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## ANNUAL COUNCIL

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**MINUTES** of the remote Annual Council meeting held on Wednesday, 15 July 2020 from 7.00pm - 11.10 pm.

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

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Martyn Cassell, David Clifford, Philippa Davies, Heather Elliott, Robin Harris, Chris Lovelock, Kellie MacKenzie, Jo Millard, Nick Vickers and Emma Wiggins.

### 1 PRAYERS

The retiring Mayor's Chaplain, Father Colin Johnson opened the meeting with prayers.

### INTRODUCTION

The Mayor explained that the meeting would be conducted in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panel (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No. 392.

In welcoming all Members and members of the public, the Mayor explained which Swale Borough Council officers were in attendance.

### 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No interests were declared.

The Leader of the opposition expressed his deep regret and offered his sincere apologies for the comments he had made during a debate at Full Council on 17 June 2020 and the distress they had caused. He unreservedly retracted any allegation of wrong-doing by anyone.

On behalf of the Cabinet, the Leader welcomed the statement by the Leader of the opposition and detailed some of the effect his original comments had caused. He concluded by encouraging Members to move on.

**3 APPOINTMENT OF MAYOR**

The retiring Mayor advised that the decision to appoint a Mayor-elect had been taken at the Council meeting held on 26 February 2020, where it was resolved that Councillor Paul Stephen would be elected Mayor for the civic year 2020/21.

Councillor Monique Bonney gave a speech to support the decision to elect Councillor Paul Stephen as Mayor, and Councillor Mike Baldock spoke to endorse the decision.

**4 APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY MAYOR**

The retiring Mayor advised that the decision to appoint a Deputy Mayor-elect was taken at the Council meeting on 26 February 2020, where it was resolved that Councillor Benjamin A Martin be elected Deputy Mayor for the civic year 2020/21.

Councillor Ben J Martin gave a speech to support the decision to elect Councillor Benjamin Martin as Deputy Mayor and Councillor Denise Knights spoke to endorse the decision.

**5 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE BY INCOMING MAYOR**

The Mayor read and signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office and announced that Councillor Mrs Sarah Stephen would be his Mayoress for the Mayoral Year.

The Mayor thanked the retiring Mayor and spoke of the change in role to virtual Mayor during the pandemic, and he praised the retiring Mayor for his chairing of virtual meetings. The Mayor said he hoped to be able to meet residents personally when social distance rules had lifted and advised that his first function as Mayor would be to send a recorded message and attend the East Kent MENCAP virtual fun day.

In outlining his plans for his Mayoral Year, the Mayor said that he hoped to be at the forefront of Swale Borough Council (SBC's) recovery from the pandemic with officers and members working together. He referred to the hard work of officers and volunteers working through the pandemic.

The Mayor asked members to consider where help was needed the most when allocating their member grant money.

The Mayor said he hoped to reach out to Swale residents to give help and reassurance that SBC was there for them and would give the best service it could provide.

The Mayor explained that he would not be appointing a cadet in his Mayoral Year but would support schools and youth organisations in the Borough.

Finally, the Mayor, reflecting on the diversity of the population, said he would not be appointing a Chaplain for the civic year but would attend services of any faith.

**Resolved:**

***(1) That the decision made at the Council meeting on 26 February 2020 to elect Councillor Paul Stephen as Mayor for the Civic Year 2020 to 2021 be endorsed.***

**6 DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE BY INCOMING DEPUTY MAYOR**

The Deputy Mayor read and signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office and announced that Mrs Eve Martin would be his Deputy Mayoress for the Mayoral Year. He said they, along with their 3 daughters, were looking forward to supporting the Mayor and Mayoress in the coming year.

The Deputy Mayor said that new ways to engage with businesses and residents of the Borough would be required in the current unprecedented times. He said he looked forward to the challenge and hoped to encourage people to become involved in local politics and to represent their communities.

He thanked the outgoing Mayor and Deputy Mayor and said they had set a good example to follow.

