. Thanks also to my Vice-Chairman, John Vincent who gave me unqualified support both in Council and on the Appeal Committee. The professionalism and hard work of all the officers has been outstanding and led to an excellent inter-relationship with elected Councillors leading to what I believe is a successful and well run Council. A very special commendation to Charlie Lant our Chief Executive who advised me on his appointment that it was part of his job to look after the Chairman and he has done it literally and metaphorically. He is a super Chief Executive and I thank him for his guidance. My personal and sincere thanks go to the Members of Committee Services who are always cheerful and helpful in the face of a very heavy workload. Another special thank you to Coral Wade, a dedicated and efficient secretary, who has made sure I arrive at the right location at the correct time.

Finally, but not least, my most grateful appreciation and thanks go to my wife Silvia, who has provided wonderful support as my consort. I am sorry she is not

present today due to her playing in an important tennis tournament, but I will be taking home to her a bunch of flowers as a token of our appreciation. It has been both a privilege and honour to serve as Chairman of the Council and represent you at many interesting events. It has given me the opportunity of meeting lots of people and attending events that I would not otherwise have done. Thank you all."

24/03 REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER

The Deputy Leader advised Members that since the last Council Meeting there had been one meeting of Cabinet held on 2nd April 2003. Unusually there were no recommendations to Council to be reported this time and no decisions by Individual Portfolio Holders. The following delegated items reserved under the call-in procedure were highlighted by the Deputy Leader: Community Planning; and Development of Bellbrook Materials Reclamation Facility.

25/03 REPORT OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Chairman of the Personnel Committee, Councillor R.I.F.Parsons, advised the Council that the Committee had met on 14th April 2003 and had appointed Miss Mary Clare Deane to the post of Corporate Director (Community Services). Miss Deane will commence her duties with the Council on 2nd June 2003.

26/03 WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL'S 2003/04 PERFORMANCE PLAN

The Draft Performance Plan, the final version of which requires to be published by 30th June 2003, had been circulated to all Members of the Council (report AJ5090-0302 refers). Members noted that a number of outcomes were still awaited and the Plan would require amendment accordingly. Questions were asked and answered. A query was raised concerning the section on Developing a Sustainable Economy, in particular the reference to Jarvis Brook Depot. It was agreed that the entry be amended to accord with the Cabinet Decision on asset management at Jarvis Brook. This would be done by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Local Member, Cllr. Mrs C.F.Wilson. A further comment was made that it would have been helpful for the document pages to be numbered.

RESOLVED that the Performance Plan 2003/4 as circulated be adopted subject to the amendments agreed at the meeting and inclusion of outstanding outcomes.

27/03 COUNCILLORS' ORAL QUESTIONS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11 the following question were asked and answered:

Questioner	Respondee	Subject
Cllr. J.L.Blake	Chief Executive	Handing in of candidates nomination forms at the Crowborough Office.

Cllr.Mrs C.J.H.Clark	Cllr. N.S.Coltman	Need for meeting papers to be received in good time to allow Members to participate in an informed debate at meetings.
Cllr. J.N.Ellwood	Chairman of the Council	Appreciation for the Chairman of the Council's work on the Golden Jubilee Appeal.

ANNUAL MEETING

28/03 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL 2003/4

RESOLVED on a motion proposed by Councillor N.S.Coltman and seconded by Councillor R.I.F.Parsons that Councillor Jack Gore be elected Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year.

On taking the Chair, Councillor Gore read out and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, and then expressed his thanks to the Councillors on his appointment. Mrs Kathy Gore was then presented with the Chairman's Consort's Badge, and the retiring Chairman, Cllr. N.A.D.Buck was presented with the Past Chairman's Jewel.

29/03 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL

RESOLVED on a motion proposed by Councillor N.A.D.Buck and seconded by Councillor N.S.Coltman that Councillor John Lesie Vincent be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year.

Councillor Vincent read out and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and expressed thanks on his appointment.

30/03 APPOINTMENT OF LEADER

RESOLVED on a motion proposed by Councillor N.A.D.Buck and seconded by Councillor R.I.F.Parsons that Councillor Nigel Stephan Coltman be appointed Leader of the Council for the ensuing year.

