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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, 29 June 2016 from 7.00pm - 8.28 pm.

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

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Derek Johnson, Abdool Kara, Jo Millard, Alice Oxley, Donna Price, Mark Radford, Gary Rowland and Nick Vickers.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Andy Booth, Tina Booth, Richard Darby, June Garrad, Gerry Lewin, Prescott (Deputy Mayor) and Ted Wilcox.

### 743 PRAYERS

The Mayor's Chaplain said Prayers.

### 744 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

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

### 745 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Annual Council held on 17 May 2016 (Minute Nos. 662 – 669) and 18 May 2016 (Minute Nos. 670 – 678) were signed as a correct record.

### 746 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

### 747 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor advised Members that the Reverend Canon Frank Moran recently celebrated his 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ordination which was celebrated with a special Mass and reception on Sunday 19 June. Members applauded his achievement.

The Mayor announced that Simon Dean, the Chief Executive Officer of Challenger Troup CIC, an organisation strongly supported in Swale, received the OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

**748 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC**

The Mayor advised that one question had been received by a member of the public, but since he was unable to be present at the meeting, the response had been sent to him. A copy of the question and response is attached as Appendix I.

**749 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS**

The Mayor advised that seven questions had been submitted by Members, the answers to which had been provided and attached as Appendix II. 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. There was a change in order of the questions as the Cabinet Member responding to question two was delayed.

**Question One**

Councillor Roger Truelove thanked the Cabinet Member for his response but expressed his frustration at further delays in the process.

**Question Three**

Councillor Cameron Beart thanked the Cabinet Member for his response and asked what the time frame for implementing the changes would be? The Cabinet Member thanked Councillor Beart for highlighting the inequality and advised that Officers were working through the process of submitting a Traffic Regulation Order, would carry out a consultation and arrange for new signage so that the changes were clear to the public, and the likely timescale was three to four months.

**Question Four**

Councillor Harrison highlighted a previous occasion when Kent Highway Services (KHS) had advised that the weeds had been cleared when they had not been, and provided a photograph that showed the work had not been carried out again. The Cabinet Member agreed that it appeared that only part of the area had been sprayed, and advised that KHS would be asked to return to spray the weeds that had not been sprayed previously.

**Question Five**

Councillor Nicholas Hampshire thanked the Cabinet Member for his response and asked if there was an update on the current levels of referrals achieved? The Cabinet Member advised that, through the hard work of the Safeguarding Team, the levels of referrals were on an upward trend from 58 in the last quarter, to 69 in the current quarter.

**Question Six**

Councillor Ghlin Whelan highlighted the shortage of available housing, suggested further house purchases were necessary, and asked what more was being done to reduce the homelessness figure? The Cabinet Member advised that Officers would

look more innovatively at options, and consider purchasing further temporary accommodation.

### **Question Seven**

Councillor Ghlin Whelan asked when there would be some activity? The Cabinet Member responded that the money would be released in accordance with the decision's preconditions, i.e. when the trust provided a verified Business Plan, and raised its portion of the funding.

### **Question Two**

Councillor Roger Truelove asked the Cabinet Member to advise the Spirit of Sittingbourne to remove the advertisement boards and only display advertisements when there was tangible progress. In response, the Cabinet Member said that the Spirit of Sittingbourne were entitled to erect or remove advertising boards, they were a good advert, and showed where development would take place. He also advised that there would be a major Board meeting next week, and he hoped to have the signs changed or even better, have equipment starting work on site.

## **750 LEADER'S STATEMENT**

The Leader presented his statement which focused on the implications for Swale of the outcome of the EU Referendum, and a devolution update. The Mayor invited Members to ask questions.

### **Outcome of the EU Referendum, implications for Swale**

The Leader of the UKIP Group asked the Leader to exert any influence to speed up Brexit (British Exit) to assist the economic markets.

The Leader of the Labour Group stressed the importance of remaining in a single market, reminded Members that Great Britain would still be subject to the European Court of Human Rights, and asked all Members to join him in the condemnation of racist, xenophobic, and hate crimes that had risen sharply since the EU Referendum.

The Leader of the Independent Group raised concern that too much time was being lost and priorities were not being considered. He did not support a second referendum as it would not achieve a high quality trade deal and control of immigration.

Other Members endorsed the comments of the Leader of the Labour Group in condemning the rise in threats and violence against all people of all nationalities, colour, faith, background and status.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration stated that Swale provided a range of industries and skills and so was ideally placed for continuing to export into Europe and further afield, whatever the economic future.

