

# Public Document Pack

---

## COUNCIL

---

**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 25 January 2017 from 7.00 - 9.34 pm.

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

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

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Roger Clark, Derek Conway, Richard Darby, Mark Ellen, June Garrad, Bryan Mulhern and Anita Walker.

### 1126 PRAYERS

The Mayor's Chaplain said Prayers.

### 1127 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Mayor outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

### 1128 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 December 2016 (Minute Nos. 1067 – 1074) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 1129 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

### 1130 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor had enjoyed the annual 'Companionship at Christmas' at Phoenix House, Sittingbourne on Boxing Day, and advised that the Deputy Mayor had also attended the event on Christmas Day. She praised the volunteers that assisted with the worthwhile event.

The Mayor was honoured to have presented the French Legion d'honneur medal to 93 year old D-Day Veteran Ken Drury, formerly of Bomber Command.

The Mayor confirmed with Members that formal invitations to her Civic Dinner & Dance “The Sparkle Ball” on Saturday 11 March 2017 had been sent out, and encouraged all to attend.

#### **1131 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC**

The Mayor advised that six questions had been submitted by members of the public, the answers to which have been provided and attached as Appendix I to these minutes. The Mayor invited the members of the public to read their questions and ask a supplementary question.

##### **Question one**

Kane Blackwell read his question and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Well-Being read his response. In his supplementary question, Mr Blackwell asked that Swale Borough Council (SBC) promoted existing mental health centres and encouraged central government to do more to address the lack of mental health support, particularly in Swale.

In response, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Well-Being advised that as the Chairman of the Local Children’s Partnership Group (LCPG), he had brought these issues to the attention of the agencies and organisations on the LCPG, and was currently organising a joint forum to consider the issues further. He added that Kent County Council were funding a two-year pilot scheme in Swale for those with mental health issues, called Head Start.

##### **Question two**

Graham Smith read his question and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance read his response. In his supplementary question, Mr Smith asked why the borrowing of funds was not being spent on affordable housing in Swale? In response, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance advised that funds would be invested to raise income, in order to maintain services.

##### **Question three**

Vic Wintergreen read his question and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance read his response. In his supplementary question, Mr Wintergreen questioned the viability of the cinema chain, and asked why prospective tenants would wish to lease any of the new proposed properties, when there were already many vacant properties in Sittingbourne Town Centre? In response, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance said that the cinema operator was an up-and-coming company, and highlighted their success in Walsall, Birmingham. He added that he believed the new scheme would benefit the High Street, and encourage visits to the Town Centre.

##### **Question four**

Paul Steele read his question and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration read his response. In his supplementary question, Mr Steele asked whether SBC had audited the market research carried out by The Light Cinema, and was it available

to see? In response, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration advised that some of the research was commercially sensitive, but that box office receipts had increased year-on-year. The Cabinet Member for Regeneration gave examples of how the cinema experience had positively changed.

**Question five**

Helen Martins acknowledged the response to her question, and had no supplementary question.

**Question six**

Simon Clark read his question and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance read his response. In his supplementary question, Mr Clark stated that Turnberry Real Estate Ltd were not qualified to give financial advice, and sought assurance that qualified financial advice would be given. In response, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance said he was content with the advice from Turnberry Real Estate Ltd, and drew attention to the current good financial position that SBC were in, due to being well-managed financially. He added that services currently provided by the Council in the future would be badly affected without investment to generate additional income.

**1132 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS**

The Mayor advised that seven questions had been submitted to Members, the answer to which had been provided and are attached as Appendix II to these Minutes.

**Question one**

Councillor James Hunt thanked the Cabinet Member for his response, and asked the Cabinet Member whether he agreed that highway safety was a priority, especially near schools, and would Planning Services consider suggesting a 20mph zone when discussing applications with developers and the highway authority? In response, the Cabinet Member for Planning said that, whilst he did not agree with a blanket 20mph zone, specific areas where it would benefit could be considered.

