
COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 21 September 2016 from 7.00 pm - 8.06 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Lesley Ingham (Mayor), Mike Baldock, Cameron Beart, Bobbin, Monique Bonney, Andy Booth, Tina Booth, Bowles, Roger Clark, 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, Ken Ingleton, Nigel Kay, Samuel Koffie-Williams, Gerry Lewin, Peter Marchington, Bryan Mulhern, Padmini Nissanga, Prescott (Deputy Mayor), George Samuel, David Simmons, Ben Stokes, Roger Truelove, Anita Walker, Ghlin Whelan, Mike Whiting, Ted Wilcox and John Wright.

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

APOLOGIES: Councillors Lloyd Bowen, Katy Coleman, Derek Conway, Richard Darby, June Garrad and Ken Pugh.

886 PRAYERS

The Mayor's Chaplain said Prayers.

887 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Mayor outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

888 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 July 2016 (Minute Nos. 808 – 818) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record, subject to an amendment to reflect that Councillor Anita Walker was present at the meeting.

889 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Bryan Mulhern declared a disclosable non-pecuniary interest as he was employed by Shepherd Neame, but confirmed that he was not involved in any way with the Hop Festival (which was an item within the Leader's Statement).

In answering questions in Minute No. 892, Councillor Gerry Lewin declared disclosable non-pecuniary interests as he was Chairman of a charity that sought to maintain a 700-year old building in Upchurch, and was a lifelong member of Court Hall, Sittingbourne.

890 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor advised of the success of the Sheppey Summer Carnival, where they had hosted the Mayor of Bromley, the Deputy Mayor from Neuwied, Germany (which was twinned with Bromley) and their carnival court, who had presented her with a carnival medallion.

The Mayor had opened the new development centre at Aesica Pharmaceuticals in Queenborough, which would bring more jobs to the area.

The Mayor congratulated Councillor Samuel Koffie-Williams, who had been awarded the title of Freeman of the City of London, which all Members applauded.

The Mayor advised that the Oasis Academy's Dementia Cafe would be hosting a delegation of Chinese doctors at their Dementia Cafe on Friday, which was a great coup for the Borough and for the Academy.

891 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC

The Mayor advised that no questions had been received from members of the public.

892 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS

The Mayor advised that five questions had been submitted by Members, the answers to which had been provided and are attached as Appendix II. The Mayor reminded Members that there was a three minute time limit for supplementary questions and their answers, and invited relevant Members to ask a supplementary question.

Question One

Councillor Mike Baldock thanked the Cabinet Member for his answer, and expressed disappointment that he appeared to have little interest in heritage. He asked whether the Cabinet Member realised that a good heritage strategy would help to promote the Borough, boost visitors and provide jobs? Had he seen Dover's heritage strategy, and would he reconsider producing a strategy for Swale?

The Cabinet Member for Planning responded by saying that he disagreed that he was not interested. After declaring interests, he advised that there were many heritage associations/trusts in the Borough, such as the Museums Group, which Swale provided support to. He reminded Members that there was a heritage grant available that Members could apply to, and to-date 10 local groups had applied for funding.

Question Two

Councillor Roger Truelove advised that he was disappointed with the answer and asked if the Leader would consider the residents and be more flexible. Did he really expect staff to walk from Cockleshell Walk, Sittingbourne, which would be developed in the future. He asked the Cabinet Member, if the Council was minded

to acquire land near to the Council Offices and it was developed in some way, would he consider including staff parking, which would delight local people and staff?

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance agreed to the talk to the Member outside of the meeting regarding the land in question.

Question Three

Councillor Mark Ellen thanked the Cabinet Member for his response and asked whether the mountain bike trail would be included within the consultation and asked what other bodies would be approached for funding, and whether the Council would consider financing improvements?

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs advised that he was delighted with the increase in use and acknowledged that the owner had put a lot of effort into making improvements. He welcomed suggestions for funding, and reminded Members about the funding opportunities via their Localism Grants.