31/03 RETURNING OFFICER'S REPORT

The Chief Executive reported that those persons named on appendices A and B to report AB7551.0301h on the Council Agenda had been duly elected as Wealden District Councillors.

32/03 REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL ON CABINET ARRANGEMENTS

RESOLVED on a motion proposed by Councillor N.S.Coltman that the following Members be appointed to the Cabinet:

Cllr. Nigel Coltman
Cllr. Raymond Parsons
Cllr. Brian West
Cllr. Robert Hodgson
Cllr. Norman Buck
Cllr. Pamela Doodes
Cllr. Mrs. Margaret Kirkpatrick
Cllr. Mrs. Sylvia Tidy

Councillor Coltman then advised the Council of the Cabinet Portfolios (report AC0506-0302 refers), and the allocation of those portfolios as follows:

LEADER	Cllr. Nigel Coltman	- All portfolios + Constitution and Partnership
	Cllr. Raymond Parsons	- Corporate
	Cllr. Brian West	- Services
	Cllr. Robert Hodgson	- Finance/Assets
DEPUTY LEADER	Cllr. Norman Buck	- Sustainable Environment
	Cllr. Pamela Doodes	- Health & Public Safety
	Cllr. Mrs. Margaret Kirkpatrick	- Housing
	Cllr. Mrs. Sylvia Tidy	- Prosperity

The Leader reminded the Council that since August 2001, when the Constitution was first adopted and the Cabinet came into being, working arrangements for the Cabinet have been refined in the light of experience, as had been envisaged by the Council from the start. Members of the previous Cabinet became familiar with the detail of their portfolios and the decision-making process became more streamlined and efficient as new practices developed.

Councillor Coltman said that he would continue the practice of Cabinet members themselves answering questions on issues within their own remits at full Council, as they take on more individual accountability. The delegation of some decision-making powers to individual Cabinet members will continue in relation to their skills and experience. Such extension will be at the leaders' discretion and will be reported explicitly through regular reports to Council so that members are aware of changes as they happen.

Finally, Members' attention was drawn Under Access to Information Procedure Rules, para. 17.3, to a list of decisions taken under special urgency procedures.

33/03 POLITICAL BALANCE ON COMMITTEES

A motion proposed by Councillor N.S.Coltman and seconded by Councillor J.N.Ellwood that the Council approve alternative arrangements under Section 17(1) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 for the establishment of Development Control North and South Sub-Committees, on the basis of one Member for each of the District Council Wards, was LOST.

Members then gave consideration to report AB7551-0301 which explains the need to review political balance on Committees and Sub-Committees following the District Council Elections.

Paragraph 5 of the report sets out the review procedure and paragraphs 6 and 7 indicate how the individual Group membership converts to a percentage of places on Committees. Based on these calculations the allocation of places was set out at paragraph 15.

The Group Leaders had notified their allocation of places on Committees.

Following discussion at the meeting it was agreed that in order to gain a further non-group place on Development Control North Sub-Committee (DCN) a non-group place on Personnel Committee be relinquished and that the Conservative Group places be increased by 1 on Personnel and decreased by 1 on DCN. The table was revised accordingly and agreed as follows:

COMMITTEE	CON	LD	WI	NG	TOTAL
S&C Review	6	3	1	0	10
Res. Review	6	3	1	0	10
Econ.Review	6	3	1	0	10
Env. Review	6	3	0	1	10
WLP Review	5	2	1	0	8
Regulatory	7	2	1	0	10
Personnel	4	1	0	0	5
DCS	13	6	2	0	21
DCN	13	6	1	2	22
TOTAL	66	29	8	3	106

Three nominations had been received for appointment to two places on the Standards Committee. Accordingly a ballot was held and Councillors J.N. Ellwood and Mrs. L.J. McKeever appointed.

Finally because of the complexity of the work facing the Independent Remuneration Panel over the next few months it was agreed that the decision to commence replacement of the members should be deferred until the end of the civic year 2003/4.