**Question two**

Councillor Mike Baldock thanked the Cabinet Member for his response, and asked if a larger budget for yellow lines was necessary in the future? In response, the Cabinet Member said that the budget for yellow lining was used in priority areas for safety reasons, such as corners. It was difficult to predict how much budget would be required, in any given year, but additional money had been made available when required.

**Question three**

Councillor Roger Truelove referred to his response from the Cabinet Member, which advised that 25% was a realistically achievable target for affordable housing. He sought clarity on how the proposed 700 homes development at Borden was due

to provide 12% affordable housing, which the developer informed was 20% more than the 10% required by SBC? In response, the Cabinet Member advised that 25% target was across the whole Borough, and 10% was the specific target for the proposed development at Borden.

#### **Question four**

Councillor Truelove referred to his response from the Leader, and asked why he, members of the public and staff were not interviewed in the review? In response, the Leader advised that the Complaints Policy was in place, and that the Statutory Officers of the Council should not be overruled when they had acted within the terms of the Local Government Act.

#### **Question five**

Councillor Cameron Beart thanked the Cabinet Member for his response, and asked if the Council would consider employing an Events Officer or Team? In response, the Leader said if this was considered in next year's budget, it would lead to an equivalent loss of staff in other service areas due to tight financial resources.

#### **Question six**

Councillor Ghlin Whelan referred to the Leader's response, and asked if the Leader considered that the mental health needs of Swale's residents were being met, and whether residents would prefer investment in specialist support accommodation in Swale, rather than in the Regeneration? In response, the Leader reminded Members of the phasing out of Government grants, and the need to invest in Swale to provide income for the Council, and job opportunities for Swale residents. He said that suggestions for investment were welcome, but investing in specialist support accommodation would not provide a net income.

#### **Question seven**

Councillor Ghlin Whelan referred to the response of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, and asked what were the Council receiving in exchange for the car park land when the developers had already sold it on to a third party for housing, and was there an update and progress on the use of the car parks? In response, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration advised that 70% of retail spend by Sittingbourne residents was outside Sittingbourne. He added that the development deal was a quid pro quo, and the scheme would retain spend within Sittingbourne, create jobs, increase growth, and improve the standard of living.

### **1133 LEADER'S STATEMENT**

The Leader presented his Statement, which gave updates on the Spirit of Sittingbourne, Finance Update and Chief Executive and Management Team Arrangements.

#### **Spirit of Sittingbourne**

The Leader of the UKIP Group welcomed progress, but raised concern about the lack of housing element in the development, and the design features in the plans

submitted with the first planning application received for the scheme. In response, the Leader said he was confident that visible work would have started by the time of the next Council meeting in February 2017.

The Leader of the Labour Group raised concern that the Council were funding many elements of the project, and suggested that the loss of the Revenue Support Grant would be replaced by property rates. He asked the Leader what U+I were investing in the project? The Leader advised that U+I had already invested several million pounds in the project and would continue to do so, and SBC were buying assets to gain income in order to continue to provide essential services for the residents of Swale. He added that some information was commercially sensitive, but he would provide as much information as he could.

The Leader of the Independent Group drew attention to the second paragraph of the Leader's Statement and asked who would look at the risk level of investing in the cinema? The Leader referred the Leader of the Independent Group to Question 6 of the Public Questions, and advised that the Statutory Officers had been delegated to undertake further due diligence.

A Member sought clarity on the timing of funding for the highway works outside the railway station, asked whether there could be any alternative uses for the cinema building should it fail, and raised concern that Turnberry Real Estate were a property developer. She suggested an experienced team should be employed to monitor the scheme constantly. The Leader advised that a team would be put in place at the appropriate time. The Chief Executive added that about third of the SE LEP funding had already been claimed, and KCC had agreed to fund more than the £2.5m if it could be spent by the deadline. He referred to the report being presented to the Cabinet Meeting on 1 February 2017 – Sittingbourne Town Centre Regeneration Project – variations to the Development Agreement.

### **Finance Update**

The Leader of the UKIP Group shared the Leader's concern on central government's lack of understanding of the impact the changes to the New Homes Bonus and change in house building targets would have on the local community. The Leader highlighted that, whilst he did not agree with the way the National Planning Policy Framework operated, he preferred SBC made decisions on new development rather than the Planning Inspectorate, to give SBC greater control.

The Leader of the Labour Group highlighted that some services provided by county councils had also been affected by lack of central government funding, and suggested that there should be other ways of controlling finance without detriment to local government. The Leader agreed, and drew Members' attention to the recent announcement about a referendum to be held at Surrey County Council to increase Council Tax by 15%.

The Leader of the Independent Group identified that the decisions were being made by a Conservative-controlled Government, and asked the Leader what action he was taking on behalf of the electorate in Swale? The Leader advised that a strong message was being put to central government on a cross-party basis by the leadership of the Local Government Association.

A Member referred to funding of the Clinical Commissioners Group, and said that additional funding opportunities were available in cases of large housing developments, but never applied for as the process was too fragmented. She urged appropriate investment in health going forwards, which was already inadequate for existing residents. The Leader said that the health sector had their own budgetary methods, and all Members had the ability to attend the regular Health and Well Being Board meetings but had so far failed to do so.

### **Chief Executive and Management Team Arrangements**

The Mayor reminded Members that a report on the Interim Management Arrangements would be considered later in the meeting and specific questions may be better addressed at that time.

The Leaders of all political groups welcomed the news that Mr Vickers, the Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer, would be extending his working hours at SBC.

A Member praised the current Chief Executive, Mr Kara, and recognised his and all SBC staff's hard work, to which Members applauded.

The Leader highlighted the significant improvement in performance since Mr Kara's appointment, and the current strength of the team.

### **1134 TREASURY MANAGEMENT HALF YEAR REPORT 2016/17**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance introduced the report which outlined the treasury management transactions for 2016/17, and proposed the recommendation which was seconded.

***Resolved: That the performance information in the report be noted.***

### **1135 EXTERNAL AUDITOR APPOINTMENT**

The Chairman of the Audit Committee presented the report which outlined the proposals for appointing the Council's external auditor for 2018/19 and beyond, and highlighted the benefits of implementing the sector-led approach.

***Resolved:***

- (1) That the changes in the external audit appointment process following the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, and the options available to the council for the appointment of an external auditor for 2018/19 accounts and beyond be noted.***
- (2) That the preferred external audit procurement route via a sector- led body (PSAA Ltd) be agreed.***

### **1136 RESOLUTIONS FOR CALCULATING COUNCIL TAX**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance introduced the report which asked the Council to agree the Council Tax resolutions. The Leader seconded the proposal.

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

For: Councillors Sarah Aldridge, Mike Baldock, Cameron Beart, Bobbin, Monique Bonney, Andy Booth, Tina Booth, Lloyd Bowen, Bowles, Katy Coleman, Mike Cosgrove, Adrian Crowther, Mike Dendor, Duncan Dewar-Whalley, Paul Fleming, Mick Galvin, Sue Gent, James Hall, Nicholas Hampshire, Angela Harrison, Mike Henderson, Alan Horton, James Hunt, Lesley Ingham (Mayor), Ken Ingleton, Nigel Kay, Samuel Koffie-Williams, Gerry Lewin, Peter Marchington, Padmini Nissanga, Prescott (Deputy Mayor), Ken Pugh, George Samuel, David Simmons, Ben Stokes, Roger Truelove, Ghlin Whelan, Mike Whiting, Ted Wilcox and John Wright. Total equals 40  
Abstain: 0

#### **1137 MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2017-20 AND ROLE PROFILES FOR COUNCILLORS**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Performance introduced the report which sought Council's approval for the Member Training and Development Strategy and Evaluation Statement for 2017-20 and the Role Profiles for Councillors.

The Chairman of the Member Development Working Group (MDWG) seconded the proposal, and raised the issue of how to improve Members' attendance and participation in Member Development? He drew attention to the information in the Strategy and Member Profile documents, and welcomed Members' suggestions.

A discussion ensued which included the following suggestions:

- consideration of day time briefing sessions;
- use of technology such as Skype;
- recording of briefings to circulate to Members;
- shorter briefing sessions to be held during Full Council meetings;
- fuller explanation of briefing content;
- briefing sessions to be added to the meeting calendar-on line;
- changes in the days/times that sessions were held; and

- presenting skills training for some briefing session providers.

A Member suggested that attendance at sessions should be compulsory; whilst another said that non-attendance by Members showed a lack of commitment, and highlighted the benefits of contact with outside service providers. A Member reminded all Members that handouts from the briefing sessions were available from Democratic Services. Members praised the vital work of the MDWG.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) ***That the Member Training and Development Strategy and Evaluation Statement for 2017-20 be approved.***
- (2) ***That the Role Profiles for Councillors be approved.***

**1138 CHANGE TO POLLING PLACE - HALFWAY POLLING DISTRICTS**

The Leader introduced the report which sought Council's approval for changes to the polling place for the Halfway Polling Districts (East and West). The proposal was seconded.

A Member thanked the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager and the Electoral Services Officer for their efforts in researching alternative venues, but was disappointed that the venue had moved so far away from some constituents. He suggested that when KCC sold the former Halfway House School site, consideration may be given to retaining the School House as a community facility. Another Member suggested that an alternative venue be researched again as part of the 2018 Polling Station Review.

**Resolved:**

- (1) ***That the proposed change to the polling place for Halfway Polling Districts (East and West) be approved.***

**1139 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPROVAL**

Council was asked to note the recommendation from the Audit Committee meeting held on 30 November 2016 (Minute No. 1041), the Cabinet Meeting held on 7 December 2016 (Minute No. 1048), and the Appointments Sub-Committee held on 10 January 2017 (Minute No. 1099).

**Resolved:**

- (1) ***That the recommendations in Minute Nos. 1041, 1048 and 1099 be noted.***

**1140 INTERIM MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS**



The Leader introduced the report which proposed the appointment of key senior posts in the Council, further to the resignation of the current Chief Executive. He highlighted that the proposal brought stability in the organisation, and showed confidence in the current management team at a time of change in Local Government. The proposal was seconded.

The Leader of the UKIP Group fully supported replacing senior officers from within the organisation, but raised concern about the lack of a probation period or alternative back-up. The Leader advised that a probation period was not possible in law and that a Performance Review process was already in place that involved the Leader of the Opposition.

In response to a question from the Leader of the Labour Group, the process of appointing was clarified.

In response to a question from the Leader of the Independent Group, it was clarified that the Head of Finance would be increasing his days at SBC from 2.5 to 4 days a week, occasionally working 5 days. The Leader of the Independent Group added that he was concerned that the proposals may cause additional workload pressure further down the organisation, and asked why the Resilience Manager reported to the proposed Acting Chief Executive, as at 3.6 of the report? The current Chief Executive explained that the Resilience Manager currently reported to the proposed Acting Chief Executive and he had requested that this remained the case under the new arrangements.

A Member sought clarification on the savings implications as referred to at 6.0 on page 71 of the report, and asked if an up-to-date Structure Chart could be provided. It was agreed that this would be provided once all the senior management changes were in place. In terms of costs or savings for the proposals, this was not yet possible to say accurately as the Job Evaluation process had not yet been concluded.

A Member gave his full support to the proposal, and said that the proposed Acting Chief Executive was very capable.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That the Council does not appoint a permanent Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service at this time.***
- (2) That the Council appoint an Acting Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service, initially for the period 1 February 2017 to 30 September 2018.***
- (3) That the current Director of Corporate Services be seconded into this role, payable at the bottom point of salary scale 14.***
- (4) That the Acting Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service be appointed as the Returning Officer and the Electoral Registration Officer, initially for the period 1 February 2017 to 30 September 2018.***
- (5) To note the minor structural changes required as a consequence of these proposals.***
- (6) That the appropriate revisions are made to amend and update the scheme of delegations to officers, including proper and authorised officers and designated posts in the Constitution, as appropriate.***

Chairman

Copies of this document are available on the Council website <http://www.swale.gov.uk/dso/>. If you would like hard copies or alternative versions (i.e. large print, audio, different language) we will do our best to accommodate your request please contact Swale Borough Council at Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT or telephone the Customer Service Centre 01795 417850.

