
COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 17 February 2016 from 7.00 - 11.06 pm.

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

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

APOLOGIES: Councillors Katy Coleman, Mark Ellen, Mick Galvin, Padmini Nissanga and Ben Stokes

499 PRAYERS

The Mayor's Chaplain said Prayers.

500 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Mayor advised the meeting of the evacuation procedures to follow in the event of an emergency.

501 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 January 2016 (Minute Nos. 445 – 458) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

The Deputy Leader referred to the answer given to question two at the last Council meeting regarding the New Homes Bonus (NHB), and clarified that this was one of the proposals being considered in a consultation by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

502 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

503 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor advised that two nominations had been received for Deputy Mayor, therefore a secret ballot would be held, and outlined the procedure for this. Members were also reminded on how to operate the pa system.

The Mayor invited Councillor Derek Conway to say a few words; Councillor Derek Conway advised that he had been delighted to present the Mayor with a book on behalf of the authors, on the Barton's Point Coastal Park. He had also presented the Mayor with a book which celebrated 40 years of Sittingbourne Rugby Club, and invited the author to say a few

words. Mr Tony Nash referred to the history, different teams and ambitions for the Club, and its achievements, in particular in terms of community engagement. The Mayor advised that both books would be in the Mayor's Parlour for Members to borrow if they wished to..

504 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC

The Mayor advised that no questions had been submitted by the public.

505 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS

As the Member was not present, the one question received was not put to the meeting.

506 LEADER'S STATEMENT

The Leader presented his Statement which gave an update on the Local Plan and invited Members to ask questions.

The Leader of the UKIP Group considered that Swale had failed to defend its target on housing (540 homes), and that some parts of the Borough would be the most under-developed in the County. He asked if the Leader did not agree that all parts of the Borough were special and should have been treated equally in the Local Plan?

The Leader disagreed with this view, and considered that it was unfair to officers and the Inspector to say this. The fact was part of Swale was designated as a growth area within the Thames Gateway, and because of this designation millions had been spent on infrastructure in some parts of the Borough, but none in others. Infrastructure improvements were required to enable growth to take place, which was why this varied throughout the Borough.

The Leader of the Labour Group referred to the Examination in Public (EIP) which some Members had attended, and asked if, despite the housing target being set at 776 homes, this meant that this number would be delivered? He expressed concern that developers would be allowed to cherry pick more attractive sites and Swale would not get the affordable or social housing it needed, and there would be a strain on existing infrastructure. In terms of infrastructure improvements, he asked whether the Leader thought it would be delivered in its entirety (including schools), and what his best estimate was of getting the infrastructure needed, particularly north west of Sittingbourne such as Grovehurst roundabout, junction 5 of the M2, and the A249?

The Leader responded by saying that the 776 allocation allowed a greater opportunity for developers to cherry pick site for development but there were many factors outside of the Council's control. He commended the efforts of officers, in particular the Local Plans Team, who had done an excellent job at the EIP in defending the number of homes as developers were arguing for 800 – 1,200 in the Borough. With respect to infrastructure, the Leader was as confident as he could be but could not give a definitive answer. The 'pinch points' were well recognised, and they would work together to make sure this stayed at the top of the agenda. As to whether the new homes would be in the right place and how many would be delivered, this would be for the Planning Committee to consider when applications came forward, and the latter would be affected by economic factors.

The Leader of the Independent Group commended the work of the Local Plans Team and considered the confirmation of the two planning areas to be important. It was not desirable to increase housing in an area without the infrastructure (schools, roads, doctors, etc). He asked if the Leader would keep on fighting to ensure this?

The Leader agreed that he would, and once more thanked Officers and the work of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning, and the Local Development Framework Panel, and considered this had been a good team effort.

Another Member also congratulated the staff in the Local Plans Team, and considered it unfortunate that the law was such that it was not possible for the Council to insist on infrastructure first before development, in particular referring to the Lower Road on the Isle of Sheppey as an example. Whilst the Council did not get a bad result at the EIP, it was difficult to explain this to people who were against more houses being built. She asked the Leader how it was possible to communicate to the public how little say the Council had (due to legislation), but that the Council was doing its best for communities? She referred to examples where planning permission had been refused and it had been overridden on appeal, sometimes with costs against the Council.