**Resolved:**

***(1) That the decision made at the Council meeting on 26 February 2020 to elect Councillor Benjamin A Martin as Deputy Mayor for the Civic Year 2020 to 2021 be endorsed.***

**7 VOTE OF THANKS TO RETIRING MAYOR**

Councillor Mike Whiting proposed and Councillor Alan Horton seconded a vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor and Mayoress. Councillor Whiting gave a history of the retiring Mayor's professional career and involvement in various projects on the Isle of Sheppey and in bringing his career experience to his role as a Borough Councillor. He outlined his continued involvement in many organisations and praised his work during his term of office as Mayor.

Councillor Horton referred to the retiring Mayor's previous term as Mayor in 1986/87 and said that the retiring Mayor was highly regarded. He spoke of the retiring Mayor's representation of SBC at a Royal Garden Party in Buckingham Palace and of his attendance at the Annual Remembrance Battle of Britain Memorial. On behalf of the opposition group, he wished the incoming Mayor and Deputy Mayor well in their new role.

In his response, the retiring Mayor compared his current term as Mayor with his previous term in 1986/87. He said that the best part of being Mayor was seeing the diversity and meeting people within the Borough.

The retiring Mayor said that he had not attended any charitable events outside of Swale that did not benefit local organisations, but that some donated funds would be divided between the Sheerness RNL and the Air Ambulance Kent, Surrey and Sussex.

The retiring Mayor said that on average he attended four events per week in his role as Mayor, most of which were a pleasure to attend. He thanked the organisations who had invited him to their events and spoke of the diverse occasions he had attended.

The retiring Mayor thanked his chaplain, Father Colin Johnson, all Council staff, especially Democratic Services, and the Deputy Mayor for his support in attending more events than was usually expected. He also thanked the Mayor's PA, Mayor's attendant and cover attendant, and all Members.

Finally the retiring Mayor thanked his wife for fulfilling the role of Mayoress.

## **8 VOTE OF THANKS TO RETIRING DEPUTY MAYOR**

Councillor James Hunt proposed and Councillor Mike Dendor seconded a vote of thanks to the retiring Deputy Mayor. Councillor Hunt said that the retiring Deputy Mayor had worked hard to fulfil the role and had received much positive feedback. He highlighted the visits of the retiring Deputy Mayor to many care homes, and two 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebrations.

Councillor Mike Dendor praised the retiring Deputy Mayor for his attitude in supporting the Mayor, and in the experience he had gained from the retiring Mayor. He spoke of the retiring Deputy Mayor's time spent attending and supporting various organisations, and the many new friends that he had made during his time in the role. He gave the incoming Mayor and Deputy Mayor his good wishes but also reflected on the experience the retiring Deputy Mayor had gained to prepare him for the Mayor role that would not be utilised.

In response, the retiring Deputy Mayor thanked Councillors Hunt and Dendor for their kind words. He also thanked the retiring Mayor for allowing him to attend visits on his behalf both in and out of the area. The retiring Deputy Mayor spoke fondly of his visits to care homes, delivering letters from the Queen to two 100 year olds and attending Gay Pride celebrations with the Mayor of Faversham amongst other memorable events. He spoke of the people that he had met, including a WWII Veteran he had befriended.

The retiring Deputy Mayor spoke about many other events he had attended including a visit to Penshurst Place where he had met Jools Holland, the presentation of awards to Sheppey Sea cadets and a visit to Phoenix House, Sittingbourne on Boxing Day, to Companionship at Christmas where he received a very warm welcome.

The retiring Deputy Mayor expressed his disappointment at not being chosen as Mayor following his experience as Deputy Mayor, but wished the incoming Mayor and Deputy Mayor good luck for the civic year 2020/21.

The retiring Deputy Mayor thanked the Mayor's attendant and cover attendant, and the Mayor's PA.

**9 ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMITTEES AND THEIR TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Leader introduced the report which asked the Council to establish the Committees of the Council for the municipal year 2020/21 and to agree their terms of reference.

The Leader proposed and the Deputy Leader of the opposition seconded the recommendation.

**Resolved:**

***(1) That the Committees of the Council and Terms of Reference, as set out in Appendix I to the report, be agreed for the 2020/21 municipal year.***

**10 ALLOCATION OF COMMITTEE SEATS AND COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS FOR 2020/21**

The Leader introduced the report and proposed recommendations 1 and 2 which were seconded by Councillor Angela Harrison.

