

**UNADOPTED
POLEGATE TOWN COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Monday 24th February 2014
Council Chambers, 49 High Street, Polegate BN26 6AL at 7.30pm**

Present: Cllrs J Harmer **JH**(Chair) , M Clewett **MCI**, H Parker **HP**, S Shing **SS**, Mrs M Piper **MP**, E Board **EB**, D Shing **DS**, J O’Riordan **JOR**, D Broadbent **DB**, M Pybus **MPy** **(10)**

Not Present: Cllrs M Cunningham **MC**, T Voyce **TV**, Mrs J Voyce **JV**, Mrs C Berry **CB**, G Gibbs MBE **GG**, **(5)**
11 members of the public

Minute No.	Subject/Resolution	Action
10897	Apologies for absence Cllrs Mrs J Voyce (personal), T Voyce (personal), Mrs C Berry (personal), G Gibbs MBE (personal)	-
10898	Declarations of interest None	
10899	Opportunity for public comment It was resolved to suspend standing orders to allow VOTE All in favour Cllr E Board arrived at 8.02pm Standing Orders Suspended A resident spoke and gave examples of the residents who use the public toilets in the High Street and mentioned medical conditions that required the immediate use of a toilet. He stated that the people of Polegate expected the council to make their decision based on the large numbers of responses on the petition. A resident spoke and commented that although he had previously been a councillor and held other local positions he was speaking on behalf of himself and his wife personally. He appreciated that the costs would be to the tax payer if the toilets were kept and that he felt the location of the current toilets was suitable, but to put a portakabin toilet at the Council office area was not suitable Standing orders reinstated The chair (deputy mayor) requested to bring forward the item for the High Street toilets (minute 10901). It was agreed that this should be done. <i>Minutes shown under minute number 10901.</i>	
10900	Minutes of the Special Full Council meeting held on 27th January 2014 It was resolved to accept the minutes with an addition of Cllrs S Shing & D Shing with declarations (non prejudicial) regarding the High Street toilets) and the minutes were signed by the chair. VOTE All in favour	
10901	Minutes of the Special Full Council meeting held on 10th February 2014	

	It was resolved to accept the minutes as circulated and these were signed by the chair. VOTE All in favour	
10902	Adoption of Minutes from Committees and Standing Committees a) It was resolved to adopt the minutes and recommendations of the Planning Committee meeting held on 13th January 2014 VOTE All in favour b) It was resolved to adopt the minutes and recommendations of the Planning Committee meeting held on 3rd February 2014	
10903	Mayors report verbal The Deputy Mayor stated that over the weekend there had been a number of incidences of vandalism in Polegate and asked that residents and councillors report any crimes taking place or those that have already occurred.	
10904	Town Clerk report A councillor asked if there was a crest on the Newsletter. The clerk stated that normally there was and she would check to see if this was still the case. A councillor asked to be sent a copy of the newsletter and a few people commented that they had not received a copy.	
10905	Reports from representatives from outside bodies a) Polegate Windmill A report had been circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting and noted by all present. A councillor commented that the AGM was on 18 th March at 7.30 and had some excellent speakers. b) Wealden's Citizens Advice A report had been circulated prior to the meeting and noted by all present. A councillor commented that there was a shortage of volunteers now and that in Polegate they were looking at providing a SKYPE link at the library, but that it was quite time consuming. c) British Legion A councillor commented that Polegate branch was considered one of the premier branches and the only one in the area with a bar. He stated that £10,000 in 2012/13 had been raised and in 2013/14 almost £8000 had been raised so far. The committee had now changed. In November 6 people went to the evening remembrance service at the Royal Albert Hall. The club has also been decorated and is a club that Polegate can be proud of. d) Polegate Twinning A councillor commented that the Twinning Association had had a very successful 2013. Burns night had been a success and had been oversubscribed. The French trip had been a huge success and there was a visit booked to France in May. There had also been a trip to Appen last September and the Germans were coming to the UK in September 2014. Polegate is considered also to be one of the premier Twinning Associations and hosted an event with many of the Twinning Associations from East Sussex recently. However, the Twinning Association felt that the Town Council could adopt a more positive role and involve itself more in the Association as it did years ago.	
10906	Financial Update a) It was resolved to accept the accounts for payment to	

the value of £44428.90 VOTE All in favour

b) Barclaycard Statement for information only

The statements had been circulated prior to the meeting and noted by all present.

c) Bank Reconciliation and accounts for information

A councillor asked about the general reserves the clerk confirmed the general reserves and ear marked reserves as shown.

d) Copy of VAT return for information only

A copy of the VAT sheet and return sheets had been circulated prior to the meeting and noted by all present.

e) Increase in clerk credit card limit as per comments form internal auditor and newsletter printing issues.