The Leader thanked the Member for her comments and advised the Council had to continue to get this message across, and be honest with people about this.

A Member said she was pleased with the Planning Inspector's comments on the Plan, but was greatly concerned about infrastructure, not just in terms of roads but also education and health. There were already difficulties for residents to get a doctor's appointment due to demand, and problems with hospitals. There may not be enough development to trigger sufficient Section 106 monies or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). She asked 'at what point will we get a grip?'

The Leader shared the Member's frustration, acknowledging that a lot of this was outside of the Council's control. However, the Council had achieved a lower housing growth figure than many expected, but the pressure needed to be kept on regarding infrastructure, and, to continue to work on health issues with partners. He encouraged the Member to get involved with the work on the CIL.

Another Member referred to 'more attractive sites being cherry picked by developers' and asked what effect this would have on 'bombsites', referring to the area between Morrisons and Charlotte Street, Sittingbourne? The Leader recognised his frustration and said assurances had been given that proposals would come forward soon, which would be a matter for the Planning Committee to consider.

The Deputy Leader advised that the EIP was the easy bit and there was more hard work to do, in particular at stage two. The process was hard to explain to the public, but there would be more consultation as part of this. He asked the Leader if he would accept his gratitude that he and other Members had spoken so well, and thanked Members of the LDF Panel and officers, in particular on their exemplary performance at the EIP. He asked that thanks be given to the Officers formally.

The Leader accepted and endorsed the sentiments, and again congratulated Officers, referring also to the positive comments at the recent Faversham Local Engagement Forum.

507 BUDGETS AND COUNCIL TAX FOR 2016/17

The Director of Corporate Services outlined the procedure for the debate on the budget.

The Cabinet Member for Finance introduced his report by thanking the Head of Finance and his team, Cabinet Members and colleagues, members of the Budget Task Force, and Officers whose hard work had helped to deliver the robust budget being presented to

Members. Swale Borough Council's Council Tax had been frozen for five years, and he was pleased to announce that it would be frozen for another year. A typical Band D household in the Borough would continue to pay just £159.93 a year - £3.08 a week - for Council services.

The Cabinet Member stressed that the challenge to do this could not be underestimated, and there were tough choices to make with ever reducing funding. However, the Council remained ambitious and optimistic for the future, and would continue to make improvements whilst protecting services and protecting jobs. The Council would need to look increasingly at ways to generate income given that the Revenue Support Grant was reducing each year. In spite of these challenges, the Council's finances remained sound with a general balance of £7m. The uncertainty around future funding made it difficult to plan ahead; however, efficiencies were being planned, and additional savings would need to be made in future years to enable the Council to continue to provide high quality services. The Council must continue to be careful not to put increased pressures on its base budget without having additional income or return to support any increase. The Cabinet Member said that he had every confidence in the Officers and that, by working together, the Council could continue to provide the community with the services they were entitled to. The Council's Chief Executive, Directors, Officers and staff were to be congratulated for their hard work and expertise. Without their professionalism the Council would not be where it was today.

The Cabinet Member referred to the declining Revenue Support Grant and the New Homes Bonus, which was currently the subject of a consultation paper, and the expectation that potential income could be reduced by a third in future years. Five years ago, 80% of expenditure was funded from Government Grant. By 2020, it was anticipated that the Council would be self-financing. Therefore, the Council would increasingly look at new and innovative ways to generate income. It was important to be ambitious to look at ways to drive growth in the Borough and to work to attract and retain business in Swale, and to try to maintain discretionary services.

The Cabinet Member welcomed input from all Members in the budget formulation process, and announced that there would be a private meeting on 21 April 2016 for all Members to give their ideas on next year's budget, including savings which would be needed in the region of £800k. Whilst change was inevitable, it was important for the Council to work to expand services for the benefit of the community as a whole. He reminded Members that Swale's Council Tax was just one element of the bill, as it included charges for Kent County Council, the Police, Kent Fire and Rescue, and Town and Parish Councils, all of which was collected by the Council on their behalf.

In concluding his speech, the Cabinet Member thanked the Scrutiny Committee for their consideration of the budget, which had not made any recommendations, and summarised that the budget was about 'protecting our residents and strengthening our communities'.