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

## Council 25 January 2017: Questions submitted from Members of the Public

Question No.	Question from	Question:	Question to:	Service Area
1.	Kane Blackwell	<p>Can the Leader please tell me how the Council and Swale Councillors will work with other agencies to identify and deal with mental health issues amongst young people in Swale?</p> <p>Also as a representative of KYCC I ask for the Council's support for the Kent Youth County Council's mental health campaign, by urging you to encourage all secondary schools, colleges and youth centres in the Borough of Swale to have at least one copy of the mental health directory we have created on their premises. So when a young person does come to a member of staff about a mental health issue, or a member of staff is worried that a young person might have a mental health issue, they can look in the directory and see who they can call for this young person. I would also urge you to encourage schools, colleges and youth centres to use the lesson and assembly plans we have created so that there can be open discussion and proper education for young people on this important issue that affects 1 in 3 people. At KYCC we found out through our survey that teachers in Kent do want mental health training. If 10 members each gave £300 from their grants to Maidstone and Mid Kent Mind it would provide a session of training at 10 secondary schools in Swale.</p> <p>This could change lives, and I urge this Council to support this Mental Health initiative for the young people of Swale.</p>	Cllr Ken Pugh/ Cllr Alan Horton	Director of Regeneration/ Housing Services

Question No.	Question from	Question:	Question to:	Service Area
<p><b>Response:</b> I would like to thank you for this important question. I have personally been very impressed with the KYCC campaign on Mental Health, and believe that the Directory is an excellent piece of work, and we will happily encourage other agencies and organisations to utilise it. Our front line Housing officers who are regularly in contact with young people with mental health issues work with all of the agencies detailed within the Directory.</p> <p>Mental ill health is a cross-cutting priority for Swale's Local Children's Partnership Group and, as Chair of this Group, I would like to invite you to present to a future LCPG meeting where Education are represented, and your request to support Lesson Plans and fund training can be fully discussed.</p> <p>I will also arrange for this to be added to the Youth Forum Agenda for discussion on how awareness can be raised.</p>				
2.	Graham Smith	The Council is proposing to add a debt of £28m to it's finances to subsidise the Sittingbourne Town Centre scheme, whilst developers have access to publicly-owned car parks to build apartments, the Council taxpayer is funding a multi storey car park to replace the lost car parks. How is that a good deal for the people of Swale? Why it is considered justifiable to incur a debt of £28m for the proposed development in the Town Centre that few of the electorate or, it appears, the developers consider viable, and what will be the effect of this debt on future council taxes and services?	Cllr Duncan Dewar-Whalley	Finance
<p><b>Response:</b> The funding and ownership of the Sittingbourne Town Centre regeneration project is a very positive move for the Council. As the reports that went to Cabinet on 9 November and 7 December showed, the Council will make a substantial financial return which will more than cover the borrowing costs. The borrowing costs will be wholly met by income from the commercial tenants, and there will be no financial cost of the borrowing to the Council Tax payer.</p> <p>By 2019/20 the Government will have completely eliminated the general grant it gives to the Council, so if we are to maintain the services we currently provide then we have to generate new income streams, and that is exactly what this project does. The Council will also benefit from substantial additional business rates.</p>				

