
COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 26 June 2019 from 7.00pm - 9.00pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Mike Baldock, Cameron Beart, Monique Bonney, Lloyd Bowen, Derek Carnell, Roger Clark, Simon Clark, Richard Darby, Steve Davey, Mike Dendor, Mark Ellen, Simon Fowle, Tim Gibson, Alastair Gould, James Hall, Ann Hampshire, Nicholas Hampshire, Angela Harrison, Alan Horton, James Hunt, Ken Ingleton (Mayor), Elliott Jayes, Denise Knights, Peter Macdonald, Peter Marchington, Benjamin Martin, Ben J Martin, Lee McCall, Padmini Nissanga, Richard Palmer, Hannah Perkin, Ken Pugh, Ken Rowles, Julian Saunders, David Simmons, Paul Stephen, Sarah Stephen, Eddie Thomas, Roger Truelove, Tim Valentine, Mike Whiting, Tony Winckless and Corrie Woodford.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Katherine Bescoby, David Clifford, Estelle Culligan, Victoria Hadfield, Nick Vickers and Emma Wiggins.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Carole Jackson, Pete Neal, Bill Tatton and Ghlin Whelan.

85 PRAYERS

The Mayor's Chaplain said prayers.

86 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Mayor outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

87 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meetings held on 21 May 2019 (Minute Nos. 1 – 9) and 22 May 2019 (Minute Nos. 10 – 18) were taken as read and approved as correct records.

88 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Monique Bonney declared a non-pecuniary interest as she was Chairman of the Five Parishes Group.

89 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor advised that he had attended 14 functions since the last Council meeting, all relating to Swale, only using the civic car on 4 occasions. He drew attention to the following:

- his first duty as Mayor, which was to raise the Blue Flags over Sheerness and Minster Beaches, and he thanked the Seafront Staff for their hard work;

- he had met with the Chair of Kent County Council (KCC) and other Kent Mayors;
- he had attended the Queenborough Independence Day with the Mayor of Queenborough.

The Mayor drew attention to Minster's Village Fair and Sittingbourne's Armed Forces Day which were both taking place on 29 June 2019.

90 AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Leader introduced the report, explaining that the purpose behind the changes to council procedures was to make meetings more spontaneous and inclusive; to allow more time for motions and debate; and less time for the Leader's Statement. He proposed the recommendations in the report, which was seconded.

In respect of the procedure for submitting Member questions, the Leader clarified that the term 'giving notice' meant submitting the question.

The Leader of the Conservative Group advised that he would support the changes in the spirit of cooperation, but he had some reservations about interpretation and the haste in which changes were being made, and suggested the item should be referred back to the General Purposes Committee.

Debate ensued, where a Member spoke against the proposed changes to the publishing of questions and answers in advance of the meeting. The Deputy Leader welcomed contributions from Members and encouraged them to make their views known to him or the General Purposes Committee, as there would be many changes to be discussed over the coming months.

The Leader responded by saying the new procedure would be less disjointed for the public, who could come along to the meeting to ask questions and hear answers, and then read about it in the minutes.

Resolved:

(1) That the Constitution be amended as follows:

(1.1) Council Procedure Rules section 14, Member Questions, in accordance with the changes set out in Appendix 2 of the report.

(1.2) Council Procedure Rules section 18, Leader's Statement, in accordance with the changes set out in Appendix 4 of the report.

(1.3) Public Participation Rules section 5, Planning Committee, in accordance with the changes set out in Appendix 6 of the report.

(2) That the amendments set out above take effect immediately.

91 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NOTING

Resolved:

(1) That the recommendations from the General Purposes Committee meeting held on 12 June 2019 be noted, as they had been subject to a separate report considered earlier in the meeting.

92 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC

The Mayor advised that a question had been submitted by Stephen Palmer. As he could not be present at the meeting, the written question and response was tabled. This is set out below.

Question submitted by Stephen Palmer:

“With reference to the Spirit of Sittingbourne, what processes and procedures are in place to ensure that the Spirit of Sittingbourne is being delivered to a high level of quality and that the council are not being charged for rework of errors? As I understand it the bus stops have been repositioned as they were installed in the wrong place. The raised paving slabs that assist partially sighted people have been relaid twice. The paving outside the station has been relaid twice and now the road signage at the Forum bus stops is not spelt correctly, as of 7 June. There appears to be a lot of rework and should not be charged to the council.”

