
COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 16 December 2015 from 7.00 - 9.40 pm.

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

OFFICERS PRESENT: Abdool Kara, Chris Lovelock, Jo Millard, Donna Price, Mark Radford and Nick Vickers.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Bobbin, Richard Darby, Mick Galvin, June Garrad, James Hall and Bryan Mulhern.

395 PRAYERS

The Mayor's Chaplain said Prayers.

396 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 October 2015 (Minute Nos. 288 - 296) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

397 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ted Wilcox declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest in Item 13 of the Agenda, Membership on Outside Bodies – Queenborough Fishery Trust and the Swale Recreation Trust as he was Chairman of the Queenborough Fishery Trust.

During the discussion on fees and charges, Councillor Monique Bonney declared a Non-Pecuniary Interest as she was a Faversham Pools Trustee.

398 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor made a number of announcements.

Evacuation Chairs – the Mayor asked for Members to volunteer to be trained in the use of the evacuation chairs to assist those with mobility problems when there was an evacuation of Swale House. Members who sat on the Planning Committee were particularly required as those meetings generally had a large number of public attendees. An hour long training session was scheduled for January, and volunteers should contact Andrew Spiers in Planning Services.

Remembrance Sunday – the Mayor thanked all Members who represented her at Services and Acts of Remembrance by laying a wreath.

Annual Civic Journey of Commemoration to Ypres – the Mayoress, Mayor's Cadet, the Leader and other Members of the WW1 Steering Group joined students from all nine secondary schools across Swale on a coach trip to Ypres in Belgium, for the Armistice Day Service at the Menin Gate on 11 November 2015. The Mayor read out a postcard message she had received from one of the Highsted School students who had been on the visit.

Charity Turkish Night – the Mayor advised that £490 profit had been made and this would be donated to the four Carnival Courts in Swale.

Swale Youth Development Fund – the Mayor advised that she had attended the Swale Youth Development Fund 30th Birthday dinner at the Coniston Hotel.

Civic Christmas Cards Primary Schools' competition - the Mayor referred to the recent presentation to winning children.

'Lights for Love' Ceremonies for Wisdom Hospice – the Mayor had attended ceremonies at Highsted Grammar School and Minster Abbey.

Salvation Army – the Mayor thanked Members that had donated to the Salvation Army from their Localism Grant.

Christmas Day Swim – the Mayor reminded Members that Councillor Katy Coleman was doing a sponsored swim on Christmas Day, in aid of Cancer Research.

The Mayor also reminded Members that the Swale Civic Ball would be held on Friday 11 March 2016, the Faversham Ball on Friday 18 March 2016, and the Swale Civic Service on Sunday 10 April 2016.

A Member thanked the Mayor for her card on the recent occasion of his Golden Wedding Anniversary.

399 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC

There were no questions submitted from members of the public.

400 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS

The Mayor advised Members that there was one question, the response to which was given to Members, and a copy is attached at Appendix I to the Minutes. The Member that raised the question was asked if he had a supplementary question.

Supplementary Question 1

Councillor Mike Baldock asked the Cabinet Member if there was further detail available in relation to what the remainder of the money left was being allocated to?

The Cabinet Member for Planning advised that, since he had not had notice of the supplementary question, he was unable to answer the question, but more detail was available from the Head of Economy and Community Services.

401 LEADER'S STATEMENT

The Leader presented his Statement to Members which included the following topics: Comprehensive Spending Review, Syrian Refugee update, MKIP Annual Report, Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report, Tesco Community Funding, and the Paris Agreement.

Comprehensive Spending Review

The Leader of the Labour Group considered that investment in manufacturing, skills and infrastructure should be the focus for the future, and the Leader agreed that the Government delaying the decision on the new runway at Heathrow was frustrating. When asked by the Leader of the Independent Group whether there would be funding to improve skills, the Leader advised that any available money would be used to upskill people to support the local economy, and he hoped to update Members on this in the future.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration referred to Junction 5 of the M2 motorway in Highway England's spending plans, the low unemployment levels in Swale, and the high skills level of employees at the Kent Science Park. The Leader advised that the Junction 5 proposals would be kept at the top of the agenda.

Syrian Refugee Update

The Leader of the UKIP Group sought clarification on whether refugees would be moved on at the end of the scheme, and the Leader advised that 80% of refugees would be sought from refugee camps or around the area of the camps, that strict Home Office criteria checks for eligibility would be carried out, and refugees would not be moved on at the end of the scheme. The Leader further advised that the multiple and complex needs of each refugee would be considered.