The clerk explained that the newsletter company did not take invoicing (accounts) and would only accept payment by credit or debit card, but the works credit card was not a high enough limit and she had therefore had to pay on her debit card and be reimbursed. Having spoken to the internal auditor about it, she explained that he has advised to put the card up to the limit of her delegated emergency powers, which was £2000. The clerk stated that she thought £500 or £1000 if Council wished to go higher would suffice for now, as the newsletters were only a little over the limit and with other items this should be enough for most eventualities.

It was resolved to increase the clerk business credit card limit to £500. VOTE All in favour.

f) Internal audit report

The audit report had been circulated to all members prior to the meeting and accepted by all present.

The clerk stated that she was working on the financial regulations and the new model standing orders. These had had to be removed from the agenda for time reasons.

g) Councillors allowances

The report was circulated to all councillors prior to the meeting and noted by all present.

i) To consider whether to increase the councillor allowances in line with the remuneration panel recommendations.

A councillor stated that the allowance did not cover a great deal and he proposed that it was increased to the recommendations from the independent remuneration panel. The clerk confirmed that the increase would be from £360 per year to £375 per year (+£15) for councillors and for the Mayor £560 per year to £590 (+£30) per year.

A councillor commented that in other areas of his life he had been on committees where people had not claimed their allowance and this had actually discouraged people from joining committees if they could not afford to subsidise the organisation. In this instance the allowance was far under the

	amount required for an active councillor and encouraged active councillors to claim their allowances. The clerk commented that not all councillors claimed their allowance. It was resolved to increase the councillors' allowances as per the independent remuneration panel recommendations. VOTE 5 for 2 against (Cllrs E Board, Mrs M Piper) 3 abstentions h) Subscription review i) Local Council Review (LCR) Magazine/online subscription It was resolved that the council would not continue with the LCR subscription VOTE All in favour	
10907	Commemoration of the WW1 a) Information from British Legion The information was circulated prior to the meeting and noted by all present. (Arrangements regarding church service 7/7.30 on the 4th August and flag lowering on 4th August 9am in the morning were in progress, public and councillors would be invited) b) Information from the Conservation Volunteers The chair read out the letter from the Conservation Volunteers to those present. It detailed a number of trees available (60-80cm whips) for planting. A councillor commented that it would be nice to plant one tree for each person who fell at each war in the War Memorial Grounds. A councillor asked if the trees could be planted in the street. The clerk stated that they could but each street would need a licence from East Sussex County Council. He stated that a resident had asked to plant a tree in Victoria Road. Another councillor commented on the size of the trees (small) and that they would need to be planted in a clump so that they could be replanted when they had reached a size that would be sustainable. Around 10 additional plants should be planted to ensure that there was at least the number of those who had fallen. A councillor stated that long term some other trees would need to be removed to make room for the trees. A councillor stated that the letter did not say what types of trees they were supplying. A councillor stated that the trees could possibly be planted in the Gosford allotments along the side of the wall. <u>The clerk was asked to get the numbers of those who had fallen and to order 10 more than that and these could be planted in a clump and decide where to plant these later.</u>	
10908	Grants Cllr M Clewett left the room at 9.43pm a) Polegate Signal Box request for £1000 The remaining funds of £2700 were discussed. The clerk stated that she had not yet had paperwork from the playgroup therefore the item b) would need to be withdrawn for now. Councillors commented that they were happy to donate the full £2700 to the signal box. Another councillor stated that perhaps it would be better to give them the £1000 they had asked for and then in the new year ask them to write in and let the	