Response by the Cabinet Member for Economy and Property:

“The highway works are regularly checked by Spirit’s highway design consultant and the KCC highways engineer throughout the month for quality and specification. A monthly drawdown request is sent to the Council and this is checked and scrutinised by the Council’s appointed independent Monitoring Surveyor who also carries out a site inspection with the Council’s Scheme Manager. The Monitoring Surveyor then provides a monthly progress report to the Chief Finance Officer confirming the amount to be paid.

All works that need to be re-done are met by the principal highways contractor or the specific sub-contractor that carried out the work on their behalf. This is purely at the principal contractor or sub-contractor’s costs and not that of the employer or funder.”

93 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS

The Mayor advised that five questions had been submitted.

Question 1 – Submitted by Councillor Tim Gibson

“Do you have any plans to restore concessionary parking rates to the Leisure Centres in Sittingbourne and Sheerness?”

Response to Question 1 - Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

“One of the Coalition’s priorities is the health of the residents. We want to ensure there are opportunities for improving both mental and physical health and the leisure centres provide both. The removal of the car parking subsidy by the previous administration was a signal of an approach to disincentivise usage of the centres.

The centres offer a range of uses including children’s learning to swim classes, GP referral schemes and we want to remove any barriers to people attending. The

renovation work to both centres is nearing completion so the range of facilities on offer has increased.

Therefore we are currently looking at the option to reinstall the subsidy and will bring a report to the July Cabinet to discuss further.”

Supplementary Question and Response

Councillor Tim Gibson asked “are you aware of the impact of the removal of concessionary parking on residents and parking in local roads?” The Leader advised that he was aware and it served as a reminder that sometimes there were unintended consequences.

Question 2 – Submitted by Councillor Tony Winckless

“Do you have any plans to improve the public facilities at Milton Country Park?”

Response to Question 2 – Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

“A further Coalition priority is to introduce a Special Projects Fund of £1m a year, over the next four years, to make improvements to the public realm of the Borough.

The allocation of this fund will depend upon bids for projects and I know Councillor Winckless will lend his support to Milton Creek Country Park, given his dedicated support to the site over the years.

The Head of Commissioning, Environment and Leisure will be taking a discussion report to Policy Development and Review Committee (PDRC) in due course to start off the process.”

Supplementary Question and Response

Councillor Tony Winckless asked “if the Cabinet would like to have a tour around the park to see where the money could be spent?”

The Leader advised that yes they would accept an invitation but it was a matter for local decision making as to where the money would be spent, if the grant was successful. This could include items such as toilets, additional seating and footpath clearing.

Question 3 – submitted by Councillor Ken Rowles

“What are the prospects of Government funding coming into Swale and the rest of the Thames Corridor to meet the enormous deficit between housing growth and infrastructure?”

Response to Question 3 – Cabinet Member for Economy and Property

“Funding opportunities are currently intermittent, and infrastructure goes beyond highways. At present delivery of wider infrastructure needs, including health and schools, are expected to be met through developer contributions, where possible –

and developer funding can only be sought for need arising from new development, not to meet existing deficits.

The current arrangements are failing to deliver what is needed, along the Thames Corridor and in Swale, both now and to meet the impact of enhanced development targets being set by Government. Other proposals, such as the Lower Thames Crossing, will also create additional pressures and there is currently no indication from Government of any planned future investment that will alleviate the concerns that all Local Authorities in North Kent have.

In the immediate future we need to see Junction 5 improvements confirmed, along with the £40m that is being sought from the Housing Infrastructure Fund for improvements to the A249 Junctions. However, over coming years there is a need for a more integrated and planned approach towards funding infrastructure.”

Supplementary Question and Response

Councillor Ken Rowles asked “what Member of Government does the coalition intend to lobby on this matter?”

The Cabinet Member responded by saying it would be the Local Government Minister, and contact would be made once the new Prime Minister was in post.

Question 4 – submitted by Councillor Steve Davey

“Having read the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 5 June 2019 I would like to know how a contractor could be engaged that has a problem laying hot rolled asphalt to acceptable KCC Standards, and if the necessary repairs are covered by said company with no cost to SBC?”