Question Four

Councillor John Wright thanked the Leader for his response and asked: if the Leader and Officers could investigate whether other sites had been indicated and given to the occupants? And if the Leader would keep track of costs that would be/had been incurred as a result of the judge's decision? He was concerned that the decision gave residents no confidence in the planning system and said that the Council should appeal the decision.

The Leader advised that he shared the Member's frustration with the system that allowed one person (the judge) to overrule the Planning Committee's decision, which complied with planning rules, and referred to a meeting that was taking place the following week to discuss this further.

Question Five

Councillor Cameron Beart thanked the Cabinet Member for his response, and advised that the person who had brought the issue to his attention was present in the public gallery. He asked whether the Cabinet Member would consider any other parking initiatives, in particular those that would support the Isle of Sheppey tourist industry?

The Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities responded by saying he was aware that the resident was present and she was delighted that one person could make a difference. He advised that he was working on creative opportunities, and as the Member had asked about the Isle of Sheppey, he advised that his intention was for the car parks known as Shingle Bank and Shellness to become free of charge, with the intention of encouraging more visitors/tourism.

893 MOTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS

Councillor Mike Baldock proposed, and Councillor Monique Bonney seconded, the following Motions.

1) This Council agrees that all Parish Councils that register to speak on a Planning Application, regardless of whether the site in question falls within their boundary or not.

2) This Council agrees that any organisation that registers to speak on a Planning Application be allowed to speak, and not be counted as a resident's spokesman – i.e. that residents are still allowed to speak on the application as well.

The Mayor advised that in accordance with Procedure Rule No. 15, as the subject of the Motions fell within the remit of another committee, they would be referred without discussion to the General Purposes Committee, which would be meeting at 5pm on 29 September 2016. The Committee would report back to the full Council on 19 October 2016.

894 LEADER'S STATEMENT

The Leader presented his Statement, which focused on the Thames Estuary Commission; Christmas 'Special' Park and Ride; Faversham Hop Festival and Aspire Free School.

Thames Estuary Commission

The Leader of the UKIP Group asked to what extent would future policies reflect new development, rather than an out-of-date policy? The Leader responded by saying that he would be mindful of this and would continue to represent the Borough, and clarified that the Commission did not replace the Thames Gateway Partnership or the Strategic Group. The Government had appointed a Cabinet Member for the Thames Gateway.

The Leader of the Labour Group considered it was an exciting opportunity to be part of the Commission, and asked the Leader if he agreed if it was important to get investment for infrastructure in Swale? The Leader agreed, and referred to the additional funds that could be borrowed to take advantage of any offers that became available.

The Leader of the Independent Group advised that the Thames Gateway boundary stopped at Teynham, and asked if that was the same for the Commission? He also asked if the submission could be made available to all Members? He referred to the debate at the last Swale Joint Transportation Board and suggested that if funding was available for infrastructure, the bulk should be spent on road improvements rather than the rail network.

The Leader confirmed that the Commission's boundary finished at Thanet, and so included Canterbury too. In terms of infrastructure improvements, he did not agree that there was an adequate rail system, referring to the capacity for freight and restrictions at the Medway Tunnel, and the reduction in rail service for residents in

some areas such as Teynham, Selling and Newington. There was a lot that could be done and the Council must grasp the nettle and invest for future growth.

A Member referred to discussion the Swale Joint Transportation Board regarding rail freight, and asked if it had been possible for an additional submission to be made regarding this? The Leader advised that there had been a good debate on this. Due to the volume of submissions it would not be possible to put in additional representations, however, there would be further opportunities to input and he would continue to make those points known. He also undertook to find out if it was possible for a copy of the submission to be provided to all Members, as asked for by the Leader of the Independent Group.

Christmas 'Special' Park and Ride

The Leader of the UKIP Group congratulated the Leader on this initiative, and asked where the car parks would be located? The Leader advised that the detail would be available soon, and confirmed that three sites had been confirmed in the last few days. He gave credit to the Cabinet Member for Families and Safer Communities, and his Deputy, for their work on this.