	council know what they plan to spend the rest of the money on as the letter stated the £1000 would go towards the insurance. It was resolved to donate £1000 to the Save Our Signal Box group to go towards the public liability insurance and to ask them to write back to the council and reapply letter the council know what they plan to spend further funds on. VOTE All in Favour b) Polegate Pre School Playgroup Item withdrawn Cllr M Clewett returned at 9.49pm	
10908	Annual Town Assembly A discussion took place on who might be requested to make a brief presentation at the meeting. A councillor asked if the company who were doing the solar farm at Natewood could be asked if they could give a short presentation on solar farms at the annual town assembly and if there were any local community benefit funds available. A councillor commented that this farm was out of the Polegate area, but there would probably be a few more in Sussex. A councillor suggested that the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service be asked to give a short presentation on the changes within the fire service. A councillor asked if the Ambulance Service could be asked to come and do a short presentation on the new make ready centre. A councillor asked if the water company could be contacted and asked to attend with regards to hose pipe bans and the maintenance of water drainage. A councillor asked if an officer from East Sussex County Council could attend to discuss the clearing of drains in Polegate. A councillor mentioned the pot holes in Polegate. The clerk commented that the clerks had been approached about Cluster Partnerships, but it was in the early stages of discussion at the moment and when more information was available, the clerk would ask a representative to come and speak to the council. This was related to local councils (towns and parishes) carrying out many of the duties of the old village maintenance teams including sign washing and temporary filling of the pot holes. It was resolved that the clerk and the Mayor would make the decision on who should attend from those who responded and set the agenda. VOTE All in favour	
10910	Summer Flower Contract The clerk had circulated some information about issues with the sponsorship of the crossroads flower beds. Councillors commented that if the sponsor agreed to pay for the planter as sponsorship for the summer and an additional sum for the winter flowers this seemed to be a good compromise. The clerk	

	confirmed that ESCC Highways had indicated a licence would be granted for the cascading tub as shown. A councillor commented that some businesses may prefer to pay in instalments rather than two lump sums. It was resolved for the clerk to organise the sponsorship and planting of the cascading tub. The Town Council to pay for the planting and plants and the company to pay for the cascading and to plant the bank if necessary. VOTE All in favour	
10911	High Street Toilets The Deputy Mayor clarified that all councillors and public had a copy of the spreadsheet of costs and explained what items should be considered. A councillor commented that the portaloo toilets would only be cleaned and restocked one per week and that this would be unacceptable and this should therefore be removed from the discussion. <u>A councillor proposed that the council purchase the freehold for around £21,000 and to negotiate the condition and repair costs, but to pay the insurance.</u> He stated that the public had signed a petition which had around 1200 signatures on it and he felt the council should represent the residents of Polegate. <u>The proposal was seconded.</u> A councillor commented that Kent had given not only the toilet for free to their town, but also a grant each year for maintenance. He asked if the clerk had heard back from the District Council as to whether they would agree to negotiate and licence the council to run the toilets whilst negotiations took place. The clerk confirmed that they had agreed. The councillor stated that the on going running costs would be expensive. He stated that the council would run out of time to do the portkabin style toilets as planning permission would be required. He stated that his preferred option would be option 4 or option 1 with 5 years. A councillor stated that he was happy for purchase as long as it was sold with the least encumbrances as possible. He felt that if the council purchase the freehold they should not be restricted on its use after 5 years. He said that the council were looking at other options. If other facilities were provided it would have a saleable asset. He stated that the council must make sure the service is continuous by having a licence to run them whilst negotiations were taking place. He agreed that although the toilets were not ideal, they would fulfil the needs of the town. He said his position was to keep a default position to run the toilets and to negotiate hard on the purchase price and to have the least amount of restrictions as possible. A councillor stated that he felt the council must have a default position and run them whilst negotiations were taking place. He stated that he had listened to some of the comments and had originally preferred to rent but he would support the purchase of the toilets with the correct negotiations. It would mean council had an asset for the future. He felt that the price was not unreasonable. The ladies and gents would need changing and adapting and the other repairs listed were accurate but the pricing he felt would be much less. He stated that he also felt that a freehold purchase was the best option. A councillor stated that she felt the sum to purchase was a lot of money and that the toilet was not ideally situated and should	