Question No.	Question from	Question:	Question to:	Service Area
<p>As well as the financial benefits the facilities available to the residents of the Borough will be substantially enhanced by the cinema and the associated restaurants.</p> <p>The project always envisaged a multi-storey car park being built, and the Council decided to fund this directly and keep the income rather than paying the developer to do it.</p> <p>The housing part of the scheme will also enhance the Town Centre and generate substantial additional Council Tax and New Homes Bonus receipts.</p>				
3.	Vic Wintergreen	Given the size of the proposed borrowing of £28 million to invest in leisure and retail in Sittingbourne Town centre, and the precarious financial situation this country finds itself in, what security is being offered against the loan should the investment fail?	Cllr Dewar-Whalley	Finance
<p><b>Response:</b> The Council will not be borrowing £28m - the November and December Cabinet reports clearly state that we will consider borrowing <b>up to</b> £28m. We aim to minimise debt interest costs to the Council, hence we will minimise the borrowing necessary.</p> <p>The Sittingbourne Town Centre project is based upon national chains of cinemas, restaurants and retailers wanting to operate in Sittingbourne, and signing up long term contracts to do so. As a result, the Council has the security of the long term leases with these companies, and as we would also own the properties we would replace any tenant that ceased to trade.</p>				
4.	Paul Steele	In view of Sittingbourne's inability to sustain a viable cinema for many years past – and the present being a time when home cinema, simultaneous downloads, and on-line releases are on the rise – what market research exists to justify an expectation that a successful and financially independent multi-screen cinema will be sustainable over a long period of time?	Cllr Mike Cosgrove	Director of Regeneration
<p><b>Response:</b> The Light Cinema has carried out extensive market testing and research, and it has considerable experience in opening new cinemas in markets similar to that in Sittingbourne. As a result of their research, they are convinced enough to fully invest in the Sittingbourne project and their method of operation, where taking the cinema experience to new and more modern levels has been</p>				

Question No.	Question from	Question:	Question to:	Service Area
<p>justified at a number of similar locations across the country.</p> <p>In those locations where they have recently completed and opened new venues their forecasts have been exceeded, and as a result the Council has every confidence that they will be a great success for Sittingbourne Town Centre.</p>				
5.	Helen Martins	<p>The Council has publicly claimed that the risky investment in Sittingbourne Town Centre is forced on them because of a decline in funding from central government, but this is not a justification for proceeding with the development.</p> <p>Do you not agree that Swale Council (public) money should be spent on services for the public, and not on a highly speculative project - of questionable public value even in the unlikely scenario that it paid for itself?</p>	Cllr Dewar-Whalley	Finance
<p><b>Response:</b> The Council has never said that it is being forced to do anything. As the report to Cabinet in November, and the following very extensive discussion at Scrutiny Committee showed, this is a strong investment opportunity that has been tested independently to verify the business case. There will be a further stage of due diligence when final build costs for all the elements are received.</p> <p>The Cabinet report made it very clear that we are not spending public money, and that once built the debt financing costs will be met by the lessees and not by the Council tax payer.</p> <p>So I entirely disagree that this is either speculative or of questionable value - the cinema and restaurants will transform the Town Centre and be the basis of the regeneration we have wanted for so long.</p>				
6.	Simon Clark	<p>How many sources of independent financial advice did this authority obtain regarding the financial viability of Swale Borough Council borrowing up to £28 million to fund Sittingbourne Town Centre Regeneration?</p> <p>Who were they, and what was the standing and status of these</p>	Cllr Dewar-Whalley	Finance

Question No.	Question from	Question:	Question to:	Service Area
		sources of advice?		
<p><b>Response:</b> The Council took advice from Turnberry Real Estate Limited, an independent property investment consultancy introduced to the Council by Pinsent Masons who have undertaken the legal work on the Town Centre project.</p> <p>As was made clear in the Cabinet reports, the final decision to proceed will be dependent upon a further round of due diligence, and once again we will be commissioning Turnberry Real Estate to undertake this work.</p>				