Response to Question 4 – Cabinet Member for Economy and Property

“All surfacing contractors that have been used by the principal highways contractor are on the KCC approved list. All works that do not meet KCC’s requirements are/will be re-done at the contractors cost with no cost to SBC.”

Supplementary Question and Response

Councillor Steve Davey asked “how many attempts will be made to lay the block paving in front of the Station, and would the costs be borne by the contractors?”

The Cabinet Member advised that work would be done to the standard required and in accordance with the contract, and the work would be re-done if necessary at no cost to the council.

Question 5 – submitted by Councillor Mike Whiting

“Will the Leader confirm he supports Highways England’s proposed Orders to progress the much needed improvements to Junction 5 at Stockbury, and that he is responding in the strongest terms in support of the Orders to both Highways England and the Secretary of State?”

Response to Question 5 – Leader

“I do support Highways England’s proposals to improve Junction 5. I’m surprised you need to ask.

I have written to the Secretary of State in line with the existing view of this Council, supporting Option 4H1 and I have stressed the need for urgency in taking this essential project forward.

I have re-enforced the exceptional daily inconvenience to local people using the A249 and other local feeder roads cause by daily processional congestion, the continuing risk of serious accidents and the significance of this junction to the bifurcation of Kent and the Lower Thames Crossing.

Apart from the absolutely key strategic importance of these projects, they offer a golden opportunity for employment in construction and engineering for local people in North Kent, including Swale. It is with this in mind that the administration puts such a high premium on closing the skills gap and therefore on the need for further education investment in the Borough.

We need to pull together on this. I note the energetic backing of the MP for Sittingbourne and Sheppey and wish it were also backed in the same way by the MP for Faversham and Mid Kent.”

Supplementary Question and Response

Councillor Mike Whiting asked “if the Leader would encourage everyone to respond to the Highways England consultation by 25 July 2019, and if he was aware of a petition that Councillor James Hunt had submitted to parliament asking for £20m of funding for a flyover?”

The Leader responded by saying that he would decide as a private citizen whether to sign it and encouraged others to do the same.

In response to a question as to why the Mayor had accepted the question after the deadline, the Mayor advised he would be happy to share his reasons with the Member concerned.

94 MOTIONS SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULE 15**Motion A – Climate and Ecological Emergency**

Councillor Tim Valentine proposed and spoke in support of the following motion, emphasising the need to take action:

“That the Council resolves:

1. To declare a ‘Climate and Ecological Emergency’.
2. To draw up an action plan with improvement in energy efficiency and making space for nature as key priorities in all strategies and plans.

3. Pursue the Swale Strategic Air Quality Action Plan 2018-22 and to actively lobby all responsible authorities to improve air quality within Swale.
4. To provide leadership by taking all measures within our control to make Swale Borough Council's own operations carbon neutral by 2025, taking into account both production and consumption emissions (scope 1, 2 and 3).
5. To engage with businesses, organisations and residents to facilitate the action required to make the Borough of Swale carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption emissions (scope 1, 2 and 3).
6. To undertake actions including, but not be limited to, spatial and transport planning to make fewer journeys necessary, improvement to the energy efficiency of new and existing housing and buildings, improved public transport especially in rural areas; encouraging active transport, developing the infrastructure for EVs; deploying renewable energy at every opportunity, while continuing to safeguard our wild places, ancient woodlands and hedgerows.
7. To call on Westminster to provide the powers and resources to make the 2030 target possible.
8. To call upon the MPs for Sittingbourne & Sheppey and for Faversham & Mid Kent to support this motion.
9. To work with other governments (both within the UK and internationally) to determine and implement best practice methods to limit global warming to less than 1.5°C.
10. To work with partners across the Borough to deliver these new goals through all relevant strategies and plans.
11. To become a 'Plastic-Free Council' by eliminating single-use plastics from the Council's operations, whenever possible, by 2021.
12. To request the Cabinet, working through the Policy Development and Review Committee, to report the actions the Council will take to address this emergency to Full Council by the end of the 2019/20 municipal year."