RESOLVED that:

- (A) approval be given to the establishment of a Wealden Local Plan Review Special Review Committee of 8 members;
- (B) the allocation places on Committees and Sub-Committees as set out in the table above be approved;
- (C) the appointment of non-group members (Cllrs. I.McKirgan and Mrs C.F.Wilson to Development Control North Sub-Committee; and Mrs C.F.Wilson to Environment Review Committee) be approved;
- (D) the Constitution page 47 be amended in respect of Development Control Sub-Committee membership as necessary;
- (E) the appointments to the approved allocation of places on the Committees and Sub-Committees having been confirmed by the Group Leaders, the Council Meeting adjourn after item 16(3) in order that the Committees and Sub-Committees may meet to appoint their Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen;
- (F) Councillors J.N.Ellwood and Mrs L.J.McKeever be appointed to the Standards Committee; and

(G) the Constitution Page 56 be amended in order that all the members of the Independent Remuneration Panel may remain in place until the end of the civic year in May 2004.

The Council then adjourned to allow the individual Committees to meet in the Council Chamber and elect their Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen for the ensuing year.

34/03 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMEN AND DEPUTY CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES 2003/2004

The several Committees, each meeting separately within the Council Chamber, formally appointed their respective Chairmen and Deputy Chairmen, of which the record as subsequently declared in the Council Meeting is as follows:

Committee	Chairman	Deputy Chairman
Social & Cultural Review	Cllr.Mrs D.P.Phillips	Cllr.J.N.Ellwood
Environment Review	Cllr.Mrs C.F.Wilson	Cllr.R. Angel
Economy & Revitalisation Review	Cllr.Mrs L.J.Murphy	Cllr. Mrs S.D.Martin
Resources Review	Cllr.D.A.J. Logan	Cllr.P.J.Sparks
Wealden Local Plan Review	Cllr.J.L.Vincent	Cllr.A.R.Parker
Personnel	Cllr. R.I.F.Parsons	-
Regulatory	Cllr.B.F.Brown	Cllr.A.P.Long
Development Control North Sub.	Cllr.Maj.A.P.W. Quin	Cllr.J.J.Hollins
Development Control South Sub.	Cllr.K.J.Whitehead	Cllr.R.Martin

35/03 REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Report AS0001-0302 requests Members' consideration to Council representation arrangements on other public associations, voluntary bodies etc. It is proposed that Council make the appointments to the Outside Bodies and that authority be reconfirmed for the Cabinet to deal with substitutions as necessary. The following recommendations were made:

- Age Concern East Sussex** - Cllr. Mrs. D.P. Phillips
- Crowborough & Rotherfield Age Concern** - Cllr. Mrs. C.J.H.Clark.
- East Hoathly & District Age Concern** - Cllr. Mrs. S.M. Tidy
- Groombridge (Age Concern) Old Peoples Welfare Committee** - Lord Abergavenny
- Hailsham & Hellingly Age Concern** - Cllr. G. Rowe
- Heathfield, Horam & Waldron Age Concern** - Cllr. Niki Oakes
- Mayfield Age Concern Home Support Service** - Cllr. Niki Oakes
- Pevensey & Pevensey Bay Age Concern** - Cllr. Mrs. L.J. McKeever
- Polegate Age Concern** - Cllr. Mrs. C.J. Berry
- Uckfield Age Concern** - Cllr. A. Whittaker
- Buxted Almshouses** - Cllr. Mrs. S.M. Tidy
- Crowborough Citizens Advice Bureau** - Cllr. Maj. A.P.W. Quin
- Hailsham Citizens Advice Bureau** -Cllr. A.C.J. Watkins
- Uckfield Citizens Advice Bureau** - Cllr. I. Nottage

