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## COUNCIL

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 21 October 2015 from 7.04 - 7.34 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Sarah Aldridge, Mike Baldock, Cameron Beart, Bobbin, Monique Bonney, Andy Booth, Tina Booth, Lloyd Bowen, Bowles, Roger Clark, Katy Coleman, Derek Conway, Mike Cosgrove, Adrian Crowther, Richard Darby, Mike Dendor, Duncan Dewar-Whalley, Mark Ellen, Paul Fleming, Mick Galvin, June Garrad, Sue Gent, Nicholas Hampshire, Harrison, Mike Henderson, Alan Horton, James Hunt, Ken Ingleton, Samuel Koffie-Williams, Gerry Lewin, Peter Marchington, Padmini Nissanga, Prescott, George Samuel, David Simmons, Ben Stokes, Anita Walker (Mayor), Ghlin Whelan, Mike Whiting, Ted Wilcox and John Wright.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Katherine Bescoby, Abdool Kara, Chris Lovelock, Donna Price, Mark Radford and Nick Vickers.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors James Hall, Lesley Ingham, Nigel Kay, Bryan Mulhern, Ken Pugh and Roger Truelove.

### 288 PRAYERS

The Mayor's Chaplain said Prayers.

### 289 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 September 2015 (Minute Nos. 230 – 239) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 290 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

### 291 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor made a number of announcements.

Remembrance Sunday – the Mayor thanked Members for agreeing to represent the Mayor by attending a service and laying a wreath on Remembrance Day, and advised that they would be contacted when the wreaths were ready for collection.

Macmillan Coffee Morning – the Mayor referred to the coffee morning announced at the last Council meeting. £251 had been raised, of which £31.23 had been contributed by Members following the last Council meeting. She congratulated Carole Pasterfield, Carol Sargeant and their helpers for organising the event.

Christmas Day Swim – the Mayor advised that Councillor Katy Coleman would be doing a sponsored swim on Christmas Day, in aid of Cancer Research.

Mayor's Charity – the Mayor advised that she would be holding a Charity Event called 'Turkish Delight' in Faversham.

The Mayor also reminded Members to respond to the email regarding Pete Raine's leaving do.

## **292 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC**

There were no questions from Members of the public.

## **293 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS**

The Mayor advised that there were five questions, the answers to which had been given to Members and a copy is attached at Appendix I to the Minutes. The Mayor reminded Members that there was a three minute time limit for supplementary questions and their answers, and invited Members to ask a supplementary question.

### **Supplementary Question 1**

Councillor Monique Bonney asked the Cabinet Member what the timeframe was for the implementation of the paperless system?

The Cabinet Member for Planning undertook to provide a written response. He also advised that the planning service was now providing a faster service than prior to the shared service arrangements, with validation taking place in three days rather than five days previously.

### **Supplementary Question 2**

Councillor Monique Bonney asked what the timeframe was to stabilise the planning team with permanent staff (rather than temporary staff)?

The Cabinet Member for Planning advised that there was a churn of staff in the department, some for natural reasons, and advised of the national shortage of trained planners. It was therefore not possible to give a timeframe at this point in time.

### **Supplementary Question 3**

Councillor James Hunt thanked the Cabinet Member for the response and asked why the issue had not been addressed until now?

The Cabinet Member for Planning advised that Swale had been using Kent County Council's (KCC's) parking standards. New regulations now allowed district authorities to agree their own standards, and this would be progressed when resources became available. Some preliminary work was being undertaken with KCC and this would come forward to the Local Development Framework Panel.

There were no supplementary questions to questions 4 and 5.

**294 LEADER'S STATEMENT**

The Leader presented his Statement to Members, which included the following topics: Syrian Refugee update; Local Enterprise Partnership; Devolution/Combined Authorities; and changes to the financing of local government.

The Mayor invited Members to ask questions on each section.

**Syrian Refugee Update**

The Leader advised that the situation was changing minute-by-minute, and whilst various announcements had been made, the detail regarding funding was not yet known. The Council would play its part but could not commit until the funding situation was clarified.

The Leader of the UKIP Group asked for a response to his questions at the last Council meeting regarding Yazadi and Christian refugees, to which the Leader advised he had no specific update.

The Deputy Leader of the Labour Group suggested it would be useful for all Members to see the report being considered by KCC's Council meeting the following day, and asked the Leader to give updates via email rather than wait for the next Council meeting. The Leader asked Democratic Services to circulate the KCC report to all Members.

The Leader of the Independent Group asked for an update on the question he asked at the last Council meeting regarding Christian refugees not in camps. He also questioned how it had been possible for three Councils in Kent to give an indicative commitment at this time?

The Leader advised that it was not for him to comment on other authorities' decisions, as each council was in a different position, for example some had their own retained Council housing stock whilst Swale did not.

**Local Enterprise Partnership**

The Leader of the Independent Group advised that he was shocked at the level of attendance by District Leaders at the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership Board (KMEP) and was pleased that the Leader was present. He asked whether there was any movement on the funding of skills training?

The Leader advised that skills training was a major objective of KMEP going forward, and he shared the Member's disappointment at the level of attendance.

**Devolution/Combined Authorities**

The Leader of the UKIP Group agreed that this had not been a hot topic at election time, and suggested that perhaps there were more suitable topics for future Leader's Statements.

The Leader responded by saying that, whilst it may not be a topic of interest in the short term, residents would become interested if, for example, council meetings were held in a different area or funding changed. It was therefore important to be involved in debates on this subject rather than play 'catch up'.

### **Changes to the financing of local government**

The Leader of the UKIP Group suggested that the central government grant should be redistributed to parish and town councils, as was the case in other Kent authorities.

The Leader noted this and advised that there would be an update on this in due course.

The Leader of the Independent Group welcomed the change to business rates to being determined at a local level, which would be a real benefit to developing commercial enterprise in Swale.

The Leader also welcomed the change, but said he would be keeping a close eye on the detail, as would the Finance Team; and advised that the Council was lucky to have Mr Nick Vickers and his team. He also advised that Swale had the best record in Kent for allocating land for business to develop industry, and congratulated those involved. In response to a further question from a Member, the Leader advised that the Council was continuing to improve economic performance.

## **295 ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT 2014/15**

The Chairman of the Audit Committee introduced the report which had been considered by the Audit Committee, and proposed the recommendations. This was seconded by the Vice-Chairman of the Audit Committee.

***Resolved:***

***(1) That the Treasury Management Stewardship report for 2014/15 be approved.***

***(2) That the prudential and treasury management indicators within the report be approved.***

## **296 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE 21 SEPTEMBER 2015**

The Mayor advised that the recommendation at Minute No. 227 was for noting, as the item related to the Annual Treasury Management Report that had just been considered by the Council.

***Resolved:***

***That the recommendations in Minute No. 227 be noted.***

Mayor

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All Minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel