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## COUNCIL

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 8 January 2020 from 7.00pm - 8.29pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mike Baldock, Cameron Beart, Monique Bonney, Lloyd Bowen, Derek Carnell, Roger Clark (Deputy Mayor), Richard Darby, 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), Carole Jackson, Elliott Jayes, Denise Knights, Benjamin Martin, Ben J Martin, Lee McCall, Richard Palmer, Hannah Perkin, Ken Pugh, Ken Rowles, Julian Saunders, David Simmons, Paul Stephen, Sarah Stephen, Bill Tatton, Eddie Thomas, Roger Truelove, Tim Valentine, Ghlin Whelan, Mike Whiting, Tony Winckless and Corrie Woodford.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Jayne Bolas, David Clifford, Janet Hill, Chris Lovelock, Jo Millard, Nick Vickers and Emma Wiggins.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Simon Clark, Steve Davey, Peter Macdonald, Peter Marchington, Pete Neal and Padmini Nissanga

### 411 PRAYERS

The Mayor's Chaplain said prayers.

### 412 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Mayor outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

### 413 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 November 2019 (Minute Nos.356 - 367) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

### 414 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

### 415 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor announced that Lady Colgrain DL, had been appointed as Lord-Lieutenant of the County of Kent in succession to The Viscount De L'Isle CVO MBE when he retired on 21 April 2020.

In his announcements, the Mayor compared the way residents of Swale received information about the work of the Council, since his last time in office as Mayor in 1986/87 and questioned whether all residents were receiving relevant information via social media.

Since the last Council meeting in November 2019, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor had attended a variety of events, mostly related to Christmas. He highlighted a church service attended by the newly installed Bishop of Dover, Bishop Rose at Eastchurch who was the first female Bishop to celebrate Holy Communion on the Isle of Sheppey. The Mayor also spoke of his visit to Borden Church to see a collection of Christmas Cribs from across the World, owned by Libby Purves and used to raise funds for The Children's Society. He also spoke of the many Christmas events involving children, the lonely and elderly residents of the Borough and said that he and the Deputy Mayor supported the Oasis Dementia café events.

Finally the Mayor advised that his Civic Service would be held on the afternoon of Friday 27 March 2020 at St Georges School, Minster and would include pupils from local schools.

#### **416 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC**

There were no questions submitted by the public.

#### **417 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS**

The Mayor advised that 10 questions had been received from Members. Each Member was invited to put his/her question, which was responded by the relevant Cabinet Member. The questioner was then invited to ask a supplementary question.

Details of the questions and responses are set out below:

##### **Question 1 – Councillor Tim Gibson:**

In the general election campaign Gordon Henderson indicated on his leaflets that the level of housing numbers being imposed by the Government were excessive. In view of the strong mandate the Government now has to continue with its housing numbers, how should this Council lobby for more reasonable targets and what part would the Leader hope local MPs could play in this lobbying?

##### **Response – Leader**

It is appropriate that our Local MPs should take a position on the punitive levels of housing allocations being demanded of this Council because, contrary to some local misconceptions, the drive in this direction comes from their government not from this Council. The pressure is unrealistic, taking little account of the restraints we have in terms of land supply and the nature of the market here. As we demonstrate that existing targets cannot be met, the Government response is to augment the unrealistic target with inflated figures for future years. It is a case of finding out what cannot be done and then demanding more of it.

Considerable lobbying has already taken place through this administration with blunt words being directed at the then Minister for Local Government James Brokenshire and with our frustrations being loudly articulated at meetings with other Kent local authorities and at Thames Gateway and North Kent leaders. We have

also met with Homes England where our desire to re-balance housing supply in favour of affordable and social housing was well received but where we were told bluntly that the Government would be unrelenting in its target expectations.

And that was before a General Election that has greatly enhanced the Government's mandate to carry out all its policies including intensive housing growth in this and other South East boroughs. The Government can intensify the pressure, partly through appeal decisions and partly by making it obvious that infrastructure investment is not conditional on catching up on existing deficits but on the acceptance of radically increased housing allocations in the future.

So, any support from Mr Henderson would be welcome but he, like us, is facing an uphill task. I will discuss these matters with him, as I have done before, and I can report that he has arranged a meeting with Esther McVey at Westminster on 27th January 2020, always presuming that she is still Housing Minister then.

### **Supplementary Question and Response**

There was no supplementary question

### **Question 2 – Councillor Winckless**

During the General Election Campaign the newly elected M.P. for Sittingbourne and Sheppey said in a B.B.C. interview that it was not in his power to do anything about poverty. Is that your view as Leader of the Council that nothing can be done?

### **Response – Leader**

I think it is fair to say that what a politician can do when faced with individual cases is challenging, but, depending on circumstances, advice and moral support can be helpful. However, as politicians, with varying degrees of influence, we should consider the impact of policy at both National and Local level on the levels of poverty, which are too high in our Borough. The evidence we have before us is that welfare reform by central government is having an adverse impact locally. There are no instant transformative policies but over a period of time here in Swale we need to address many of the causes of deprivation. Too many in Swale suffer from in work poverty. Inadequate housing supply for those on average and low incomes needs to be tackled. We need better jobs, not any jobs, and that requires better outcomes for local people through education and training, with much greater opportunities for vocational training. Poverty in Swale also has its roots in poor health outcomes. Tackling poverty and underlying deprivation is a key driving force of the Coalition and so I would not be inclined to say on National TV that nothing can be done about it.

### **Supplementary Question and Response**

There was no supplementary question

### **Question 3 – Councillor Tim Gibson**

Once agreed, would you tell the Council how you expect the Heritage Strategy will add value to our review of the Local Plan?

**Response – Cabinet Member for Planning**

The Strategy has been drafted to help to ensure that the next version of the Local Plan has every chance of being found sound when that next plan reaches Local Plan Inquiry stage. By highlighting the extensive and important rich heritage within the Borough, we can ensure that our planning policies are fit for purpose and protect our heritage from adverse impacting development and responds to the National Planning Policy Frameworks recognition of the value that heritage should have in the Council's planning decision making.

It will also make the protection of our existing Conservation Areas, and the historic buildings within them, much easier, as up-to-date Assessments with effective management plans will carry far more weight than those that are several decades out of date and lack any management plans whatsoever.

This heritage strategy has very much been developed to display the Council's commitment to supporting existing local groups and initiatives that seek to promote, protect and/or enhance the historic environment in Swale Borough and in particular improve understanding. It is anticipated that the strategy's first action plan will complement the work of the many heritage focused local groups and initiatives and will go some way to ensuring that the historic environment in Swale receives the recognition, protection and positive management it deserves, given the benefits it brings to Swale Borough.

**Supplementary Question and Response**

There was no supplementary question

**Question 4 – Councillor Tim Valentine**

Can the Cabinet Member for Planning please provide an update on the status of any proposals for land at North Street on the A251 as some residents believe a development of 5,000 houses has already been approved?

**Response – Cabinet Member for Planning**

I would like to thank Cllr Valentine for bringing this issue forward. I am indeed aware that there is a persistent misrepresentation of the situation being promulgated from some quarters that the proposed North Street Garden Village has received some sort of permission. It's almost as if someone is going around attending Parish Councils and intentionally spreading untrue scare stories.

I am grateful for the opportunity to set the story straight.

The North Street Garden Village has NOT been given permission - none of the 4 schemes have. Further, there are no planning applications that have been submitted for the North Street scheme - so no permission could have been given

at any stage. If any such Application is submitted, it would go through the usual process and people would be fully aware of it and would have the opportunity to comment in the usual way. There are no back-room deals with developers and no behind the scenes approaches to Government Ministers to seek funding for favoured partners under this administration.

The land parcels that make up all 4 of the Garden Village proposals were submitted to the Council as part of the 'Call for Sites' exercise and will be assessed in line with government policy for their suitability as a potential development allocation. That said, a site being assessed as suitable does not necessarily mean it will become an allocation. These land parcels will be considered in the round along with every other proposal that has been put forward. A decision was taken by the Local Plan Panel in October that Swale would continue to treat all 4 Garden Village proposals equally at this stage, and not rule any in or out. This seemed the most pertinent approach given potential legal challenges that may have arisen had we differentiated between the different proposals on what Members considered were tenuous grounds.

The Council will be issuing a preferred future program for the revised Local Plan later this year.

### **Supplementary Question and Response**

There was no supplementary question

### **Question 5 – Councillor Denise Knights**

Could the Cabinet member give details as to how many households in temporary accommodation were placed in Bed and Breakfast over the Christmas period?

### **Response – Cabinet Member for Housing**

We continuously work towards keeping families out of B&B and placed into more local and suitable temporary accommodation. Prior to the Christmas period we managed to move all families into non-B&B accommodation. However, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> December one family presented as homeless and B&B accommodation was the only short-term accommodation available at this time.

### **Supplementary Question and Response**

Councillor Denise Knights asked what action was being taken to increase the supply of affordable housing and reduce the need for temporary accommodation?

In response, the Cabinet Member for Housing referred to the £10m of borrowing to be allocated to support affordable housing initiatives, agreed at the Cabinet Meeting on 18 December 2019, subject to final agreement through the budget process for 2020/21. He added that there had been meetings with housing providers to provide more affordable housing.

### **Question 6 – Councillor Benjamin A Martin**

On the 9th December, KCC appointed a contractor to temporarily remove the Faversham Creek Bridge. These works were scheduled to take 3 days, and reopen in time for Election Day. When the contractor lifted the bridge, they damaged the abutments which the bridge sits on. I have since been told that KCC knew that this might happen, however failed to prepare for this or warn the local businesses and residents.

As the ward member for Priory Ward which has been the worst effected area while these works are taking place, the latest update that I have received from KCC, is that the temporary bridge will not be in place before the 20th January 2020, some 7weeks from the start of the 3day project.

Is the Cabinet member aware of this problem, and what action can be taken by this council to insist that KCC mitigate the financial impact to the businesses, and the lack of connectivity for the residents?, both of which have been severely effected as a result of this appalling situation.

### **Response – Cabinet Member for Economy and Property**

We have had the following response from KCC:

*“On the 9th of December, after a period of planning and local engagement Kent County Council lifted Faversham Swing Bridge on to the riverbank.*

*Whilst the lift took longer than planned, and ultimately required two cranes, it was successful and contrary to the question raised did not damage the bridge or the abutments.*

*Once the bridge had been removed bridge integrity inspections were undertaken. This found that significant corrosion had occurred in locations that could not be accessed without the bridge being moved.*

*The inspection also assessed the condition of the now full exposed bridge abutments. Previous site inspections had identified surface cracking but it was only after the bridge was removed that it was possible to confirm that the crack propagated into the structural elements of the abutment.*

*KCC had, as a contingency, arranged for a temporary bridge to span the creek resting on the abutments. When issues with the integrity of the abutments were discovered, an alternative design was developed to span over the abutments and rest upon the existing highway.*

*By undertaking these inspections and delivering the restoration work in a controlled and logical manner we can ensure we keep road users, pedestrians and the communities safe now and in the future. We will not cut corners nor put anyone at risk and will remain committed to restoring this critical connection within Faversham.*

*I can confirm that the KCC Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport took time out to visit Faversham on 12 December to visit the site and observe the bridge for himself.*

*At this time he also inspected the additional work to provide improved pedestrian access through Flood Lane. These works are now complete and provide a safe, drained and well lit bituminous footway for all to use which will remain in place for the long term benefit of the local community."*

It appears the bridge will be repaired; they have not clarified the extent of the bridge work, if they will repair the swing mechanism as part of that now extensive work etc and offered no timings for the works. Their preparations have not been adequate as they did not expect wider damage, to my mind that is a failure to prepare.

It's clear the current situation is very disruptive for our local residents and businesses and is having a financial impact on them whilst the diversionary routes are in place. We will continue to put pressure on KCC to resolve the situation appropriately and expediently. KCC is prepared to come and brief members on progress an offer I have accepted.

### **Supplementary Question and Response**

There was no supplementary question.

### **Question 7 – Councillor Hannah Perkin**

Could the Cabinet member confirm what measures are being taken to improve air quality along Ospringe Street and at the junction of East street, Crescent Road and Newton Road Faversham, and a timescale for any required works?

### **Response – Councillor Tim Valentine**

Ospringe Street was declared as an Air Quality Management Area in June 2011 and revised to include the Mount in May 2016. The declaration is for exceedance of the annual average Air Quality Objective for nitrogen dioxide. Monitoring of NO<sub>x</sub> levels continues in Ospringe Street using both a continuous analyser and also diffusion tubes at 9 sites.

In consultation with the Faversham Society and following a comprehensive audit of diffusion tubes across the whole Swale Borough Council area, 4 additional NO<sub>x</sub> tube locations have been identified and agreed for Faversham for 2020. This makes at total of 7 locations being monitored in Faversham and 16 in the Ospringe/Faversham area as a whole.

The new sites in Faversham are:

- The Ashford bound carriageway of the A251 opposite the Fire Station.
- On the A2 at the junction with Preston Grove
- 17 East Street; and
- Crescent Road

Monitoring will start at the new sites on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2020 which means that the sites will be monitored alongside the existing sites and in accordance with National Diffusion Tube Monitoring Calendar which is laid down by Defra. Once a full year's

worth of monitoring has been undertaken and the results ratified and bias corrected, we will have a more accurate picture of the NO<sub>x</sub> levels in these areas.

Although Newton Road was monitored as part of the University of Kent's survey for the Faversham Society, levels here were well below the Air Quality Objective, so it was agreed that further monitoring was not required at this location.

The Council's 2019 Strategic Air Quality Action Plan, which was approved by Defra in September 2019, identifies a number of strategic and local actions to improve air quality. A number of these measures are already under way could influence air quality in the Ospringe and Faversham areas. These include:

- Revised and updated Planning Guidance on Air Quality for developments has been agreed and issued – this includes minimum requirements for electric vehicle infrastructure and low NO<sub>x</sub> boilers for all new developments throughout the district.
- Invitations to tender have been sent to 5 specialist air quality consultants for a feasibility study into the introduction of a clean air corridor along the A2 in the borough. Quotations are invited to be submitted by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020 with a view to submitting the initial feasibility study in May 2020.
- Discussions regarding the introduction of anti-idling legislation under the Road Traffic (Vehicle Emissions) (Fixed Penalty) (England) Regulations 2002 are underway with a report to be submitted to Cabinet shortly.
- Ospringe Primary School is already participating in the Clean Air for Schools scheme promoted and managed by Swale Borough Council. This scheme works with schools to look at ways to increase local knowledge of air pollution and influence behaviour change in parents, children and teachers. The scheme includes measures to encourage more journeys to school to be made on foot.

A joint application has been submitted by Swale Borough Council and Arriva to Defra for an Air Quality Grant for an electric bus. If successful, 2 routes have been identified as being suitable for an electric bus. One of these is the route between Faversham and Sittingbourne. We will know whether we have been successful in the bid later this year.

### **Supplementary Question and Response**

Councillor Hannah Perkin asked if there were any plans to make particulates a priority?

The Cabinet Member for Environment said that there was particulate monitoring in Ospringe and in St. Paul's, Sittingbourne which currently measured PM10's but in future it was hoped that PM2.5's could be measured.

**Councillor Steve Davey and Councillor Simon Clark were not in attendance at the meeting but their questions and responses are set out below:**

**Question 8 – Councillor Steve Davey**

What progress has been made in establishing a fit for purpose response capability for rough sleepers in the borough, with particular reference to the out of hours service currently based in Medway as part of the CCTV contract.

**Response – Cabinet Member for Housing**

As members will be aware, we established a rough sleeping service in 2019. The work to the service has been very positive and we have managed to accommodate a large number of rough sleepers and continue to offer support to those that are not housed. As with access to all services a verification process is needed prior to offering accommodation, and this can leave some individuals on the street until this has been completed. This process is always given priority. Not all people that are sleeping rough are ready to accept help from the Council.

The current out of hours service for all housing options services is managed as part of the CCTV contract. We are looking at new provision when this service is brought back in house.

**Question 9 – Councillor Steve Davey**

What pressure is being put on major housing developers within the Borough to abandon the contentious leasehold schemes that make it difficult for owners of houses bought under the Help to Buy Scheme to sell their house on, particularly as some developers have a history of misleading potential purchasers over the levels of ground rent and the practice of selling on the leasehold to third party investors?

**Response – Cabinet Member for Housing**

The Help to Buy shared ownership scheme is a government led initiative to help people get on the property ladder. Negotiation with developers takes places regarding the level of affordable housing on a development, which as members will be aware is set out in the Local Plan and viability is also considered. Our preference is to maximise the amount of affordable rented properties provided but there is a need to help individuals get on the property ladder and appropriate level of shared ownership therefore needs to be included. There is a marketplace for resale of shared ownership properties. The Government announced in 2019 plans for legislation to address the leasehold concerns and selling practices, I am keen to see this legislation come forward.

**Question 10 – Councillor Simon Clark**

The Queen's speech that followed the general election contained no reference to the climate emergency. How do you think this might impact on this authority's determination to reduce carbon emissions?

**Response – Cabinet Member for Environment**

It is very likely that globally, 2019 will be the second warmest year on record; July was the warmest month ever recorded; and the last decade will be the warmest on record. Global heating has now reached 1.1°C above pre-industrial temperatures, while the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is still increasing at an accelerating rate.

2019 wild fires have spread across the Amazon, California, Indonesia and Australia. Bushfires in Australia alone have killed 24 people, destroying almost 2000 homes and estimated to have affected half a billion animals. Closer to home dozens of towns and villages across England were flooded due to exceptional rainfall as rivers, including the Medway, burst their banks.

In this context it is very disappointing that the Queen's speech did not refer to the climate emergency.

I was pleased to see that the Queen's speech did include a commitment to "continue to take steps to meet the world-leading target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050." However, carbon neutrality by 2050 is not world-leading. It is the latest date by which the world must achieve carbon neutrality if we are to avoid more than 1.5°C of global heating, as agreed at Paris in 2015. The Government's target ignores the principle that the developed world should cut faster and deeper than the developing nations. Even with a target date for carbon neutrality of 2050, the pathway recommended by scientists requires a reduction of approximately 80% by 2030. Whether the target date is 2050 or 2030 deep cuts in carbon emissions must be made now.

Government policy will not affect our determination to reduce carbon emissions. In Swale, as we will hear later in this meeting, good progress is being made towards our target to make the council's operations carbon neutral by 2025. I remain confident that we will be able to achieve this target. However, the council's operations account for only 1% of carbon emissions in Swale. As a council we do not have the power to control the carbon emissions generated across the borough. We can only become a beacon of good practice, and through our policies encourage residents and businesses to make the right choices. To meet the target of Swale being carbon neutral by 2030 we have to insulate 3,604 homes per year; electrify the heating of 2,181 homes per year; encourage 40% of people to commute by public transport, cycling or walking (up from 22%); install 65 public EV chargers; double the amount of tree cover from 8%; and increase recycling from 41% to 70%.

These targets are challenging but most people now say they are willing to make changes in their lifestyle to tackle the climate emergency and 265 councils have declared a climate emergency. Support from central Government through both new legislation and provision of funding will be essential to meet our targets. We will continue to lobby Government for the support required.

#### **418 LEADER'S STATEMENT**

The Leader was pleased to report to Council that the Development Agreement with the consortium "Spirit of Sittingbourne" had ended. He said that this meant that the plans to build over 200 high rise apartments on three Sittingbourne town centre sites would not now go ahead, and that these sites had been allocated free of

cost to the developers by the previous Council. They included the Cockleshell Walk and Spring Street car parks and the land next to Fountain Street. The Leader said that Phase 2 of the Sittingbourne Town centre project, involving development at Swale House and around the centre of the town, near the Swallows Leisure Centre and library, was now cancelled and any pressure for further capital borrowing on unlikely projects had been avoided. The Leader added that Spirit of Sittingbourne would complete the Cinema, restaurants and hotel development in the Forum but thereafter would not be involved in the regeneration of Sittingbourne.

In reference to the Development Agreement, the Leader said that the project was not the best way to regenerate Sittingbourne as a town, as it tried to do too much inside the confines of one project when a series of more specific plans might have been more productive. He said it was beyond the capacity of the Council to deliver, and too much control was handed over to one developer partner. The Leader said that, as a result, the Council, over the last 7 years or so, had been over dependent for delivery on that one partner and this had made the process too slow, with too many delays and, in reference to the roadworks, frustrating and below expectations. He added that, from the start, there had been a lack of clarity and certainty about funding which eventually led to the Council, in 2017, deciding to become the main investor, with all the risks that that could entail. He said that the Council had borrowed a lot of money and must do all it could to ensure that this was not a financial burden over the next few years. The Leader said that the Council had worked together in achieving its own Withdrawal Agreement with finesse.

In considering the potential benefits, the Leader said that it gave the Council, in consultation with the local community, the chance to take control again of how it wanted Sittingbourne to develop, to encourage the High Street in a realistic and responsible way and to preserve the heritage of the town and in the interests of local people. The Leader went on to say that the Car parks in the Fountain Street sites should never have been handed over to the developers and it would be a relief to many local residents that the high-rise flats would not be built. He said that the Council would now be able to use these sites in the best interests and needs of local people.

In reference to the rest of Phase 1 (the cinema, hotel and restaurants), the Leader said this was due to be completed in the early part of 2020, and progress was being closely monitored. Looking forward, the Leader said that it was important that everyone, sometime doubters included, needed to generate a positive view of this development, in the interests of the Council, but also the wider community. He reminded Members that the departure from recent policy had the full support of the Coalition Cabinet but also, importantly, was condoned by the Scrutiny Committee. The Leader said that there was unity that this was in the best interests of the Council and the people it represented and the concern had been to negotiate a path that would:

- Give everyone greater control over development in the town;
- protect the financial interests of all Swale's Council taxpayers; and
- address some of the real needs of the whole of Swale and move the focus of regeneration into other parts of the Borough.

The Leader said that this outcome was the result of months of meticulous work by officers in close contact with key cabinet members and he thanked the Director of Regeneration, the Head of Housing, Economy and Community and the Chief Financial Officer for their input. He added that this change of direction was a signal moment which he hoped would be welcomed by residents.

Speaking of the future, the Leader said that there had been much preliminary discussion driven by local need and fiscal responsibility, and one part of these discussions has been a continuing drive to base further education in the centre of Sittingbourne. He said that this did not only matter considerably to the skills and employability agenda but that the daily presence of large numbers of students would add much to the viability of the town centre as a whole, including the Spirit of Sittingbourne development. The Leader said that there had been a number of meetings with further education providers and he had visited both the Sheppey College and Canterbury College. He highlighted that the main obstacle was that the retention of post 16 youngsters in the local Secondary schools allowed providers to argue that there was not a large enough cohort to justify the investment so it was strategically important that if and when the new school came on stream in North West Sittingbourne, its age designation be 11-16 and not 11-18. The Leader explained that, under the current Government, it would have to be a free school, with local authority influence being limited. He said there would be further visits and discussions with key figures at Canterbury College, also involving the MP for Sittingbourne and Sheppey.

The Leader advised that, with the help of the Local Government Association, there would be a review of the Management Structure in the next few months.

Finally, the Leader said he hoped all Members felt that they had a role to play in promoting a positive view of the Borough and he referred to the rich heritage and history, areas of outstanding natural beauty and a stunning coastline. He said there needed to be more positivity around Swale's more urban areas and encouraged all Councillors to promote this.

In response, the Leader of the Conservative group thanked the Leader and encouraged all Members to join in celebrating the success of Phase 1 of the Sittingbourne Town Centre Regeneration project. He gave his commiserations to those that were unsuccessful in the recent General Election and highlighted the overwhelming support of Mr Gordon Henderson MP.

The Leader of the Conservative group thanked Councillor Denise Knights for highlighting housing families at Christmas in her Council question, and stressed that no family should be in bed and breakfast accommodation at Christmas. He congratulated the Cabinet Member for Housing for ensuring that as few families as possible spent Christmas in bed and breakfast accommodation.

In response, the Leader thanked the leader of the Conservative group and spoke of the diversity in local politics. He advised that he met with Mr Gordon Henderson MP monthly.

**419 PROGRESS ON THE CLIMATE CHANGE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY DECLARATION**

The Cabinet Member for Environment introduced the report and referred to the motion agreed at Council on 26 June 2019, when Swale Borough Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency. He acknowledged the amendment submitted by Councillor Nicholas Hampshire in pledging that an annual progress report be submitted to Council every January.

The Cabinet Member for Environment went through the progress highlights on page 6 of the report drawing particular attention to the work under way by the Carbon Trust in developing an action plan to achieve net zero carbon by 2025 on the Council's own estate, including the refurbishment of Swale House. He spoke of the energy efficiency measures requested in planning applications for new developments as well as the provision of new Electrical Vehicle (EV) chargers in the Borough, including near junction 6 of the M2.

In response, the Leader congratulated the Cabinet Member for Environment and Members and officers of the steering group.

The Leader of the Conservative group was critical and disappointed with the lack of progress in the report, and said that it lacked information on the changes required and the impact on residents and businesses in Swale who would need advance warning on what they should do and the policies being introduced to help them, or that may place obstructions in their way, so they could prepare for the longer term. He questioned the costs and unrealistic timescales of insulating properties and whilst acknowledging the approval from DEFRA in September 2019 for the Air Quality Management Plan, reminded Members that this was written by the previous administration. The Leader of the Conservative group questioned what the targets were and how they would be measured, and raised concern over the costs to the public. Lastly, the leader of the Conservative group questioned whether other services in the Council would be reduced to pay for the plan.

Other Members raised points which included:

- Not enough detail in the report;
- developers needed to know what was required before submitting a planning application;
- there were no on-street charging points, as there were in other Boroughs;
- disappointed that the steering group was not cross-party;
- few solutions;
- needed to have the electric bus depot in the Borough ;
- the new hotel had new electric charging points;
- it took time for changes to filter through;
- there would be more control now that SBC were free from Spirit of Sittingbourne;
- it was work in progress;
- 20's plenty would not necessarily assist;

- glad to see single use plastic reduction;
- what plans were there to support initiatives such as the recently approved storage facilities at Nicholls Transport?;
- how would the needs of the largest Industrial site in Kent be met and allowed to continue to grow and thrive?;
- needed sustainable communities, not being car dependent;
- should aim high, there was lots to do but were restricted;
- should lobby Central Government to seek a policy change on the restriction of solar panels on school buildings;
- drew attention to Plastic Free Sheerness;
- why turn down development on Cockleshell Walk if sustainable communities were necessary?;
- highlighted that the amendment to the motion pledged to take steps to avoid any adverse impacts on the most vulnerable residents; the policies should not be disproportionate;
- if more SBC staff worked from home, what would be the impact on customers to the building?;
- use of technology – could Council meetings be carried out via SKYPE?; and
- it was difficult to retro fit insulation, especially to Listed Buildings.

The Cabinet Member for Environment, thanked Members for their enthusiasm and questioned what the previous administration had achieved in their long-term history. He highlighted the out of town retail park for car users with no entrance from the train station and the multi-storey car park.

The Cabinet Member for Environment welcomed the change in attitude of all Members. He said that this report was the first produced, and was a progress report not an action plan which would be presented to Full Council on 1 April 2020. The Cabinet Member for Environment said it was too early to give full budget details, welcomed good ideas and sources of funding and explained that KCC needed to be involved to install EV charging, to meet demand. He added that Plastic Free for Sheerness would be supported, working remotely had already seen a reduction in paper and the priority was for the building of carbon neutral affordable properties near transport links, not 4/5 bedroom homes on greenfield sites.

***Resolved:***

***(1) That progress be noted.***

**420 APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODIES - QUEENBOROUGH FISHERIES TRUST**

The Mayor announced that Item 11 – Appointment to Outside Bodies – Queenborough Fisheries Trust and Item 12 – Appointment to Outside Bodies – Faversham Pools had been withdrawn from the Agenda, and he asked the Leader to speak.

The Leader explained that more consideration was required for Outside Body appointments since it had been many years since the last review. He advised that the matter would come back to Members for consideration in due course.

**421 APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODIES - FAVERSHAM POOLS**

This item was withdrawn from the Agenda.

**422 APPOINTMENT OF LOCAL INDEPENDENT MEMBERS FOR SWALE TO THE INDEPENDENT MEMBERS' REMUNERATION PANEL**

The Mayor referred to the exempt appendix and Members indicated there would be no discussion on it.

The Leader proposed and the Leader of the Conservative group seconded the recommendations in the report.

***Resolved:***

***(1) That the extension of the appointment of Mr Lionel Robbins as a Local Independent Member for Swale to the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel for a further three year term of office be agreed.***

***(2) That the appointment of Mr Christopher Webb as a Local Independent Member for Swale to the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel for a three year term of office be agreed.***

***(3) That it be noted that Independent Members of the Independent Remuneration Panel is restricted to two consecutive three year terms of office to maintain their independence.***

**423 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPROVAL**

***Resolved:***

***(1) That the recommendations in Minute No.401 from the Cabinet meeting held on 18 December 2019 be noted.***

**424 EXEMPT APPENDICES FOR APPOINTMENT OF LOCAL INDEPENDENT MEMBERS REMUNERATION PANEL**

There was no discussion on the exempt appendices.

Chairman

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