He proposed

'(1) That Members note the Head of Finance's opinion on the robustness of the budget estimates and the adequacy of reserves.

(2) That Minute No. 471/02/16 of the Cabinet held on 3 February 2016 on the report on the Medium Term Financial Plan and the 2016/17 Revenue and Capital Budgets be approved.

(3) That the resolutions contained in Appendix I to the report be approved.

(4) That in accordance with the proposals contained within SI 2014 No. 165 that a recorded vote be taken on the 2016/17 Budget and Council Tax'.

This was seconded by the Leader.

Amendment No. 1

Councillor Richard Darby proposed, and Councillor Mike Baldock seconded, 'that Council Tax be reduced by 3% for 2016/17 and the difference be funded (circa £225,000) from extra unallocated New Homes Bonus (NHB)'.

The Leader responded by referring to the difficulties in achieving a balanced budget, and the fact that it would be the sixth year that Swale had not increased Council Tax and still provided a good level of service. He could not support using the NHB for revenue expenditure.

The Leader of the Labour Group referred to the Conservative Administration reducing Council Tax in 2003, and said that the proposal was not sustainable, or what NHB was for, and so he could not support this amendment.

The Leader of the Independent Group also advised he could not support this motion.

The seconder of the amendment (who had reserved the right to speak) responded by saying that every year the Council had an underspend, and so why not set the budget to what the Council was going to spend?

The proposer of the original motion did not wish to speak on this.

In accordance with SI 2014 No. 165, a recorded vote was taken on the amendment and voting was as follows:

For: Councillors Baldock, Bonney, Crowther, Darby, Fleming, Garrad and Hall. Total equals 7

Against: Councillors Aldridge, Beart, Bobbin, Andy Booth, Tina Booth, Bowen, Bowles, Clark, Conway, Cosgrove, Dendor, Dewar-Whalley, Gent, Hampshire, Harrison, Henderson, Horton, Hunt, Ingham, Ingleton, Kay, Koffie-Williams, Lewin, Marchington, Mulhern, Prescott, Pugh, Samuel, Simmons, Truelove, Walker, Whelan, Whiting, Wilcox and Wright. Total equals 35

Abstain: 0

Amendment No.2

Councillor June Garrad proposed, and Councillor Mike Baldock seconded, 'that £100,000 be taken from unallocated New Homes Bonus (NHB) and awarded to Parish and Town Councils pro-rata to the population'.

The Leader responded by saying that NHB should not be used for core funding of the revenue budget, and that the Council had received no correspondence from Central Government to say that money should be allocated to Parish and Town Councils. Parish and Town Councils were the only tier of local government that were not capped.

The Labour and Independent Group Leaders did not wish to respond to this amendment.

A debate ensued during which Members asked what the money was for; what about areas of the Borough that were unparished; and that the use of NHB should be used as a capital project for new homes, not for revenue expenditure.

The seconder of the amendment (who had reserved the right to speak) advised that the money had traditionally been provided from the Government for third tier authorities. The money would allow Parish and Town Councils to interact with the Council more, and to work on joint ventures/projects; to be more effective; and was in line with devolution.

The proposer of the original motion did not wish to speak on this.

In accordance with SI 2014 No. 165, a recorded vote was taken on the amendment and voting was as follows:

For: Councillors Baldock, Bonney, Crowther, Darby, Fleming, Garrad and Hall. Total equals 7

Against: Councillors Aldridge, Beart, Bobbin, Andy Booth, Tina Booth, Bowen, Bowles, Clark, Conway, Cosgrove, Dendor, Dewar-Whalley, Gent, Hampshire, Harrison, Henderson, Horton, Hunt, Ingham, Ingleton, Kay, Koffie-Williams, Lewin, Marchington, Mulhern, Prescott, Pugh, Samuel, Simmons, Truelove, Walker, Whelan, Whiting, Wilcox and Wright. Total equals 35

Abstain: 0

Amendment No. 3

Councillor June Garrad proposed, and Councillor Mike Baldock seconded, 'that the tourism allocation be doubled from £14,670 to £29,340 by taking £14,670 from the Communications budget to enable further tourism support for Sheppey and the rural villages'.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration considered that communications was part of tourism (for example, social media could be used to promote attractions) and so he was perplexed by this proposed amendment.

The Leader of the Labour Group advised that he would support more funds being allocated to tourism and less to communications, as he considered that communications was used for propaganda for the controlling political party. He asked, however, for clarification on what the money would be used for and the effect on the Communications Team?

The Leader of the Independent Group advised that as he had also proposed an amendment regarding tourism (Amendment No. 8) he asked Members not to support this amendment, as his amendment was for more money on tourism in general and not just the Isle of Sheppey and the rural villages.

The seconder of the original motion (who had reserved the right to speak) considered that there should be cut backs on Inside Swale and press releases, and communications improved through the internet instead. There would be savings if the Local Engagement Forums and Rural Forum were disbanded. A great deal of work was done on tourism with a minimal budget, as advised at the recent Scrutiny Committee Meeting, and so more work could be done on tourism if more money was allocated.

The proposer of the original motion did not wish to speak on this.

In accordance with SI 2014 No. 165, a recorded vote was taken on the amendment and voting was as follows:

For: Councillors Baldock, Crowther, Darby, Fleming, Garrad, Hall, Harrison, Truelove, Whelan. Total equals 9

Against: Councillors Aldridge, Beart, Bobbin, Bonney, Andy Booth, Tina Booth, Bowen, Bowles, Clark, Conway, Cosgrove, Dendor, Dewar-Whalley, Gent, Hampshire, Henderson, Horton, Hunt, Ingham, Ingleton, Kay, Koffie-Williams, Lewin, Marchington, Mulhern, Prescott, Pugh, Samuel, Simmons, Walker, Whiting, Wilcox and Wright. Total equals 33

Abstain: 0

Amendment No. 4

Councillor Richard Darby proposed, and Councillor Mike Baldock seconded, 'that Councillor Allowances be frozen and mileage expenses be limited to the standard CC rate, and savings be used to establish a Green Fund of £10,000 for grants to support environmental initiatives'.

As a point of order, a Member considered that as the allowances scheme was part of the Council's Constitution, then this was not a decision that the Council could take as the matter should be referred to the General Purposes Committee. The Director of Corporate Services advised that under legislation, any proposed changes to allowances would need to be considered by the Independent Members Allowances Panel.

On this basis, the proposer and seconder agreed to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment No. 5

Councillor Paul Fleming proposed, and Councillor Mike Baldock seconded, 'that the Communities Fund be abolished and instead 3 Area Funds (Sittingbourne, Sheppey, Faversham) be established and £1,000 be allocated to each Member to award to community projects either separately or in conjunction with other Councillors'.

The Cabinet Member for Localism advised that he would not support this amendment as it was for individual Members to decide which projects to support. £150k of grant funds were available each year; some Members allocated 100% of their grant whilst others did not. Furthermore, Members already had the option to pool funds to support projects, and many projects already benefited from cross-party support.

The Leaders of the Labour and Independent Groups did not wish to speak on this item.

A debate ensued during which comments were made regarding the existing grant scheme and the need to promote and advertise grants.

The seconder of the amendment (who had reserved the right to speak) responded by saying cooperation was key and the proposal would be for members to work together, to discuss in their areas and make decisions to allocate money to projects.

The mover of the original proposal did not wish to speak on this.

In accordance with SI 2014 No. 165, a recorded vote was taken on the amendment and voting was as follows:

For: Councillors Baldock, Crowther, Darby, Fleming, Garrad, Hall, Harrison and Truelove.
Total equals 8

Against: Councillors Aldridge, Beart, Bobbin, Bonney, Andy Booth, Tina Booth, Bowen, Bowles, Clark, Conway, Cosgrove, Dendor, Dewar-Whalley, Gent, Hampshire, Henderson, Horton, Hunt, Ingham, Ingleton, Kay, Koffie-Williams, Lewin, Marchington, Mulhern, Prescott, Pugh, Samuel, Simmons, Walker, Whelan, Whiting, Wilcox and Wright. Total equals 34

Abstain: 0

Amendment No. 6

Councillor Roger Truelove proposed, and Councillor Harrison seconded, 'that £500k be allocated from the New Homes Bonus (NHB) generated Regeneration Fund to the renewal,

updating and development of many of the Borough's tired children's play areas and other public recreation facilities.