The Leader of the Labour Group welcomed Swale Borough Council's participation in the scheme, and suggested that more publicity should be given to highlight that Central Government would be financing the scheme and that refugees will be housed in private rented accommodation.

A Member asked the Leader if the Government would reimburse costs for the entire length of the scheme, and if there was a plan at the end of the five years? The Leader confirmed that the Government had guaranteed financial reimbursement and the situation would be monitored and kept under review. He further added that he hoped for an improvement in the situation in the Middle East, so any refugees may be able to return.

MKIP Annual Report

The Leader of the Independent Group highlighted communication issues between the Planning Administration Team in Maidstone and Planning Officers in Swale

House. In response, the Leader advised that weekly meetings with the Cabinet Member for Planning and the Head of Planning Services took place to continuously improve the service, and determination rates were now better than before the shared service had started. He also highlighted the lack of qualified Planning Officers nationally.

Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report

In response to a question from a Member regarding the benefits of signing the Covenant and the resources available to implement it, the Leader advised that no officers had specific training in assisting with post-traumatic stress disorder, but he would update the Member in more detail in writing.

Tesco Community Funding

The Leader of the UKIP Group sought clarification on the amount of grant awarded in each of Tesco's areas, and the Leader advised that the amount was **up to** £12,000. A Member suggested the scheme could be extended to smaller businesses.

Paris Agreement

The Leader of the UKIP Group sought more commitment and responsibility to protect the environment and the Leader of the Independent Group highlighted the lack of available grants to householders to make their homes more energy efficient.

A discussion ensued and a Member suggested specific funding to be allocated for green projects, whilst another Member suggested that Swale Borough Council's Environmental Policy and Development Management Policy should be reviewed. The Leader suggested that specific funding for green projects could be considered in future budgets, and the review of the policies highlighted could be considered in 2016.

402 REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report and thanked the Members of the Scrutiny Committee and the Management Team. He advised that there had been no increase in general car parking charges since 2011, there was evidence that the concessionary bulky waste collection service was being abused, and that the Council was increasingly self-financing and so relied on fees and charges. He further advised that the Council had to reduce its subsidies on discretionary services, and proposed the recommendation in the report, subject to a change to the car park charges at Trinity Road, Sheerness, and to bring them into line with other long stay car parks as set out in the tabled report. This change was recommended by the Scrutiny Committee. The Leader seconded the proposal.

The Leader of the UKIP Group objected to the increase and proposed that the recommendation in the report be accepted with an amendment to freeze car parking charges. A discussion on the amendment followed, which focussed on the following themes:

- the recommendation made by Scrutiny Committee that was not agreed by Cabinet;
- whether the four hour restriction at Faversham Pool car park deterred customers;
- no alternative had been proposed as to how the budget shortfall from not raising car parking fees would be funded;
- the proposed increase in car park charges was reasonable;
- the car park service should be funded by those that use it;
- Swale car parks were amongst the cheapest in Kent, even with the increase;
- the majority of residents did not want an increase in car park charges;
- there was a general lack of parking availability in Swale; and
- there may be a loss of income by pricing car users out of car parks.

The Cabinet Member for Finance stressed the importance of financing discretionary services and considering the long-term budget.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 19(5) a recorded vote was taken on the amendment and voting was as follows:

For: Councillors Sarah Aldridge, Cameron Beart, Andy Booth, Tina Booth, Lloyd Bowen, Bowles, Roger Clark, Derek Conway, Mike Cosgrove, Mike Dendor, Duncan Dewar-Whalley, Sue Gent, Alan Horton, James Hunt, Lesley Ingham, Ken Ingleton, Nigel Kay, Samuel Koffie-Williams, Gerry Lewin, Peter Marchington, Prescott, Ken Pugh, George Samuel, David Simmons, Ben Stokes, Anita Walker, Mike Whiting, Ted Wilcox and John Wright.

Against: Councillors Mike Baldock, Monique Bonney, Katy Coleman, Adrian Crowther, Mark Ellen, Paul Fleming, Harrison, Mike Henderson, Padmini Nissanga and Ghlin Whelan.

Abstained: Councillor Nicholas Hampshire.

The amendment was lost.