This page is intentionally left blank



## Council 25 January 2017 - Questions submitted by Members

Question No.	Question from:	Question:	Question to:	Service area:
1	Cllr James Hunt	I'm pleased to see that Faversham is progressing well with their 20's plenty scheme and I hope that other areas in the Borough will be looked at to see whether the scheme could be implemented in those areas, but whilst work will need to be done in existing parts of the Borough with new developments already being designed with safety in mind 20mph speed signs could easily be installed within those developments. Can this Council put a policy in place so that all new development coming forward are 20mph zones?	Cabinet Member for Planning	Planning Services
<p><b>Response:</b> I also am pleased that progress is being made with the 20's plenty scheme for Faversham. The introduction of 20 mph zones are the responsibility of KCC as Highways Authority, and the matter has recently been considered by the Joint Transport Board (JTB). In accordance with the outcome of the JTB, I understand that officers will be investigating the potential for further 20mph zones within the Borough, and I would expect the outcome of those investigations to be reported to the Council's LDF Panel and Cabinet, and to Kent CC as required.</p> <p>In the meantime, each major planning application for new housing development will need to be looked at in its own merits, and we should expect the Highway Authority to consider and advise on whether the introduction of a 20mph zone within or adjacent to a new development would be appropriate in order to mitigate any highway safety or congestion impacts arising.</p>				
2.	Cllr Mike Baldock	Can the Cabinet Member confirm how much has been spent on repainting yellow lines so far this financial year, in comparison to the amount budgeted for such activity?	Cabinet Member for Safer Families and Communities	Commissioning and Customer Contact

Question No.	Question from:	Question:	Question to:	Service area:
<p><b>Response:</b> The budget code for the repair and renewal of yellow lines within the Borough is 6220/21203 Road Lining. The budget allocation for 2016/17 approved by Council last February was £2,000. The total expenditure year-to-date has been £12,860.52, with the additional spend coming from income generated by our Pay and Display car parks. It is unlikely that any further spend on this budget will take place in the current financial year.</p> <p>Work on yellow lines is generally 'batched' based upon the priority, and allocated to the Contractor as a concise works program, as that is the most effective and efficient use of resources.</p>				
3.	Cllr Roger Truelove	The Swale Local Plan is about to return to its Examination in Public. The process is challenging for a District Planning Authority. What do you regard as the greater challenge; to meet the real local need for affordable and low cost housing for purchase and renting, or to meet the Government imposed speculative housing numbers and the aspirations of local developers to build the highest value housing at the lowest possible land costs?	Cabinet Member for Planning/ Cabinet Member for Housing and Wellbeing	Planning Services/ Housing Services
<p><b>Response:</b> The challenge of meeting the Government imposed objectively assessed need for housing will be the subject of discussion at the forthcoming Examination in Public Part 2.</p> <p>The modifications we are presenting to meet that target assess the affordable element at 25% as being realistically achievable. The assessment of affordable housing is based on a report from highly respected consultants, and takes full account of the viability of the market across Swale. The Plan therefore also contains policies to provide as much 'affordable housing' as could be viably and realistically delivered (in the absence of grants to housing associations), and without undermining the Council's ability to meet its five-year housing land supply.</p> <p>As and when the modifications are found sound (in addition to that which is already agreed with the Inspector), then the Council can deliver with greater certainty those housing numbers.</p>				

Question No.	Question from:	Question:	Question to:	Service area:
While enabling the delivery of affordable homes of any tenure is especially challenging at present due to many factors, including the reduction in National Affordable Housing Programme funds, we continue to work with our housing association partners and housing developers to increase the number of affordable homes locally, and the Council has now received its first planning application for Starter Homes. In addition, we await the imminent publication of the new Housing White Paper, which we expect to detail the future role of Local Councils in enabling new affordable homes.				
4.	Cllr Roger Truelove	On 29 November a number of members of the public were excluded from attending any part of an Emergency Scrutiny meeting on the Cabinet's proposed provision of borrowing as an investment in the leisure and retail parts of the Sittingbourne Town Centre scheme. There have been public complaints and a review of what occurred conducted by officers. Can you tell me what was the nature of that review?	The Leader	Corporate Services
<b>Response:</b> I would thank the member for his question. To be clear, there was no active exclusion of members of the public on the night, although I appreciate that there have been a number of complaints raised. As a result of these complaints matters were investigated and responses provided through the Council's complaints procedure.				
5.	Cllr Cameron Beart	In June 1667, the naval forces of the Dutch Republic sailed into the Swale, captured the incomplete garrison at Sheerness and invaded the town of Queenborough, hoisting the Dutch flag over the Guildhall before sailing further up the Medway to target the English battleships at the Battle of Chatham.  Following the end of the Second Anglo-Dutch War, no mention was made of Queenborough in the Treaty of Breda, and on the 300th anniversary in June 1967 a celebration was held both in Medway and on Sheppey, where the Netherlands formally	The Leader	Economy & Community Services