The funding to be allocated as follows:

(a) Faversham area

- Faversham Swimming Pool Refurbishment £60k
- Lower Road Play Area Refurbishment £50k
- Bysingwood Road Refurbishment £40k
- Painting £10k

(b) Sittingbourne area

- Milton Recreation Improvements £50k
- Diligent Drive Refurbishment £20k
- Manor Grove Refurbishment £50k
- Painting £10k

(c) Isle of Sheppey area

- Nursery Close, Sheerness Refurbishment £50k
- Beachfields Park, Sheerness Improvements £130k
- Warden Bay improvement £20k
- Painting £10k'

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs advised that he supported the regeneration of tired play areas and open spaces, but this amendment was premature. He advised that there was already money allocated (£50k) for a consultant to undertake a survey of open spaces and to develop an Open Spaces Strategy. The contract had been awarded and work would commence in March 2016, to be completed in September 2016. He considered it best to wait for the outcome of that report before deciding on the best way to proceed.

The Leader of the UKIP Group questioned how the Council could meet its objective to be a 'Council to be proud of' when parks were in such a condition? He also stated that there was no reason to wait for the report before works could start.

The Leader of the Independent Group advised that there would be at least a year's delay in starting work if waiting on the consultant's report, and so suggested that money should be allocated now so that improvements could be made. However, he considered that there should be a caveat that money could be moved between play areas/wards.

A debate ensued during which comments were made in terms of agreeing the sentiment and principle behind the amendment, but that the detail/allocation was not correct; concern that there had not been an audit of green spaces already, and concerns about delays to make improvements; that the amendment would be a step in the right direction; on what basis had the amounts been reached?; and now was not the correct time and the Council should wait for the full report.

The seconder of the amendment (who had reserved the right to speak) said that the parks and play areas used to be regularly reviewed; and that the money being spent on the consultants could be better used to make improvements.

The mover of the original motion did not wish to speak on this.

In accordance with SI 2014 No. 165, a recorded vote was taken on the amendment and voting was as follows:

For: Councillors Baldock, Bonney, Crowther, Darby, Fleming, Garrad, Hall, Harrison, Henderson, Truelove and Whelan. Total equals 11

Against: Councillors Aldridge, Beart, Bobbin, Andy Booth, Tina Booth, Bowles, Clark, Conway, Cosgrove, Dendor, Dewar-Whalley, Gent, Horton, Hunt, Ingham, Ingleton, Kay, Koffie-Williams, Lewin, Marchington, Mulhern, Prescott, Pugh, Samuel, Simmons, Walker, Whiting, Wilcox and Wright. Total equals 29

Abstain: Councillors Bowen and Hampshire. Total equals 2

Amendment No. 7

Councillor Roger Truelove proposed, and Councillor Harrison seconded, 'that provision of £600k be taken from the General Reserve to fund the purchase of three new properties in the Borough to deal with the growing problem of homelessness in the Borough; one in the Faversham area, one on the Isle of Sheppey, and one in the Sittingbourne area'.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration responded by saying he welcomed the attention on homelessness, but he could not support the amendment because of unintended consequences. He referred to the Homelessness Strategy and advised that the budget proposed would be tight; there would also need to be extra resources in terms of housing management and support for the tenants.

The Leader of the UKIP Group advised that the Council had £15m in reserves so the financial argument against this did not stack up. However, if the Council was not up to running this he did not have the confidence in partners to go down this route. It was important to get this right every step of the way, and the proposal was 'too fast'.

The Leader of the Independent Group considered that the amendment should be supported and that something needed to be done, referring to the impact on families of being put into temporary accommodation away from their family, friends and social networks, as well as work, nursery, school, etc. It was important to be careful on this but to make a commitment.

A debate ensued during which the following comments were made: the perception that the Council owns hundreds of council houses, but it actually only owned three; the increase in the number of homeless families in temporary accommodation (currently 96); the need for the Council to 'do something', particularly considering the level of reserves; and the poor quality of temporary accommodation being offered. Members were reminded that it was Council tenants that had voted to transfer to a housing association.

The seconder of the amendment (who had reserved the right to speak) spoke about the projected savings of £18.5k when the first property had been purchased by the Council, and considered that more savings could be achieved if more properties were purchased, and that management of the houses would not cost 'an arm and a leg'. Homelessness was one of the worst things to affect residents, and the Council should take action.