The Leader of the Labour Group also welcomed this initiative, as did his Group. He asked if there would be an opportunity for the Scrutiny Committee to look at how well this had worked in the new year? The Leader advised that there would be procedures in place to monitor this, after a fair trial, and looked forward to a proper debate to see how well this had worked and if improvements could be made for future years. It was not for him as Leader to advise the Scrutiny Committee what to look at.

The Leader of the Independent Group also welcomed this idea, and asked why the service would not operate on Christmas Eve? The Leader advised that this had been discussed, but it was thought that providing the service on Christmas Eve would not generate any more business for traders.

In response to another question from a Member regarding why the location of the car parks was being kept secret, the Leader advised that information would be released when all sites were approved.

Faversham Hop Festival

The Leader of the UKIP Group referred to the coverage of the Hop Festival and asked the Leader if he would be attending the Medieval Mops Festival in Sittingbourne, and whether it would be possible for this to receive £4000 of funding next year in the same way that the Hop Festival had? The Leader responded by saying that he always enjoyed the Hop Festival, which attracted visitors from across the country and overseas, as well as those who lived locally. If he had caught up with his ward work, he would be attending the Mops Festival in Sittingbourne.

The Leader of the Labour Group congratulated all involved.

The Leader of the Independent Group commented on the need to monitor fringe activities, and said that the Festival brought a lot of tourism to Faversham. It was

important to acknowledge that it was not the Shepherd Neame Hop Festival; there were many establishments in Faversham who benefited from the Festival and who should be persuaded to sponsor and support it. The Leader responded by saying that activities would continue to be monitored, drawing attention to the fact that zero arrests had been made, and that he would be attending the de-brief.

The Mayor advised that it had been a great day, and that she would also be attending the Mops Festival.

Aspire Free School

The Leader of the UKIP Group congratulated Councillor Sarah Aldridge and the team for their hard work which had led to the Department for Education approving their bid for the Aspire Free School, and as Ward Member and County Member he hoped to be invited to the school once it was opened.

The Leader of the Labour Group added his congratulations and praised them for their determination and acumen which had led to a facility being provided for children with autistic needs. Whilst he may not support the ideology of free schools, without this initiative there would be a gap and there was a great need for this facility in Swale and Medway.

The Leader of the Independent Group also added his congratulations, referring to the positive impact it would have on children and parents, and asked whether the new school would be in contact with Meadowfields School?

The Leader responded by saying that he believed in choice, and had done all he could to support Councillor Sarah Aldridge with this project. As Chairman of the Kent County Council's (KCC's) Regulation Committee, he referred to the savings that would be made in terms of school travel, and the greater choice that would be available to children and parents.

Other Members added their congratulations on the news that the bid for the School had been approved.

In response to a question regarding the provision of a grammar school on the Isle of Sheppey, the Leader advised that he had long fought for fair treatment for grammar schools in Kent and he supported grammar schools wherever there was a need and an intake, including on the Isle of Sheppey. In response to a suggestion that KCC might be able to subsidise transport for attendance at grammar schools for children from lower income families (from the savings made in transport costs for children who would now be attending the Aspire School), the Leader advised that he had discussed this with the Leader of KCC.

Councillor Sarah Aldridge thanked Members for their support and kind words. She advised that this had been achieved through sheer determination, and that it was important for there to be a choice for children on the autism spectrum. During the discussion it was clarified that Meadowfields School was a different category of school to the Aspire Free School.

During the discussion, the Leader undertook to speak to a Member about an individual case regarding transport costs that had been brought to his attention.

A Member suggested that the Leader could invite Councillor Sarah Aldridge to give a seminar on the steps that had been taken to set up the new school, and asked the Leader if he would consider bringing forward other initiatives to generate improvements in life chances for young people across the Borough? The Leader responded by saying he would be happy to invite Councillor Sarah Aldridge to do this, and advised that he would be attending a multi-agency meeting the following week to discuss other initiatives to improve life chances.

At the end of the discussion, the Mayor added her congratulations to Councillor Sarah Aldridge and Donna Smith-Emes on this achievement.

Chairman

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