In proposing the Motion, Councillor Tim Valentine summarised the notes to the motion as set out on the agenda, referring to the impacts of climate change which were being felt around the world; the vulnerability of Swale to the effects of climate breakdown; the impact of air pollution; the unprecedented and accelerated rate of species extinction, including the impact on butterflies in Kent; the effect of changes in land use on wildlife; the need to reduce carbon emissions and for the Council to show leadership and take action by declaring a climate emergency and committing resources to address it.

This was seconded by Councillor Eddie Thomas who reserved his right to speak.

The Leader congratulated Councillor Tim Valentine on his speech and Motion, and urged Members to support it.

The Leader of the Conservative Group also congratulated Councillor Tim Valentine, and said that whilst he supported the motion, he considered there were lots of loop holes in the wording, and asked what the costs would be?

A debate ensued during which Councillor Nicholas Hampshire proposed an amendment to add two additional resolutions, which was seconded by Councillor Mike Whiting, who reserved his right to speak.

“In meeting this pledge, the Council will take steps to avoid any adverse impacts on our most vulnerable residents.

This Council pledges to produce in January of each year, between now and 2030, an annual report detailing the council’s progress against Swale’s carbon neutral action plan, enabling members, residents and other stakeholders to hold the council to account for the delivery of this pledge.”

The amendment was accepted by the proposer and seconder of the original motion, and so became part of the substantive motion.

Members spoke in support of the motion, referring to:

- the record breaking temperatures in Europe and the need for urgent action;
- the need for the council to ‘consume its own smoke’;
- whether the ambitious target to make the Borough of Swale carbon neutral by 2030 was achievable;
- environmental changes and the effect of climate change on farming and wildlife;
- the Swale Strategic Air Quality Action Plan 2018 – 2022;
- the fact that Faversham Town Council had become plastic free in terms of single use plastics;
- the potential to work with other parish councils on this area, in particular air quality;
- the need to contact South Eastern trains to reinstate high speed services in rural areas which would reduce travel to mainline stations;
- the opportunity to encourage taxis to use hybrid or electric cars (it was later confirmed that measures were already in place);
- the need for air quality assessments and traffic assessments as part of large planning applications, and to consider measures that could be used in new buildings such as insulation, solar panels, rain water harvesting, and ground source heat pumps;
- whether there was a need to re-establish an environment committee.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Eddie Thomas spoke of the need for urgent action to cut carbon emissions and to mitigate climate change, and urged members to support the motion.

Councillor Tim Valentine responded to comments made during the debate, emphasising the need for urgent action and the need to set ambitious targets, whilst recognising that some areas were not within the Council’s control. He advised that there would be a comprehensive action plan which would be taken forward and he encouraged the parish council mentioned to contact him direct.

The motion was put to the vote and agreed.

Resolved:

That the Council resolves:

- 1. To declare a 'Climate and Ecological Emergency'.**
- 2. To draw up an action plan with improvement in energy efficiency and making space for nature as key priorities in all strategies and plans.**
- 3. Pursue the Swale Strategic Air Quality Action Plan 2018-22 and to actively lobby all responsible authorities to improve air quality within Swale.**
- 4. To provide leadership by taking all measures within our control to make Swale Borough Council's own operations carbon neutral by 2025, taking into account both production and consumption emissions (scope 1, 2 and 3).**
- 5. To engage with businesses, organisations and residents to facilitate the action required to make the Borough of Swale carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption emissions (scope 1, 2 and 3).**
- 6. To undertake actions including, but not be limited to, spatial and transport planning to make fewer journeys necessary, improvement to the energy efficiency of new and existing housing and buildings, improved public transport especially in rural areas; encouraging active transport, developing the infrastructure for EVs; deploying renewable energy at every opportunity, while continuing to safeguard our wild places, ancient woodlands and hedgerows.**
- 7. To call on Westminster to provide the powers and resources to make the 2030 target possible.**
- 8. To call upon the MPs for Sittingbourne & Sheppey and for Faversham & Mid Kent to support this motion.**
- 9. To work with other governments (both within the UK and internationally) to determine and implement best practice methods to limit global warming to less than 1.5°C.**
- 10. To work with partners across the Borough to deliver these new goals through all relevant strategies and plans.**
- 11. To become a 'Plastic-Free Council' by eliminating single-use plastics from the Council's operations, whenever possible, by 2021.**
- 12. To request the Cabinet, working through the Policy Development and Review Committee, to report the actions the Council will take to address this emergency to Full Council by the end of the 2019/20 municipal year.**

13. In meeting this pledge, the Council will take steps to avoid any adverse impacts on our most vulnerable residents.

14. This Council pledges to produce in January of each year, between now and 2030, an annual report detailing the council's progress against Swale's carbon neutral action plan, enabling members, residents and other stakeholders to hold the council to account for the delivery of this pledge.