Conservators of Ashdown Forest - Cllrs. B.F. Brown and R.I.F. Parsons
Court of the University of Sussex – Chairman of the Council, Vice-Chairman of the Council and Chief Executive
Crowborough Partnership - Cllr. Mrs. D.P. Phillips
Crowborough Town and Community Facility Working Party - Cllrs. Mrs. S.M. Tidy and Mrs. C.F. Wilson
Diplocks Forum (Hailsham) - Cllrs. J.N. Ellwood and Dr. I.G. Haffenden
Eastbourne & District Enterprise Board (EDEAL) - Cllr. Mrs. S.M. Tidy
Eastbourne & District Managing Agency (EDMA) - Cllr. Mrs. S.M. Tidy
Eastbourne Area Youth Services Committee - Cllr. Mrs. I. Scarborough
East Sussex Economic Partnership Board - Leader of the Council
East Sussex Education Consultative Forum - Cllrs. Mrs. D.P. Phillips
East Sussex Health and Social Care Partnership Board - Cllr. Mrs. M.C. Kirkpatrick
East Sussex Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Cllr. Mrs. C.F. Wilson
East Sussex Pension Fund Investment Panel - Cllr. B.T. Redman
East Sussex Rural Priority Area - Cllrs. Mrs. C.J.H. Clark and Mrs. S.M. Tidy
East Sussex Travellers – Member Forum - Cllrs. Mrs. D.P. Phillips
Environment Agency Sussex Area Environment Group - Cllr. Mrs. S.M. Tidy
Freedom Leisure Management Board - Cllrs. Mrs. L.J. Murphy and J.L. Vincent
Hailsham Partnership - Cllr. J.L. Blake
Hailsham East Community Partnership - Cllr. N.S. Coltman
Hailsham Town Council Youth Foyer Management Committee - Cllr. J.N. Ellwood
Hailsham Local Area Transport Strategy Steering Group - Cllrs. N.S. Coltman and D. White
Harrison’s Rocks Management Committee (Groombridge) - Cllr. Mrs. L. Myers
Heathfield Partnership - Cllr. Niki Oakes
Hellingly Hospital Joint Liaison Committee - Cllr. J.L. Blake
High Weald Forum - Cllr. Mrs. S.M. Tidy
Raglan Housing Association (SE Area Committee) - Cllr. Mrs L. Myers
Uckfield Housing Association - Cllr. P.J. Sparks
Interreg Joint Monitoring Committee - Cllr. N. Coltman
Local Government Association (LGA) (including Annual Conference) - Chairman of Council, Leader of the Council, Leader of the Major Minority Group (with deputies acting as substitutes)
LGA - General Assembly - Leader of the Council
LGA – Coastal Issues Group - Cllr. Mrs. P.A. Doodles
LGA Rural Commission - Leader as voting Member + Leader of Major Minority Group
LGA – East Sussex Waste Management Members Group - Cllr. B.R. West
LGA - East Sussex Branch - Leader of the Council, Leader of Major Minority Group
Mayfield & Five Ashes Old Peoples Welfare Committee - Cllr. B.T. Redman
Michelham Priory Management Committee - Cllr. J.L. Blake
Pevensey Action Group - Cllr. Mrs. L.J. McKeever
Polegate Regeneration Partnership - Cllr. Mrs. I. Scarborough
Repairs and Maintenance Strategic Partnership - Cllrs. Mrs. M.C. Kirkpatrick and Mrs. D.P. Phillips

South East England Tourist Board - Tourism Council - Cllr. Mrs.L.J.Murphy
South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) - Leader of the Council
South Eastern Employers Organisation - Cllr. R.I.F. Parsons
Sussex Downs Conservation Board - Cllr. Mrs. S.M. Tidy
Action in rural Sussex - Chairman of the Council
Uckfield Partnership - Cllr. Mrs. C. Dowling
Upper Medway Internal Drainage Board - Cllr. R.I.F. Parsons
Wadhurst Partnership - Cllr. Mrs. A. Monaghan
Wealden Federation of Voluntary Organisations - Cllr. Mrs. D.P. Phillips

With regard to membership of the Crowborough Town and Community Facility Working Party it was agreed that the possibility of increasing the Council's representation be investigated.

The Council is a member of the LGA Rural Commission and the opportunity also exists for the Council to join the Urban Commission for 2003/04. confirmation and details of up to two representatives are required by 20th June, 2003.

It was agreed that given the ever increasing number of appointments to outside bodies, Members may wish to consider referring the process to the Review Board with a view to the appropriate Review Committee including in their programme a review of the Council's policy on appointments including consideration of the merits of the Council joining the Urban Commission.

RESOLVED: that (A) the appointments to outside bodies as set out above be approved and confirmed; (B) the possibility of increased representation on the Crowborough Town and Community Facility Working Party be investigated; (C) the authority to delegate to the Cabinet the power to make substitutions in respect of appointments as necessary be reconfirmed; and (D) a review of appointments to outside bodies including the Urban Commission be carried out by the appropriate Review Committee.

Chairman of the Council