

EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

To All Members, East Grinstead Town Council
(Other circulation for information only)
Quorum for Council: 1/3 Membership or 6 members

Council Offices
East Court
College Lane
East Grinstead
RH19 3LT
Tel: (01342) 323636
www.eastgrinstead.gov.uk

31st July 2024

Report for the Council Meeting 1st August 2024

Item:

2 To formally appoint the new Town Clerk

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There were 18 applicants. 6 were selected for interview and 2 were called back for second interview. The interviewing panel were: The Town Mayor, The Deputy Town Mayor, Cllrs Barnett, Farren and Mockford. Support was given from the Town Clerk, The Responsible Finance Officer and Mr Trevor Leggo from WSALC (West Sussex Association of Local Councils).

Council are **recommended** to appoint Ms Samantha Heynes to the role of Town Clerk. The starting salary has been agreed and will be circulated to the Council along with other details such as start date. Ms Heynes is required to work 3 months notice at her current Council and it is therefore envisaged that she will have a start date early November.

3 To approve the consultation response to Mid Sussex DC concerning Off Street Charging charges.

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Dear Sirs

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The recruitment process having taken place on 30th and 31st July 2024, has culminated in an offer which has been verbally accepted. Paperwork is now being drawn up for her contract of employment.

There were 18 applicants. 6 were selected for interview and 2 were called back for second interview. The interviewing panel were: The Town Mayor, The Deputy Town Mayor, Cllrs Barnett, Farren and Mockford. Support was given from the Town Clerk, The Responsible Finance Officer and Mr Trevor Leggo from WSALC (West Sussex Association of Local Councils).

Council are **recommended** to appoint Ms Samantha Heynes to the role of Town Clerk. The starting salary has been agreed and will be circulated to the Council along with other details such as start date. Ms Heynes is required to work 3 months notice at her current Council and it is therefore envisaged that she will have a start date early November.

3 To approve the consultation response to Mid Sussex DC concerning Off Street Charging charges.

The Consultation Working Group met on 29th July, the Clerk drew up the draft response which is shown below. This has now been approved by the working group members who were present and is shown below.

Recommendation : That the consultation be approved for submission before noon on 2nd August as per the notice received from Mid Sussex DC.

Dear Sirs

Off Street Parking Places

We are grateful for the opportunity to reply to the above consultation, noting that it must be submitted before noon 2nd August 2024.

The East Grinstead Town Council and Councillors, having received representations from the public and mindful of the over five thousand signature petition, collected in six days, when the proposals were first made public, wish to object to the proposals for varying of the hours of charging in the Mid Sussex Car Parks. While we understand that the petitions were submitted before the opening of the consultation we are disappointed that they have not been able to be considered. They do show the depth of feeling regarding these proposals by town residents, which has not diminished since the original mooting of the proposals.

The Town Council understands that this decision is based on a historic report, we believe that a lot has changed since the report was originally collated in 2020 and should be revisited. The recent cost of living crisis and changes in retail shopping since the pandemic have continued to cause problems for the traditional High St. We find that In East Grinstead a town which pre pandemic seldom had any empty units for periods of time on the High St and indeed London Road now tells a different story. High rents and reduced shoppers are a struggle for many business owners and we have noted moves away from our town by independent shops to Forest Row and other areas where there exists a free period of parking.

We have grave concerns that these changes will have for the nighttime economy in East Grinstead. We know of many people who come to East Grinstead to eat on a Saturday night, get a taxi home and then collect the car on the Sunday morning. Anecdotally residents are saying they will consider restaurants in Oxted or other towns rather than East Grinstead should these Sunday charges apply. An additional charge to park for the gyms, theatre, cinema or eating out will all have a negative impact on these services and generally on the town economy, where the parking has previously not been an issue. We expect to find that restaurant reservations will push back to after 8pm in order to avoid parking charges, making the early evening unprofitable. We would refer to past initiatives where Mid Sussex has encouraged support of local traders we fail to understand how these proposals support local businesses at this time.

It is the nature of people to try to avoid charges, pushing yet more cars on to the over full on-street parking in residential areas.

Sundays and bank holidays, our car parks are currently frequented by those attending events in the town or church services. We note the comments of the East Grinstead Community Bonfire, a fledging community group, concerned that other towns do not charge after 6pm, this may affect the visiting Bonfire groups' ability to attend the events and we would echo their request for a temporary alleviation of any charges on our bonfire night, should these charges be approved.

Additional charges may affect whether a family are willing to come to an event if they now have to pay additional parking charges, granted only a small charge at this time, but this is the starting point and prices only ever go up.

The Council note that the differential rates implemented in April are not subject to this consultation, which only relates to the proposals to implement fixed charges weekdays between 6-8pm and Sunday and Bank Holidays. Notwithstanding this, the Council would wish to register again our deep disappointment at the increased weekday charges being applied on a differential with East Grinstead being charged a significantly higher proportion

than the other two towns in the District. We seek assurances from the District Council that the profit over service provision revenue, will be ringfenced and committed for infrastructure improvements in East Grinstead car parks, or additional parking in the town, to at least the proportion of the differential. Any other use of these additional funds would not be acceptable.

Finally we wish to raise concern as to the timing of the consultation, just as the summer holidays start for a 6 week period. A consultation addressing this magnitude of feeling by residents should have been for a minimum of 2 months, to allow full opportunity to respond and to ensure that the District Council would have time to consider all responses before making a final decision.

We trust these comments are helpful to the decision making process.

Yours faithfully

The date of the next meeting of the Town Council is **Monday 8th October** at 7 pm in the Council Chamber.

EAST GRINSTEAD TOWN COUNCIL

To All Members, East Grinstead Town Council
(Other circulation for information only)
Quorum for Council: 1/3 Membership or 6 members

Council Offices
East Court
College Lane
East Grinstead
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31st July 2024

Report for the Council Meeting 1st August 2024

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