Motion B – Southern Relief Road

Councillor Monique Bonney proposed and spoke in support of the following Motion:

“This Council notes the demonstrable lack of public support for a Southern link road dependent on house building and/or commercial development for funding. This motion supersedes the previous motion passed by Council on 26th July 2017, and confirms that a southern link road dependent on housebuilding and/or commercial development for funding delivery is not a strategic objective of Council.”

In proposing the Motion, Councillor Monique Bonney referred to the motion passed on 26 July 2017, suggesting that the motion had been used at meetings with government departments and developers to say that there was public support when that was not the case, and prior to the Local Plan being agreed.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Sarah Stephen advised that massive development was not supported by local people, and that there had been very little investment in infrastructure, including soft infrastructure such as health, education and affordable housing. The situation was at breaking point and there were no plans for government to make up this deficit. Massive development was not the way forward to be able to pay for it, when it was already at breaking point. She urged Members to vote in support of the motion.

The Leader of the Conservative Group advised that it had never been a strategic objective of the council, and read out the original motion that had been agreed in 2017. He did not agree that there was a demonstrable lack of support and considered that the motion was about housing development and not the road. He also expressed concern that the 2017 motion also referred to other important road improvements, e.g. the A249 and J5 of the M2, which this motion did not address. Neither did it mention air quality or traffic flow. He considered that the motion agreed in 2017 should not be superseded. He suggested an amendment to the motion:

“That this Council recognises the importance of a southern link road to the residents and businesses of Swale and continues to pursue funding for its construction other than through housebuilding and/or commercial development.”

This was seconded by Councillor Cameron Beart who reserved his right to speak.

Debate then ensued on the amendment, on the following themes:

- disagreement that the motion would remove the Council's position on other elements in the original motion agreed in 2017;
- the assertion that the original motion agreed in 2017 had been 'misused' as it had been used to show support for a road funded by housing;
- the motion proposed would make the Council's position strategically clear;
- there was support for a southern relief road from residents but there was a conflict between a new road and additional development;
- there were traffic and air quality issues to consider, the impact of traffic would get worse if there was not a Southern relief road;
- other ways to fund the Southern relief road should be looked at;

The amendment was put to the vote but was lost.

Debate then returned to the original motion, which centred on the following themes:

- There was a need for a Southern relief road;
- What were the implications on funding bids for other roads mentioned in the motion agreed in 2017, referring in particular to the funding bid for Grovehurst junction;
- That there was a desperate need for a northern relief road but not a southern relief road if it was based on housing; and the impact that this would have on residents on the A2;
- That there was a need for another link to the M2 between junctions 5 and 6;
- Whether the coalition supported a southern relief road or not;
- That traffic and congestion was increasing regardless of additional development, and better infrastructure was required;
- Opportunities for employment in construction and investment in the area, if a southern relief road was built;
- Unable to support the motion as it did not refer to other roads mentioned in the motion agreed in 2017;
- Clarification that the motion was not saying it did not support a southern relief road, but that it did not support it on the basis of 12,000 houses;
- The impact of additional development on air quality, traffic and congestion;
- Concern that if the 2017 motion was not superseded, that it would be used to show support for 11,500 new houses.

In summing up, Councillor Monique Bonney acknowledged the deficit in investment in the existing road structure and considered that improvements to junction 5, junction 7 and the A249 were crucial; there was a need for a northern relief road and focus should be on that, rather than mass housing to support a southern relief road. She asked Members to support the motion.

In accordance with procedure rule 19, five members requested that a recorded vote be taken. Voting was as follows:

For:

Councillors Mike Baldock, Monique Bonney, Derek Carnell, Simon Clark, Richard Darby, Steve Davey, Mark Ellen, Tim Gibson, Alastair Gould, James Hall, Angela Harrison, Elliott Jayes, Denise Knights, Benjamin Martin, Ben J Martin, Lee McCall, Richard Palmer, Hannah Perkin, Ken Rowles, Julian Saunders, Paul Stephen,

Sarah Stephen, Eddie Thomas, Roger Truelove, Tim Valentine, Tony Winckless and Corrie Woodford. Total = 27.