	be more central. She felt that negotiating for a year was a good option whilst looking at other options. Portakabins would still fulfil the council's obligations by providing public toilets. She commented that the signal box may be suitable. A councillor commented that the signal box did not have the correct facilities for a public toilet and would be unsuitable and was not owned by the council, but a trust. He stated that he felt the toilets should be purchased outright and has the year licence to be able to run them whilst negotiations are taking place. He also stated that there were not full costs on the portakabin style toilets yet as the company had not come back with the full details. He stated that he felt the licence to run them whilst negotiations were taking place was appropriate. A councillor stated that he had also asked the leader of the council whether he could give the town council the toilets (like Kent) but the District Council had not been so generous. He stated that he supported the purchase of the toilets outright to have the freedom without the potential for future costs (legal etc). He felt that the leasehold options restricted the choice and that is why he had seconded the purchase. A councillor stated that he was in favour of running the toilets for a year while the negotiations were taking place, but that he was not in favour of purchasing them, and preferred a 5 year lease. A councillor stated that he had concerns if the council did not purchase as the legal costs each time a break came up would cost the council a large amount, especially in the event of a dispute of the condition. If purchase went ahead only one set of negotiation would take place regarding purchase. A councillor commented that Wealden were not being awkward with regards to their restrictions and it was perfectly sensible from the district point of view. He doubted that the town council would get rid of the toilets within 4-5 years, because of the nature of the council, even if the council had agreed to build an extension at the back of the site at 49/51 High Street it would take time to get planning permission, tenders and the building works. He understood their concerns over the potential sale of the asset, but that all of the options were negotiable. He stated that the council should run them for a year whilst negotiations were taking place. A councillor asked if the council had the money to purchase these. The clerk stated that there was funding within the general reserves that could be used to do this, but this would reduce the reserves substantially and that the running costs were expected to be around £14000 pa and only £10000 pa had been set aside in the precept. Therefore the council would be short of funds each year until the budget changed. A councillor stated that he did not understand the comment about the toilets not being central. He stated that brick built toilets would always be more permanent than any prefabricated toilets. He stated that the council could negotiate the purchase of the freehold and that a claw back was common practice (overage clause). He stated that they must be cleaned up and refurbished within a year or the council would be running them as the District Council did. A councillor stated that the council already has some assets that were actually liabilities (Wannock Office) and to purchase the toilets would mean taking on another liability for the council. He	
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	believed it would take around 8 ½ years to develop the site at 49/51 High Street. He felt that option 3 would only cost the council £6000 and around £1800 for option 1. He stated that the district council were just getting rid of an asset that they had stated they would mothball. He stated that the toilets were probably over capacity. He agreed that the toilets should be open for a year but he did not think that purchasing was the correct option. He felt it was a financial liability that the council would be taking on. A councillor stated that he saw the long term vision as building something at 49/51 site and this would include making the chambers accessible to disabled users and to have a proper council chamber. Although the idea was in its embryo stage if that occurred, the toilets in the High Street may become redundant. He agreed that they should be run whilst other options were being considered, whatever they may be, but that he had concerns of being saddled with a liability that the council could not sell. A councillor stated that he also did not believe that the refurbishment would cost £8000. He stated that the costs for a professional surveyor and legal costs would cost so much at each clause he believed that purchase was the only sensible option for the council. He stated that if the council wished to provide toilets at another location 5 years would be fine to get this completed. He had serious concerns about taking on a full repairing lease. It was resolved to negotiate to purchase the High Street toilets at a maximum price of £21,000 and to do the repairs estimated to be £8000 to be funded from general reserves and to include a licence to run the toilets whilst the negotiations take place and options are being considered. It was agreed that a group of delegated councillors meet to discuss the details and formulate a negotiating position for the council and to appoint Hedleys to carry out the legal paperwork once a satisfactory solution has taken place (the costs of approximately £1000 to be borne from general reserves.) VOTE 7 for Cllrs S Shing, D Shing, M Clewett, M Pybus, D Broadbent, J O’Riordan, H Parker for 3 against Cllrs Mrs M Piper, E Board, J Harmer It was resolved that 4 councillors Cllrs M Clewett, D Broadbent, S Shing & J O’Riordan would negotiate the purchase price and details of the sale VOTE 9 for 1 against Cllr E Board. It was resolved that the delegated councillors set the specification and cleaning contract to enable a smooth transition on 1st April 2014. VOTE 9 for 1 against Cllr E Board.	
10912	Cllr O’Riordan left the meeting at 10.16pm Proposed dates of next cycle of meetings Full Council 31st March 2014 Business Plan, Buildings & Land Joint Committee 31st March 2014 Annual Town Assembly 7th April 2014 Full Council April 28th 2014 Annual Statutory Meeting (Election of Mayor) 19th May 2014 Full Council 30th June 2014	

	Business Plan, Buildings & land Joint Committee 30 th June 2014 Full Council 28 th July 2014 Business Plan, Buildings & land Joint Committee 16 th September 2014 Full Council 29 th September 2014 Full Council 27 th October 2014 Personnel budget 24 th November 2014 Planning budget 24 th November 2014 Full Council 24 th November 2014 Business Plan, Buildings & land Joint Committee 8 th December 2014 Full Council precept 12 th January 2015 Finance & Policy Committee 23 rd February 2015 Full Council 23 rd February 2015 Business Plan & Buildings & Land Joint Committee 30 th March 2015 Full Council 30 th March 2015	
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The meeting closed at 10.17 pm