The mover of the original motion did not wish to speak on this.

In accordance with SI 2014 No. 165, a recorded vote was taken on the amendment and voting was as follows:

For: Councillors Bonney, Darby, Fleming, Garrad, Hall, Harrison, Henderson, Truelove and Whelan. Total equals 9

Against: Councillors Aldridge, Beart, Bobbin, Andy Booth, Tina Booth, Bowen, Bowles, Clark, Conway, Cosgrove, Dendor, Dewar-Whalley, Gent, Hampshire, Horton, Hunt,

Ingham, Ingleton, Kay, Koffie-Williams, Lewin, Marchington, Mulhern, Prescott, Pugh, Samuel, Simmons, Walker, Whiting, Wilcox and Wright. Total equals 31
Abstain: Councillors Baldock and Crowther. Total equals 2

Amendment No. 8

Councillor Mike Henderson proposed, and Councillor Monique Bonney seconded, 'that the budget for tourism proposed at present in the 2016/17 budget is £14,309 (net of salaries/on costs). Officers already achieve a great deal with this very modest sum. This relates to a total value of tourism to the Borough (most recent estimate from 2012) of £194,131,000. This is made up of almost 5.5 million visits – day and staying visits. Employment of people serving this tourism business, it is estimated, represents 7% of total Swale employment. There are for sure opportunities to expand this important economic value to the Borough by researching opportunities and implementing those which appear to have potential. We propose that the budget is increased to £40,000 in 2016/17, to assist in the economic regeneration of Swale across the whole Borough. To retain a balanced budget it is proposed that the increase of £25,691 is met from the regeneration reserve.'

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration spoke against the amendment. He did not disagree that more could be done, but there was no precise correlation between increased funding and improved outcomes.

The Leader of the UKIP Group referred to the recent Scrutiny Committee meeting where it had been shown how much could be done with a modest budget. He considered it hard to quibble about the amount proposed when there was such a large underspend.

The Leader of the Labour Group agreed that more should be spent on tourism. He asked, however, if it was a one-off increase or year-on-year?

A debate ensued during which the following comments were made: more money was needed but this should be looked at properly; that Members should await the outcome of the Scrutiny review; that there was already the option available to make a bid to the Regeneration Fund for additional funding; and an acknowledgement at how good the officers in the team were.

The seconder of the amendment (who had reserved the right to speak) advised that the amendment was a one-off increase, but if successful it could be looked at for future years. More money was needed to enable the Council to compete with neighbouring areas, and a clear strategy to promote tourism across all areas of the Borough was required to drive more business.

The mover of the original motion did not wish to speak on this item.

During the discussion on this item, as 10pm was approaching, Members agreed to extend the duration of the meeting by thirty minutes.

In accordance with SI 2014 No. 165, a recorded vote was taken on the amendment and voting was as follows:

For: Councillors Baldock, Bonney, Crowther, Darby, Fleming, Garrad, Hall, Harrison, Henderson, Truelove and Whelan. Total equals 11

Against: Councillors Aldridge, Beart, Bobbin, Andy Booth, Tina Booth, Bowen, Bowles, Clark, Conway, Cosgrove, Dendor, Dewar-Whalley, Gent, Hampshire, Horton, Hunt, Ingham, Ingleton, Kay, Koffie-Williams, Lewin, Marchington, Mulhern, Pugh, Samuel, Simmons, Walker, Whiting, Wilcox and Wright. Total equals 30

Abstain: 0

Amendment No.9

Councillor Mike Henderson proposed, and Councillor Monique Bonney seconded, that 'it is not possible from the budget papers to identify the sum budgeted for economic development into general expenditure and salaries and on-costs. However it is clear that it is a modest sum. Economic development has always been a vital part of the Council's work and will become even more important as the Council's funding becomes ever more dependant on business rates. Officers in the department achieve a great deal already to stimulate Swale's economy and could undoubtedly achieve much more with additional resources. We therefore propose that the economic development budget be increased by £40,000 to allow research into potential projects and then to implement action where appropriate in innovative ways. Effectiveness of financial results should be measured with a view to ensuring that there is a positive payback. To ensure a balanced budget it is proposed that the increase of £40,000 is met from the regeneration reserve'.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration referred to page 56 of the Budget Book for the expenditure information, and referred to case studies of high quality small businesses; that Swale had the most take up of the TIGER Fund; and there was no need to increase the base budget as Officers could apply for funding from the Regeneration Fund.

