

Bexhill Heritage Members Online Meeting Wednesday 6th October 2021 at 7pm.

Committee:

Raymond Konyon	(RK)	Chair
Steve Johnson	(SJ)	Vice Chair/Treasurer
Alexis Markwick	(AM)	iT Support Officer/Historian
Simon Allen	(SA)	Projects Coordinator
David Beales	(DB)	Planning Officer/Consultant
Anthony Lightly	(AL)	Chartered Building Surveyor
Geoff Tompkins	(GT)	Band Stand Chair
Yolande Leybourne	(YL)	East Parade Liaison
Jeanette Eason	(JE)	Committee Clerk

Welcome - RK asked the committee members to briefly introduce themselves to the members attending. Warm thanks were given to John Swap for all his hard work and commitment to Bexhill Heritage. John is stepping down from his role as Membership Secretary.

Apologies – Dru Tramaseur, Anne Anderson, Sue Burton, Jenny Farrer, Dave Hattherall, Angela Hart, Val hunnisett.

Declarations of interests – none except that RK is a Trustee of Bexhill Old Town Preservation Society (BOTPS).

1. Approval of minutes of April 2021 Meeting – agreed and to be signed off by RK.

2. Matters arising from the April Members Meeting - None

3. Planning and Development Updates (DB)

Applications commented on:

Clavering Walk – despite allowed appeal, there is still no protection plan of Cooden Moat and manor house foundations, which could come under severe threat from new residents and activity. BH keeping close eye on situation and liaison with residents of the area.

Sussex Hotel, London Road – Construction of new 2 metre close boarded fence, opposed. New planning application put in for reduced height 1 metre high fence.

Hastings Direct, Conquest House – proposal to convert into flats. Does not need a planning application and is allowed as “Permitted Development”. All they have to do is notify the council.

Cooden Sea Road, Little Common (opposite Tesco's) – formerly the Co-op, which has been extended upwards. BH and others objected to a 4 storey building, as being out of scale in Little Common. RDC approved despite objections. Soon to be unveiled when scaffolding comes down.

August 2020 – Government announcement to the revamp of 1947 Planning Act & system. Legislation promised. Outcome of Bexhill was largely to be designated an ‘area of renewal’. BH wrote into Government re plans and objections. Result of people and MPs objections has meant legislation has been put on hold and ‘paused’, and possibly abandoning plans.

Drill Hall next to Leisure Centre – to be retained. Successful intervention by BH and others, appealing for retention. MOD not willing to release building. Financial pressures on council may affect future situation.

Cemetery Lodge - RDC Cabinet decided to abandon plans to demolish. Thankful to councillors and officers who agreed to retention.

RDC Planning Department – has had lots of criticism in recent years. RDC accepted it was warranted, and was too inward looking. New Officer has role of ‘sorting everything out’. BH would like to see more openness from the department. Suggested every detail of case files re Planning Applications as they progress, are available to view online. Nothing is confidential. Often see redactions, but they are public documents and should be available to view.

Town Hall site redevelopment – RDC less keen to retain the two houses adjacent to TH, but BH wish to see kept. Damaged by 1970s link building, but should not be a reason to demolish.

4. TALK by Frank Rallings ‘Bexhill-on-Sea – past, present and future’ and questions

RK introduced and read out brief CV for the guest speaker. Has a wide knowledge and experience and been involved with Planning Departments, in various roles, in Lincoln CC, Suffolk CC, East Sussex CC, RDC, and lecturer at University of Brighton.

FR – Presentation will aim to take through some personal reflections of the Rother “that I know” and when it was Bexhill Borough Council.

FR provided a very interesting series of slides, photos and background information from his time in Bexhill and the Rother area.

Also highlighted a DVD of Coastal Architecture, looking at French and UK buildings (Hastings and Bexhill feature) and fluidity of styles relating to coastal areas. Although France has maintained its seaside and coastal architecture, the same has not been the case for much of the UK.

5. Projects Update (SJ/SA)

Bandstand – (SJ). Lots has been happening in background with this project. Team effort of several people, working with RDC and consultants. Roof tiles will be going on soon. Slides shown of current state. Cleaning out loft space completed by AM,SA and J Gardiner. Old floor to be taken away before Christmas. BH volunteers will be asked to help with removal of debris. Paint stripping is needed soon (when floor has been replaced) and volunteers wanted for working on this aspect around November. Provisional plan to hold opening event in August 2022.

Sainsburys Mural – Offered to restore with consent of Sainsburys. No interest shown to date by company.

K6 Telephone Kiosk, Normans Bay - report been completed by SA as to what needs doing, and the means to complete. Unfortunately, no funds available to progress at present. BH has asked Normans Bay Parish Council and Bexhill Town Council if they can contribute to the costs. Awaiting confirmation. Discovered that the kiosk actually falls within the Bexhill TC area. (slide shown). Approximate cost expected to be in area of £4k.

West Parade Clocktower – externally looks ok, but internally showing neglect and decay and needs work. Report has been completed. RDC actually owns the clock tower, but currently the clock is not working.

9. Financial Report (SJ)

6 months into FY – BH broken even so far. BH started the year with £11,500, but has had to purchase a replacement gazebo, a new information board (awaiting installation by RDC), and preliminary items for the bandstand project.

Bexhill 100 recently made a generous donation to BH. There will be a presentation on Sat 23 October 11.00 a.m. outside bandstand. Currently looking at sponsorship for Bandstand, already have one, and waiting to hear news about another soon.

10. Q & A Session

David Beales – response to Frank Rallings. Question re conservation and replacement of windows with plastic/keeping wood or original? FR agreed shop fronts shouldn't be using any plastic in conservation areas. More difficult to match and enforce in upper floors or at rear of buildings.

DB – commented that no enforcement action tends to be taken by RDC against those who do not even submit an application for the change of windows. And yet when applications are submitted, they are closely considered by RDC. FR – agreed it should be and confirmed that councils had won appeals in the past, where plastic inserted and action taken to replace. Also mentioned that Permitted Development Rights are a great concern to all Planning Officers and departments at present.

RK – question to Frank, re RIBAs recent leaning towards policy and attitude to carbon and demolition of buildings. FR – mentioned he saw the report and aware some buildings cannot be reused or refurbished/conserved. Some are uneconomic, re removal of demolition products and decontamination and carbon emissions from lorries etc.

RK – highlighted the shining success of St Andrews Church, when two previous applications for demolition were refused.

FR – also highlighted the new cinemas in Hawkhurst and Rye, and the current refurbishment of a chemists in St Leonards.

RK – once again thanked our guest speaker, Frank Rallings for his very interesting talk and presentation.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.00 p.m.

Date of next members meeting will be held on Wednesday 1st December 2021, which we hope may be a face to face meeting.