Question No.	Question from:	Question:	Question to:	Service area:
		<p>returned the Town to the United Kingdom and cemented a lasting relationship by twinning the Town with Brielle.</p> <p>This year marks the 350th anniversary of the invasion and the 50th anniversary of Queenborough's 'Independence Day'. Medway Council have announced nine days of events and celebrations this summer, 'Medway In Flames', but could the Leader confirm if Swale Borough Council will be doing anything to mark this momentous event of historical significance to our Borough?</p>		
<p><b>Response:</b> As the local Ward Member and community champion for Queenborough and Halfway, the Council is grateful to Cllr. Beart for reminding us of this significant history of which we, and our local partners in Queenborough and Rushenden, are aware, including the plans of our North Kent partners.</p> <p>You will know that the Council has a number of resources (heritage, culture, and Members' grants in particular) that its communities can use to support and deliver this type of work. Examples have included a number of high profile partnership events, such as Victoria Cross, Princess Irene, and the Gunpowder Explosion.</p> <p>Members will be aware that there is no Events Team at this Council, rather that officers work in an enabling role with Town/ Parish Councils and other community groups. In this regard officers are keen to facilitate and encourage development work, and have for some time been engaging directly with the key organisations in Queenborough (eg Queenborough Town Council, Queenborough Society/The Guildhall Museum) on behalf of Visit Kent around this 350<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and other historical matters.</p> <p>We understand that local partners have determined their local priorities, and are currently co-ordinating project work for delivery in 2018 with regard to the 'Queenborough Charters Anniversary'. Swale BC officers have been invited to contribute their knowledge and expertise in this regard, and a meeting is scheduled for mid-February at which this Council will play a full part.</p>				

Question No.	Question from:	Question:	Question to:	Service area:
6.	Cllr Ghlin Whelan	<p>Some time ago we benefited from two separate presentations from two senior practitioners in the field of Mental health. Their greatest concern was inadequate housing. When asked what Swale planned to do in this area, the Leader advised that it was not this Authority's responsibility and we would be doing nothing.</p> <p>Bearing in mind that the needs of mental health patients can be a major factor in housing allocations, and in light of the Prime Minister's recent utterances on the subject of funding being made available, is it still the policy of this Authority to do nothing as regards the mental health problems of its residents, in particular the housing problem?</p>	The Leader	Housing Services
<p><b>Response:</b> Applicants with a mental health condition are given preference on the Housing Register for social housing and priority under homelessness legislation, along with a number of other vulnerable groups.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that suitable housing for all is in great demand but short supply, in particular specialist supported accommodation, which is funded and currently commissioned by Kent CC.</p> <p>The Housing Options Team work with Kent CC, the clinical commissioning groups and other local agencies to ensure that homeless households with mental ill health have access to the support that they need.</p>				
7.	Cllr Ghlin Whelan	Now that the Council is funding the provision of a seven- screen cinema and retail outlets etc, could the portfolio holder advise what exactly residents are getting in return for giving up the car parks, and providing a £3,000,000 multi-storey car park?	Cabinet Member for Regeneration	Director of Regeneration

Question No.	Question from:	Question:	Question to:	Service area:
<p><b>Response:</b> As was shown in the November Cabinet report and discussed in great detail at the Scrutiny Committee, the Council has an excellent financial opportunity to become the funder and owner of the Sittingbourne Town Centre development. The Council has to find new revenue streams to replace Revenue Support Grant which will be completely eliminated by 2020/21.</p> <p>The case for the Council becoming the funder and owner of the multi-storey car park was fully set out in the Cabinet report of 16 July 2014. The multi-storey car park is integral to the regeneration project, providing car parking for the hundreds of thousands of new visitors to the Town Centre to enjoy the cinema and new restaurants.</p>				