The Leader of the UKIP Group advised that he could see what the amendment was 'getting at' and considered there should be an opportunity outside of the meeting to look at ways Members can be involved to work together to encourage businesses.

The Leader of the Labour Group considered that more support should be given for micro-businesses by having hubs, and therefore he supported the amendment.

A debate ensued during which the following comments were made: there was already flexibility to use the Regeneration Fund; no examples had been given of schemes that had been refused; and Members should come forward with ideas as economic development meant more people in work and more business rates being paid.

The seconder of the amendment (who had reserved the right to speak) considered that regeneration needed to be spread more widely across the Borough, it was not just a large project in Sittingbourne, and that the regeneration reserve must be used for the right things. The Budget Book did not separate culture and economic development expenditure; the TIGER Fund was for individual businesses; and that more could be done to create a foundation and networking opportunities.

The mover of the original motion did not wish to speak on this item.

In accordance with SI 2014 No. 165, a recorded vote was taken on the amendment and voting was as follows:

For: Councillors Baldock, Bonney, Crowther, Darby, Fleming, Garrad, Hall, Harrison, Henderson, Truelove and Whelan. Total equals 11

Against: Councillors Aldridge, Beart, Bobbin, Andy Booth, Tina Booth, Bowen, Bowles, Clark, Conway, Cosgrove, Dendor, Dewar-Whalley, Gent, Hampshire, Horton, Hunt, Ingham, Ingleton, Kay, Koffie-Williams, Lewin, Marchington, Mulhern, Prescott, Pugh, Samuel, Simmons, Walker, Whiting, Wilcox and Wright. Total equals 31

Abstain: 0

After discussing the amendments, debate returned to the substantive motion.

The Leader of the UKIP Group considered that the budget was stable, not very dramatic, and that the Council could do more.

The Leader of the Independent Group expressed disappointment that none of the amendments had been accepted, and he looked forward to the meeting on 21 April 2016 that the Cabinet Member had announced earlier in the meeting.

A debate ensued during which the following comments were made: the fact that Swale had not increased its Council Tax for the previous five years but others such as the Kent County Council and the Police had; that Swale had the second lowest Council Tax in Kent; radical changes were ahead as the Council needed to become self-financing by 2020; thanks expressed to the Cabinet Member for Finance and Officers; was the Council making the best use of digital technology?; concerns that parking wardens could not do their job properly due to lack of signage or yellow lines; whether Members might be able to fund litterbins in the same way as they had for dog fouling posters?; congratulations to all involved in Housing Enforcers; congratulations to the Cabinet Member for Finance in his initiative to have a meeting on the budget on 21 April 2016; and whether any assurance could be given that any further savings required would not damage the quality or provision of services?

The Leader, as seconder of the original motion (who had reserved his right to speak), advised that he was proud in what the Council had achieved over the last five years; Swale had the fastest growing economic sector in Kent, the largest employment park, a six year freeze on Council Tax, and still public satisfaction statistics 'held up'. Whilst the budget was not exciting, the Council was continuing to provide good services at an affordable level. Looking ahead, the most substantial changes to local government since 1973 would take place and the future would be 'bumpy'.

The Cabinet Member for Finance summed up by saying that all questions would be responded to in writing. He looked forward to meeting with all Members on 21 April 2016, and said it had been interesting listening to the debate.

During debate on this topic, Members agreed to suspend Standing Orders in order that full Council could complete its business.

In accordance with SI 2014 No. 165, a recorded vote was taken and voting was as follows:

For: Councillors Aldridge, Beart, Bobbin, Andy Booth, Tina Booth, Bowen, Bowles, Clark, Conway, Cosgrove, Dendor, Dewar-Whalley, Gent, Hall, Hampshire, Horton, Hunt, Ingham, Ingleton, Kay, Koffie-Williams, Lewin, Marchington, Mulhern, Prescott, Pugh, Samuel, Simmons, Walker, Whiting, Wilcox and Wright. Total equals 32

Against: Councillors Baldock, Bonney, Crowther, Darby, Garrad, Harrison, Henderson, Truelove and Whelan. Total equals 9

Abstain: Councillor Fleming. Total equals 1.