Against:

Councillors Lloyd Bowen, Roger Clark, Simon Fowle, Peter Marchington, Mini Nissanga, Ken Pugh and David Simmons. Total = 7

Abstain:

Councillors Cameron Beart, Mike Dendor, Ann Hampshire, Nicholas Hampshire, Alan Horton, James Hunt, Peter MacDonald and Mike Whiting. Total = 8.

Resolved:

(1) That this Council notes the demonstrable lack of public support for a Southern link road dependent on house building and/or commercial development for funding. This motion supersedes the previous motion passed by Council on 26th July 2017, and confirms that a Southern link road dependent on housebuilding and/or commercial development for funding delivery is not a strategic objective of Council.

95 LEADER'S STATEMENT

The Leader advised that since the last Council meeting, he had had meetings with other Kent Leaders, KCC members, the MP for Sittingbourne and Sheppey and representatives of the local community. He had also joined the Cabinet Member for Economy and Property at the Thames Gateway Kent Partnership where she had made a very forceful and cogent case for Health investment throughout North Kent.

The Leader advised that the same theme had recurred over and over. There was a sense that all over Kent, Councils were being asked by Government to accept unrealistic levels of housing allocations; that there was already a serious deficit in infrastructure delivery, and that that deficit was set to increase and that support was contingent on more centralised control and less local autonomy for locally elected members.

The Leader advised that he was particularly disturbed by an assertion from one significant County Member that when it came to housing growth, it would prove impossible to achieve both infrastructure investment and affordable housing at the same time. If that notion was accepted, then he considered that the Council would be letting down its local community.

The Leader then gave an update on the immediate aims of the Coalition.

- On the constitutional review, an 'objectives and options' paper would be considered by the Policy Development and Review Committee (PDRC) in July, and a resolution would be submitted to Full Council in October 2019.
- Progress was being responsibly made by the Deputy Leader on reviewing the Local Plan in such a way as to reflect the deep concerns of residents right across Swale. Personally, he was pleased to see last Thursday that the planning committee had not been prepared to be cavalier about the need for

affordable housing, for genuine infrastructure and for protecting our environment.

- Steps were in place to re-organise and enhance the Council's resources in housing and health; high level meetings had been organised with housing providers and contacts had been forged with community groups that regularly confronted the problems of social exclusion.
- They were in the process of reviewing provision for CCTV surveillance and a report would be considered at the July 2019 Cabinet meeting.
- They were looking forward to meeting local business leaders, who must be conscious of the need for skills enhancement locally. A meeting had been arranged with Further Education leaders in the near future, however, he did not wish to diminish previous efforts or the challenges involved.
- The Cabinet's commitment to environmental issues had been represented by the motion at tonight's meeting, proposed by the Cabinet Member for the Environment who brought depth and knowledge to their understanding of these vital issues.
- Questions and answers under agenda item 10 indicated their intention to introduce a projects budget that would be used to enhance local people's experience of our open spaces, in our towns, in the countryside and in our leisure and tourist environment.
- Much time had been spent by Cabinet members and officers on sorting out concerns about the Sittingbourne Town Centre project. The Council was entering a critical stage in their dealings with Spirit of Sittingbourne and he hoped to report more on this at future Council meetings.

In concluding, he acknowledged that the Cabinet had a very full and clear agenda. Officers at all levels had responded in a very positive way, and he particularly thanked Ms Wiggins, Mr Vickers and Mr Clifford for their guidance during a period of change and in the absence of the Chief Executive, who he was keeping in regular contact with.

The Leader of the Conservative Group was invited to respond to the Statement. He thanked the Leader for the courtesy of early sight of the Statement, but urged the Planning Committee to take a balanced approach to avoid the risk of non-determination appeals. He then read out details of two corporate announcements on the Council's intranet page and asked why this information had not been shared with councillors? He noted that the measures set out were in connection with officers, and he expressed his wider concerns.

The Leader advised that the intention of this item was for the Leader to respond to the issues covered by the Leader's Statement, and hoped that in future there may be some reference to it.

Mayor

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