
COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 3 April 2019 from 7.00pm - 8.27 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Sarah Aldridge, Mike Baldock, Cameron Beart, Bobbin, Monique Bonney, Tina Booth, Lloyd Bowen, Bowles, Roger Clark, Derek Conway, Mike Cosgrove, Richard Darby, Duncan Dewar-Whalley, Mark Ellen, Paul Fleming, June Garrad, Sue Gent, James Hall, Nicholas Hampshire, Harrison, Mike Henderson, Alan Horton, James Hunt, Ken Ingleton (Deputy Mayor), Nigel Kay, Samuel Koffie-Williams (Mayor), Gerry Lewin, Peter Marchington, Ken Pugh, George Samuel, David Simmons, Ben Stokes, Lynd Taylor, Roger Truelove, Anita Walker, Ghlin Whelan, Mike Whiting, Ted Wilcox and Tony Winckless.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Billy Attaway, David Clifford, Estelle Culligan, Jo Millard, Nick Vickers and Emma Wiggins.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Andy Booth, Mike Dendor, Mick Galvin, Padmini Nissanga, Prescott and John Wright.

586 PRAYERS

The Mayor's Chaplain said Prayers.

587 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Mayor outlined the Emergency Evacuation Procedure.

588 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 February 2019 (Minute Nos. 497-514) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

589 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

590 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor thanked Members for their support and participation in the Council meetings during his Mayoral year. He highlighted events he had attended recently which included his fund-raising afternoon tea at Hempstead House, the Sea Cadet's presentation evening at which his Cadet was promoted and the Mayor of Faversham's Civic Dinner. The Mayor reminded Members that his Civic Dinner would be held on 27 April 2019 and tickets were available.

The Mayor reminded members of the public of the consequences of using inappropriate language or displaying disruptive behaviour during the meeting.

591 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC

The Mayor advised that three questions had been submitted by the public, the answers to which had been provided, could be viewed on the Council's website and were attached as Appendix 1 to these Minutes. The Mayor invited the members of public in attendance to ask a supplementary question.

Question one

Kane Blackwell thanked the Leader for his response and asked whether he agreed that there was a need to increase the number of one and two-bedroomed homes?

The Leader agreed that a wide range of house types, sizes and prices was necessary.

Question two

Jeff Tutt gave a summary to his original question and stated that it was not for Swale Borough Council (SBC) to decide where lorries from within the Canterbury district should be parked.

The Leader explained that there was a meeting between the Chief Executives and Leaders of both SBC and Canterbury City Council (CCC), to discuss the issue and the decision to agree was taken at their respective meetings. He added that due to the schedule of meetings, the matter was considered by CCC first but all papers from both meetings were published. The Leader highlighted that there were other proposals outside of the Swale area and drew attention that the Joint Transport Board was advisory only.

Question three

Mr Peto was not in attendance at the meeting.

592 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS

The Mayor advised that six questions had been submitted by Members, the answers to which had been provided, could be viewed on the Council's website and were attached as Appendix 2 to these Minutes. The Mayor invited all the Members to ask a supplementary question.

Question One

Councillor Mike Baldock asked what further tests would be carried out and what traffic model would be used?

The Leader advised that transport modelling was not his speciality and it would be several months before the work would be ready to come back for a statutory consultation.

Question Two

Councillor Mike Baldock asked whether the outcome of the review would be made available?

The Cabinet Member for Planning advised that he would let Members know the outcome of the review if possible.

Question Three

Councillor Monique Bonney asked what was the nature of training the Leader would receive and did he have any regrets?

The Leader said that he had already undertaken training sessions – Equalities and Social Media at KCC with the Head of paid Service, and an on-line session on Equalities at Work at Swale House supervised by the Chief Executive. He added that he regretted that he could not support freedom of speech or sympathy with those views.

Question Four

Councillor Monique Bonney gave a history of the contaminated land at the Kent Science Park, asked if it was ethically reasonable to build houses and create employment on the land, and asked what the responsibilities of SBC were if the company that recently purchased land there were to go into receivership as a consequence of the contamination?

The Cabinet Member for Planning said he was unaware that land in the location was contaminated and studies of the land would take place if a planning application came forward. He added that he could not speculate if a company went into receivership.

Question Five

Councillor Truelove asked if promoters could have a case against SBC, whether SBC would lose control if the Garden Settlements were agreed and whether the Council needed a Leader who thinks before he speaks or tweets?