Resolved:

(1) That Members note the Head of Finance's opinion on the robustness of the budget estimates and the adequacy of reserves.

(2) That Minute No. 471/02/16 of the Cabinet held on 3 February 2016 on the report on the Medium Term Financial Plan and the 2016/17 Revenue and Capital Budgets be approved.

(3) That the resolutions contained in Appendix I to the report be approved.

508 ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING

The Mayor adjourned the meeting for 10 minutes. Members were reminded to cast their votes for the Deputy Mayor.

509 TREASURY STRATEGY 2016/17

The Cabinet Member for Finance proposed the recommendations in the report. This was seconded and agreed.

Resolved:

(1) That the Treasury Strategy 2016/17 and the Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators be approved.

510 PAY POLICY STATEMENT

The Cabinet Member for Finance advised that the Pay Policy Statement had been updated and proposed the recommendations in the report. This was seconded.

The Leader of the UKIP Group advised that he did not agree with the Reward Strategy, he considered that additional time off should be given for trade union activities, and asked that this be looked at in the future.

The Cabinet Member responded by saying that the reward strategy was the same as before, and that no requests had been received from trade union representatives for more time for trade union activities.

Resolved:

(1) That the proposed Pay Policy Statement be agreed for publication on the Council's website.

(2) That the information within the Pay Policy Statement be updated with actual year-end figures before final publication.

511 CHANGES TO POLLING ARRANGEMENTS 2016

The Leader introduced the report which set out some suggested changes to arrangements, and advised that there would be a polling district review later in the year. The Leader proposed, and the Deputy Leader seconded, the recommendations within the report. Members gave their views on the suggested arrangements and one questioned whether a public house was a suitable location for a polling station? The Leader confirmed that the polling stations would be monitored.

Resolved:

(1) That the polling place for voters in the Tunstall Urban Parish polling district (in Woodstock Ward) be extended to include the Tunstall Rural Parish polling district (in West Downs Ward), to enable voters in both wards of Tunstall Parish to vote at Tunstall Memorial Village Hall.

(2) That Council notes that the Returning Officer intends to locate the polling station for voters in the Roman West polling district of Roman Ward at the Netchurch, East Street, Sittingbourne, which is within the current polling place.

(3) That Council notes that the Returning Officer intends to locate the polling station for electors in the Ospringe polling district of the East Downs' Ward at the Alma Public House, Painters Forstal, which is within the current polling place.

(4) That Council notes that the Returning Officer intends to locate the polling station for electors in the Meads Ward at the Meads Community Centre, Emerald Crescent, Sittingbourne which is within the current polling place.

512 TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS FOR 2016/17

The Leader proposed, and the Deputy Leader seconded, the recommendation in the report which set out a draft programme of meetings for 2016/17.

In response to a question, the Leader advised that additional Cabinet meetings could be scheduled if there was urgent business to consider.

Resolved:

(1) That the programme of meetings set out in Appendix I of the report be agreed.

513 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPROVAL

The Council was asked to note the recommendations, as separate reports on the items had been considered earlier in the meeting.

Resolved:

(1) That Minute Nos. 471 and 472 of the Cabinet Meeting held on 3 February 2016 be noted.

514 ELECTION OF MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR 2016/17

The Mayor advised that one nomination had been received for Mayor, namely Councillor Lesley Ingham, which had been proposed by Councillor Ben Stokes and seconded by Councillor Sue Gent.

The Mayor advised that two nominations had been received for Deputy Mayor. Councillor Prescott had been proposed by Councillor Andy Booth and seconded by Councillor Lesley Ingham; and Councillor June Garrad had been proposed by Councillor Mike Baldock and seconded by Councillor Mick Galvin. The Mayor reported that 29 votes had been cast in favour of Councillor Prescott and 10 votes cast in favour of Councillor June Garrad.

Resolved:

(1) That the Mayor elect for the civic year 2016/17 is Councillor Lesley Ingham.

(2) That the Deputy Mayor elect for the civic year 2016/17 is Councillor Prescott.

Chairman

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