

EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL MONDAY 13th MAY 2024 at 7.00 pm

Councillor Ody (Town Mayor)
Councillor J Belsey (Deputy Town Mayor)
Councillors; Barnett, M Belsey, Farren, Gibbs, Gibson, Godwin, Hughes, Mockford, Peacock, Pond, Reeves, Scott, Visser and Whittaker.

Also present: Town Clerk, Mayors Secretary and 77 members of the public and Council staff. 1 member of the public attended via Zoom

1 ELECTION OF TOWN MAYOR 2024/2025

The Town Mayor (Cllr Visser in the Chair) opened the meeting, thanked all for attending and before moving to the business of electing a new Town Mayor paid tribute to the Council and the Charities which he had represented during the past 12 months. He highlighted the amazing community of East Grinstead which had been his honour to represent, including school visits; where the honesty of children when asking questions was always surprising, but welcomed. East Court Live, twinning events at home and abroad, despite challenging travel arrangements due to strikes. A very soggy evening out with the East Grinstead Street Pastors, Christmas events including a beautiful carol concert at Sackville College where the rich history is celebrated in such a unique setting. He referred to visiting the Bluebell Railway as part of the opening of the first fully accessible pullman coach in the country on a heritage line, opened by local Paralympian Fabienne Andre. He thanked everyone for their support at the charity events; a quiz night, a barn dance at Meridian Hall where a tractor was placed on the forecourt, much to the horror of the Town Clerk advising that the weight on the drains may be a concern, but all was well, an evening with Vox and finally the Mayoral Ball, hosted at Ashdown Park Hotel with such incredible support from sponsors that it sold out in 18 hours before any local publicity could be done. He was sorry that so many usual supporters were unable to secure tickets this year, he could have sold the tickets several times over. The Ball alone raised £15,000 which was staggering and it was one of the best nights of his life.

He Thanked all of the charity staff, his work colleagues, community groups he had attended and been welcomed by. He thanked the deputy Mayor and Councillors for their support during the year.

He came to some personal thank yous, Kirstie Hamper the Mayors Secretary who looked after his diary helping to juggle his very busy personal and work schedule alongside the Mayoral duties. He also thanked The Town Clerk for friendship, advice and support during the year. Both were presented with flowers.

He thanked his Mayorlings, Ellie, Jessica, Maddie and Fleur who had attended events, supported at home, raised funds and been a constant help. Ellie is an honorary mayorling but who has worked as hard as his girls and fully deserved to be mentioned and thanked. He presented them each with a gift (Jessica on zoom would receive hers later).

He then turned to his Mayoress, thanking her for her unequalled support and hard work, from making the dinner platters for the quiz to securing sponsorships for the ball. He said she had been simply incredible this year and he could not have done it without her. He presented her with some flowers.

He then turned to his charity, The Queen Victoria Hospital Charity and said that he set himself a target to raise £20,000 for this amazing hospital. Through the efforts of his team and all his supporters he was delighted to be awarding a cheque for £24,142.73. He invited James Lowell (CEO) to accept the cheque on behalf of the Charity. James explained that there was so much extra that could be provided outside of the core funding from the NHS and this cheque was so gratefully accepted as it allows the hospital to ensure that patient care and experience at QVH remains at the highest world standards, continuing the hospitals legacy. He thanked the Mayor, Mayoress and all the supporters during the year.

The Town Mayor then announced that he was pleased to propose his successor as Mayor to be a gentleman who is not only kind and loyal, but has such integrity, enthusiasm and optimism, he is simply always happy. He was very proud to be able to propose as his successor for 2024/25, Cllr Steve Ody be elected as the Town Mayor. This was seconded by Cllr Farren.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Ody be elected Town Mayor for the civic year 2024/2025.

Cllr Ody made the declaration of acceptance of office and received the Mayoral Chain of Office.

Cllr Ody in the Chair

Cllr Ody thanked the Council and the outgoing Mayor for the honour, stating that when initially asked to stand as a Councillor he had refused, but within 6 months found himself co-opted. When asked to stand as Deputy Mayor he agreed but only on the grounds of not proceeding to Mayor, and yet here he is.

He reflected on the compassion, kindness, humour and love that has been demonstrated by Cllr Visser during his year and then presented a gift to Cllr Visser from his fellow Councillors, along with his past mayors' jewel and the town council crest as mementos of his year.