In response to questions and comments from Members, the Leader made the following points:

- it was too early for a General Election, and consideration should be given to the economy;
- the Conservative Party would elect a perfectly adequate replacement as Prime Minister;
- there were arguments both for leaving and remaining within the EU;
- condemned hate crime; and
- agreed that Swale was well placed geographically to take advantage of opportunities for exporting into Europe and referred to the skills required.

The Leader advised Members that he and others would be attending the Local Government Association Conference next week, and he highlighted the efficiency, high quality services, and savings made by Local Government Authorities.

### **Devolution Update**

The Leader of the UKIP Group raised the issue of infrastructure and asked whether funding was still available for the M2 Junction 5 Stockbury Roundabout proposal, and whether a 2019 start date was still a realistic timescale? In response, the Leader advised that he hoped to have an update by the next Council meeting, and the public consultation may start within the next four weeks.

The Leaders of the Labour Group and the Independent Group both raised doubts over the devolution materialising, and a Member asked the Leader what the timescale was? The Leader stated that it was still feasible to be in time for the elections in May 2019.

### **751 PRESENTATION OF PETITION FROM FAVERSHAM AND VILLAGES REFUGEE SOLIDARITY GROUP**

The Mayor invited Mr Gregg Gibbons from the Faversham and Villages Refugee Solidarity Group to speak.

Mr Gibbons gave a history of the Group and thanked the Leader for meeting with representatives from the Group recently. He suggested that landlords could be recruited to house refugees by advertising in Inside Swale, and referred to other authorities using Home Office funds to house refugees in private accommodation.

The Director of Corporate Services explained that under the Council's Petitions Policy, the petition would not be debated at Council as the number of signatures was below the 1,500 threshold required. He advised that the most appropriate route was for the Leader to refer the petition to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Well-Being to coordinate a response.

The Leader of the Labour Group was disappointed that the press were not in attendance, and the Leader agreed to issue a press release.

The Leader of the Independent Group stated that he hoped the number of signatures on the petition was extended so that the petition could be debated properly.

**752 AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16**

The Mayor invited the Chairman of the Audit Committee to present the Audit Committee Annual report.

The Chairman of the Audit Committee presented the report and praised the high quality Audit service. He thanked Officers, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance, Members of the Audit Committee, and Grant Thornton as the external auditors. He was pleased to advise that Swale had no poor or weak opinions on Internal Audit reports for 2015/16.

***Resolved:***

***(i) That the report be noted.***

**753 POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16**

The Chairman of the Policy Development and Review Committee introduced the report. He thanked the Vice-Chairman, Members of the Committee, Cabinet Members and officers, and paid particular thanks to Democratic Services staff and the Policy and Performance Officer, Bob Pullen. He welcomed all Members to attend future meetings.

The Leader of the UKIP Group praised the Committee for working so well, and commented on its role in supporting the development of junior members of staff submitting reports.

***Resolved:***

***(i) That the report be noted.***

**754 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16**

The Mayor invited the Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee to introduce the report in the Chairman's absence.

On behalf of the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, the Vice-Chairman thanked Committee Members, Cabinet Members, officers, invited guests and outside body representatives, and paid particular thanks to the Vice-Chairman, the Policy and Performance Manager, and the Policy and Performance Officer.

The Vice-Chairman outlined some of the work covered over the previous municipal year, and invited all Members to attend future meetings or contribute to future reviews.

The Leader of the UKIP Group suggested that the Scrutiny Committee should be chaired by the opposition, and highlighted the improved consultation which followed the CCTV Call-in.

The Leader of the Independent Group asked if Deputy Cabinet Members could sit on the Scrutiny Committee? In response, the Chief Executive advised that under the Local Government Act 2000, Deputy Cabinet Members did not hold executive powers and so were allowed to sit on the Scrutiny Committee. The Leader added that there were no Deputy Cabinet Members on the Scrutiny Committee, only on the Policy Development and Review Committee.

**Resolved:**

- (i) ***That the report be noted.***

**755 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPROVAL**

Council was asked to note the recommendation from the Audit Committee on 8 June 2016 (Minute No. 722) which had been the subject of a report considered and agreed by Council earlier in the meeting.

**Resolved:**

- (i) ***That the recommendation in Minute No. 722 be noted.***

Chairman

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