The Cabinet Member for Planning said that there was not a case for pre-determination as a decision had not been made, no decision had been made on the Garden Settlement, and SBC could not have had a better Leader. He added that SBC were a well-run Council.

Question Six

Councillor Roger Truelove sought clarification from the Cabinet Member for Regeneration on whether the response had been a joint response from Officers and the Cabinet Member? The Cabinet Member for Regeneration explained that the response was not from an Officer.

593 LEADER'S STATEMENT

Before presenting his statement, the Leader thanked those Members who had chosen not to stand in the Borough elections in May for their service to the Council. He gave particular praise and thanks to Councillor Mike Henderson. Members applauded. The Leader thanked Councillor June Garrad and wished her well. All Group Leaders thanked and praised the out-going Mayor.

The Leader presented his Statement which gave updates on Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping 2019-2023 Consultation, Housing Infrastructure Fund, Future High Street Fund and Rural Policing update.

Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping 2019-2023 Consultation

The Leader of the Swale Group said that the Leader had sought to beat but had not achieved the ambitious target set, welcomed the intention to address local needs of vulnerable people but highlighted that there were no bungalows or appropriate housing for young people, and affordable housing was constantly being undercut. He asked whether it was right to ignore 95% of those who did not agree with Garden Communities?

The Leader said that he neither liked or believed in the Government setting Housing Targets and any opportunity to challenge the figures set for Swale would be challenged if there was a chance of success. He added that there was a possibility of Garden Settlements in the future but the mix of housing was not determined.

The Leader of the Labour Group said there was a severe housing crises now, and asked what was going to happen to decrease the ever growing homelessness figures?

The Leader responded that all 47 Members would debate and determine the Policy moving forward.

The Leader of the Independent Group expressed concern that the strategy was not achieving anything and highlighted that only three or four houses for temporary accommodation had been delivered. He said that the Government's definition of 'affordable' was not affordable for people in Swale, and reminded Members that they did not agree to an increase in funds to tackle the issue when setting the budget.

The Leader referred to the financial costs of providing a solution and said that the Government needed persuading to give equal treatment to those that had transferred housing stock, with those who still had housing revenue. He added that he agreed with the Cabinet Member for Finance being cautious in the spending review.

A Member was frustrated in the inability to control the proportion of affordable housing included in Section 106 Agreements, said that affordable housing should be spread in locations that were fair and reasonable to all, and that SBC should have invested in affordable housing instead of stockpiling money buying commercial property.

In response the Leader agreed that being unable to control affordable housing in Section 106 Agreements was unfair, but was critical of Members who did not want housing in their own area.

A Member was critical that so little had been done to address the housing crisis when the Leader had claimed it was a priority.

The Leader said that the consultation was on-going and decisions would be made. He explained the financial difficulties faced by Local Authorities and advised the Member to discuss this with the Finance Department.

Housing Infrastructure Fund

The Leader of the Swale Group asked what was Plan 'B' if the bid was not successful?

The Leader replied that he hoped Plan 'B' would not be needed as the bid was in-line with the criteria.

Future High Street Fund

The Leader of the Swale Group asked who decided Sittingbourne was the best option and what plans were there for the existing High Street?

In response, the Leader advised that the decision was made by Cabinet on advice from Officers that in the time given to submit the bid, the information was already available to submit. He added that Sheerness was the preferred option but he hoped there would be a second round of bidding.

Rural Policing update

The Leader of the Labour Group referred to the problems of fly-tipping in the rural areas.

The Leader of the Independent Group said that there were fewer rural crime issues and crime was on the increase in towns. He asked the Leader to liaise with the Police Crime Commissioner (PCC).

In response, the Leader advised that he did liaise with the PCC but that he had highlighted rural policing as it had improved with additional officers in place. He suggested that the Cabinet Member for Housing and Safer Communities could advise the Member.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs sought the Leader's help and support against carrying, and the illegal dumping of, waste material. He highlighted some recent successful prosecutions.

The Leader agreed to support and thanked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs. He drew attention that the public could assist by using only those carriers with a licence and reminded Members of the danger to public health, when waste disposal providers carried unknown material.

A Member commended the PCC for investing wisely and increasing police numbers. He suggested that the PCC be invited to speak at a briefing to Members.

Chairman

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