He advised that his charity would be Being Neighbourly, with the intention of funding a tri-shaw for use in the town. He spoke of his love of cycling and how it has connected him with places, people and life over the years, reflecting that as you get older and the ability to cycle is reduced the potential of being able to be taken out in a tri-shaw and still connect with your community should not be underplayed and his intention is to raise funds for at least one of these tri-shaws in his year.

He then said that he knows that he cannot complete the year successfully without his Mayoress to support him and presented his wife Maria, with some flowers as a token of advance thanks for the support she will give. He also acknowledged his children will similarly be on hand along with other family and friends during the year to help and he was grateful for the offers of support.

2 DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR 2024/2025

It was proposed by Councillor Ody and seconded by Councillor Farren that Cllr J Belsey be elected as Deputy Town Mayor.

RESOLVED: That Councillor J Belsey be elected Deputy Town Mayor for the civic year 2024/2025.

Councillor J Belsey then made and subscribed to the Declaration of Acceptance of Office

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were none as the Council was fully present

4 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 4th March and 8th April 2024, having been previously circulated, be confirmed and signed by the Town Mayor.

5 MEMBERS' ATTENDANCES 2023/2024

Council received a schedule circulated with the agenda showing Councillors' attendances at meetings of Council and Committee meetings during 2023/2024 civic year.

RESOLVED: to accept the table as a true record of the Councils attendance

6 REPORT AS TO THE RESULT OF THE COUNCIL ELECTIONS

The Town Mayor asked the Clerk to give the following report:

Following the notice of the Casual Vacancy and the Local Election which was held on 2nd May 2024; Edward Godwin was duly elected to represent Ashplats North. The Council has all 16 of the seats filled.

The Town Mayor: congratulated Cllr Godwin, it is believed he is the youngest member to take up office in East Grinstead, he stated that he was looking forward to working with him. He commiserated with those who failed to win a seat on this occasion but commented that it is good to see that seats on this Council remain sought after.

7 DECLARATIONS OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

The Town Clerk confirmed that Cllr Godwin had duly signed his declaration of acceptance of office prior to the start of the meeting.

8 LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

The Council noted that Cllr Barnett would fill this role in the coming year.

9 STANDING COMMITTEES - 2024/2025 CIVIC YEAR

Noting that the Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor were ex-officio for all committees it was

RESOLVED:

- I. That Cllrs M Belsey, Farren, Gibbs, Godwin, Mockford, Pond & Scott were elected to serve the Environmental and Sustainable Travel Committee
- II. That Cllrs Gibbs, Godwin, Mockford, Peacock, Pond, Scott & Whittaker were elected to serve the Planning Committee
- III. That Cllrs Barnett, M Belsey, Gibson, Hughes, Reeves, Scott & Whittaker were elected to serve the Public Services Committee
- IV. That Cllrs Barnett, Farren, Godwin, Hughes, Mockford, Peacock and Visser were elected to serve the Amenities and Tourism Committee
- V. The Committee would be composed of the chairs of the other standing committees along with Cllrs Barnett, M Belsey, Farren and Gibson.

10 ADJOURNMENT OF COUNCIL MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 7.39pm to elect the chairmen and Vice chairmen of the respective committees

11 RESUMPTION OF COUNCIL MEETING at 7.44pm

The Council resumed following the appointment of the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the following committees:-

	Chairman	Vice Chairman
(a) Environmental and Sustainable Travel	Cllr Ody	Cllr Pond
(b) Planning	Cllr Gibbs	Cllr Pond
(c) Public Services	Cllr Reeves	Cllr Whittaker
(d) Amenities and Tourism	Cllr Peacock	Cllr Hughes
(e) Finance and General Purposes	Cllr Farren	Cllr M Belsey

12 TIME OF COMMENCEMENT OF MEETINGS AND PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was noted that all Ordinary Council meetings would commence at 7.00pm and that Public Question Time would continue to be held prior to each ordinary Council meeting, subject to the business of those Council meetings commencing not later than 7.30pm. It was also noted that the dates of meetings are as approved at Finance and General Purposes Committee and Council (Min 240 14.12.23 & Min 62 08.01.24). The Town Mayor advised that the date of the annual town meeting will be moved as it clashes with a Mid Sussex Council Meeting, this will come to the July Council.