In response to a proposal to make amendments to the fees and charges for 2017/18, the Leader of the Independent Group was advised that the Budget process will be starting again in May 2016.

A Member sought reassurance that Swale Borough Council were still monitoring fly-tipping as there had been an increase in incidents, and sought clarification on whether the Pest Control service was free for Benefits claimants.

In response to a question on burial fees, the Leader advised that the process for reviewing setting all licensing charges will commence in May 2016.

The Cabinet Member for Finance proposed to move the recommendation in the report with the tabled amendment. The Leader seconded the proposal.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 19(5) a recorded vote was taken on the substantive motion and voting was as follows:

For: Councillors Sarah Aldridge, Cameron Beart, Andy Booth, Tina Booth, Lloyd Bowen, Bowles, Roger Clark, Derek Conway, Mike Cosgrove, Mike Dendor, Duncan Dewar-Whalley, Sue Gent, Nicholas Hampshire, Alan Horton, James Hunt, Lesley Ingham, Ken Ingleton, Nigel Kay, Samuel Koffie-Williams, Gerry Lewin, Peter Marchington, Prescott, Ken Pugh, George Samuel, David Simmons, Ben Stokes, Roger Truelove, Anita Walker, Mike Whiting, Ted Wilcox and John Wright.

Against: Councillors Mike Baldock, Monique Bonney, Katy Coleman, Adrian Crowther, Mark Ellen, Paul Fleming, Harrison, Mike Henderson, Padmini Nissanga and Ghlin Whelan.

This was therefore agreed.

Resolved:

- (i) ***That the Council approves the proposed fees and charges for 2016/17 as set out in the report, subject to a change to the car park charges at Cockleshell Walk, Sittingbourne, and Trinity Road, Sheerness, to bring them into line with other long stay car parks, as set out in the tabled report.***

Post Meeting Note: The Cabinet Member for Environmental and Rural affairs confirmed the pest control service was not free for benefit claimants.

403 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2016/17

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced the report which set out proposals for the Council Tax Support Scheme 2016/17. The recommendation was seconded by the Leader.

Resolved:

- (i) ***That the Council Tax Support scheme for 2016/17 be kept the same as 2015/16, and Council Tax Support continues to be reduced by 15%.***

404 REVISED STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

The Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Health introduced the report which set out the revised statement of Licensing Policy, and proposed the recommendation. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Mark Ellen.

The Leader of the UKIP Group raised concern that Ward Members were not informed of applications in their wards early on in the process, and the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Health advised that the authorities and individuals consulted on the Licensing Policy were shown on page 38 of the report, and no responses had been received to the consultation.

The Leader of the Independent Group raised a concern where the issuing of Licensing Approval and Planning Approval could conflict and was advised that they were independent quasi-judicial processes. The Chairman of the Licensing

Committee advised that a Licence application was often submitted first as it was cheaper than a planning application.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Revised Statement of Licencing Policy as set out in Appendix I of the report be adopted.**

405 REVISED STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES UNDER THE GAMBLING ACT 2005

The Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Health proposed the recommendation. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Lesley Ingham.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Statement of principles under the Gambling Act 2005 (Gambling Policy) as set out in Appendix I of the report be adopted as a temporary measure with a view to incorporating the new guidance and conducting a full review of the policy at the earliest opportunity.**

406 MEMBERSHIP ON OUTSIDE BODIES - QUEENBOROUGH FISHERY TRUST AND THE SWALE RECREATION TRUST

The Leader proposed the recommendation in the report which was seconded by the Cabinet Member for Planning.

Resolved:

- (i) That Councillor Ken Pugh be appointed as one of the two Council representatives on the Queenborough Fisheries Trust and Swale Recreation Trust for a four year term expiring on 31 January 2020.**

407 RECOMMENDATIONS

Council was asked to note the recommendations from the Cabinet Meeting on 4 November 2015 (Minute No. 309) and the Licensing Act 2003 Committee on 3 December 2015 (Minute Nos. 370 and 371) which had been the subject of reports considered and agreed by Council earlier in the meeting.

Members agreed the recommendations from Standards Committee, 10 November 2015 (Minute No. 343).

Resolved:

- (i) The recommendations in Minute Nos. 309, 370 and 371 be noted.**
- (ii) The recommendations in Minute No. 343 of the Standard Committee be agreed.**

Chairman

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