13 SIGNING OF CHEQUES

RESOLVED: That all cheques and other orders for the payment of money by the East Grinstead Town Council during the Municipal Year 2024/2025, with the exception of payments on the Town Council's Imprest Account (see Min 15 below), shall be signed by any two of Councillors: The Town Mayor, M Belsey, Farren, Hughes, Mockford and Peacock.

14 IMPREST ACCOUNT

RESOLVED: That the Town Clerk, namely Mrs J W Holden, be authorised to sign all cheques on the Imprest Account during the Municipal Year 2024/2025 in respect of payment of wages and petty cash, subject to such amounts not exceeding £5,900 in any one month. In the absence of the Town Clerk, any of the six Members authorised to sign cheques on the main account (Minute 13 above) be authorised to sign.

15 REPRESENTATIVES ON OTHER LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

RESOLVED: That the under-mentioned Members represent the Town Council on the following organisations until the next Annual Meeting of the Town Council.

1. East Grinstead Town Twinning Assoc:
(Cllr Visser)
2. Mid Sussex District Assoc of Parish Councils:
(Cllrs Godwin and Whittaker)
3. Age UK East Grinstead and District
(Cllr Hughes)
4. Friends of East Grinstead Museum:
(Cllr Mockford)
5. East Grinstead Music and Arts Festival:
(Cllr Gibbs)
6. Disability Access Group (East Grinstead and area)
(Cllr Barnett)
7. East Grinstead Society
(Cllr Visser)
8. East Grinstead Business Association Exec comm.
(Cllr Whittaker)
9. East Grinstead Fairtrade Town Steering Group
(Cllr Scott)
10. Mid Sussex Assoc of Town Councils: Town Mayor, Leader of the Majority Group, Leader of the Minority Group and one other (Town Mayor, Cllrs Farren, Barnett and Whittaker)
11. Grenstede Talking News for the Blind
(Cllr Peacock)
12. Felbridge Beef and Faggott Trust
(Cllr M Belsey)
13. SANG Steering Group (MSDC)
(Cllr Godwin & Reeves)

14. East Grinstead Sport Council
(Cllrs J Belsey & Whittaker)
15. East Grinstead Food Bank
(Cllr Peacock)
- 16 Community Rail Partnership
(Cllr Pond)

To note:

- 17 Chequer Mead Theatre (the Council appoints a maximum of 4 trustees). The current Council trustees are Cllrs Barnett, Farren, Hughes & Mockford,
- 18 East Grinstead Museum (Trustee) Cllr Ody fills this seat and will do so until he steps down from the role or ceases to be a Councillor.
- 19 Queen Victoria Hospital (Stakeholder Governor) The Town Clerk was reappointed for a three year term in January 2024.

The Leader advised that there have been some changes this year, the Rural Towns network, following a year of evaluation from Cllr M Belsey is not to be continued with due to lack of value. The shopping promotions committee have disbanded. The representative serving East Grinstead in Bloom felt that as the group no longer receive a grant from the Council, at this time a representative was not necessary. This can be reviewed in time to come. The East Grinstead Society have asked for a representative from the Council to be appointed.

The Town Mayor thanked all for service in the previous year

- 16 The Council noted that the details for the audit of the accounts for 2023/24 will be reported to the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 20th June.

17 COMPLAINT PANEL HEARING.

The Town Mayor thanked Cllrs Hughes and Pond for convening the panel and feeding the result back to the Council.

He advised that the decision of the panel as included in the agenda is noted and the work is underway to amend the video recording in line with the decision. Any changes to council procedures as indicated by the decision will be considered in due course.

It was also stated that the complainant had raised additional requests during the hearing, which were not matters concerning the complaint itself and therefore could not be considered by the panel. These requests have been fed back to the Council.

18 ASSISTING EAST GRINSTEAD LIONS WITH HEALTH SCREEN EVENT

The Town Mayor proposed the recommendation in the report that the Council supports this event based on the costs being met by funds from the Mid Sussex DC Health and wellbeing team.

RESOLVED: To support the health screening day on 29th June, subject to funding of costs being met by the Mid Sussex Health and Wellbeing Grant via the Mid Sussex Partnership

The Town Mayor then advised that there was no other business, the next full meeting is Monday 1st July, although there will be a short special meeting on 20th June to accept the accounts. He invited all to stay and enjoy some refreshments and asked that Councillors go over to the East Court Mansion briefly for a photograph. He ended the meeting at 7.53pm

SIGNED:

TOWN MAYOR