The Deputy Leader proposed an amendment to recommendation 1, that the unallocated seat on the Licensing Act 2003 be gifted to the ungrouped Member, Councillor Mini Nissanga. This was seconded by Councillor Monique Bonney and on being put to the vote, recommendations 1 and 2 were agreed.

As the chairmanships were contested for the General Licensing and Licensing Act 2003 Committees, Members of those Committees took a vote to appoint the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Committee Members voted to appoint Councillor Derek Carnell as Chairman, and Councillor Tony Winckless as Vice-Chairman, on both Committees.

The Leader proposed and Councillor Ben J Martin seconded recommendation 3 and on being put to the vote, the recommendation was agreed.

**Resolved:**

***(1) That the political balance calculation as set out in Appendix 1 and amended to allocate the unallocated Licensing Act 2003 seat to the ungrouped Member, be agreed.***

***(2) That the allocation of seats to Committees, in accordance with the wishes of Group Leaders, as set out Appendix I to these minutes, be agreed. And that the Leader's appointments to the Cabinet and their portfolios be noted.***

***(3) That the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committees as set out in Appendix II to these minutes, updated to included Councillor Derek Carnell and Councillor Tony Winckless as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the General Licensing Committee and the Licensing Act 2003 Committee for the municipal year 2020/21 be agreed.***

**11 BOROUGH COUNCIL NOMINATIONS TO OUTSIDE BODIES, TRUSTS ADMINISTERED BY SWALE BOROUGH COUNCIL AND STATUTORY BODIES**

The Leader introduced the report which set out the nominations received from all Groups. He proposed the recommendations which were seconded by the Deputy Leader.

The Monitoring Officer explained the voting procedure in respect of those outside bodies that had more nominations than seats as below. In order to simplify voting, Members agreed to suspend standard orders:

- Actions with Communities in Rural Kent;
- Citizens Advice Service Swale (formerly CAB);
- Council for Voluntary Services (CVS);
- Kent Downs AONB Joint Advisory Committee;
- Lower Medway Internal Drainage Board;
- Oare Gunpowder Works Advisory Group;
- Sheppey Matters; and
- West Faversham Community Association.

Upon being put to the vote, the Monitoring Officer announced the results. The complete list of outside body appointments are attached as an Appendix to these Minutes.

**Resolved:**

***(1) That the Borough Council nominations on outside bodies and trusts administered by Swale Borough Council and statutory bodies be as set out in Appendix III to these minutes.***

## **12 CONFIRMATION OF TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2020/21**

The Leader referred to the Timetable of Meetings 2020/21 and explained that there would be changes to it throughout the municipal year due to the Covid-19 crisis. He proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Benjamin A Martin.

The Leader advised that the schedule would be updated with more detail and circulated as soon as possible.

The Leader of the opposition commended the Monitoring Officer and Democratic Services staff for their work in setting up and holding remote meetings. The Monitoring Officer explained that the Coronavirus Regulations allowed more flexibility in moving dates for necessary meetings but going forward, the Timetable of Meetings schedule would be followed more closely when possible.

**Resolved:**

***(1) That the timetable of meetings for the 2020/21 municipal year be noted.***

**13 AMENDMENTS TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES - LEADER'S STATEMENT**

The Leader introduced the report which proposed changes to the Council procedure rules to allow more members than the Leader of the opposition to respond to the Leader's statement. He said that the changes would be trialled and he proposed the recommendation which was seconded by the Deputy Leader.

The Leader of the opposition group said that whilst the changes did go some way to address the inclusion of more members to respond, he hoped the changes would be reviewed again in the future if necessary.

**Resolved:**

***(1) That the revised wording in paragraph 3.1 be incorporated into the Constitution.***

**14 URGENT ITEM- ECONOMIC RECOVERY**

In proposing the recommendation, Councillor Angela Harrison said that the proposal for a short-term car parking concession was to give additional time necessary whilst queuing to use a shop during the current pandemic. Councillor Nicholas Hampshire seconded the recommendation and reserved his right to speak.

A Member did not support the proposal as he was in favour of building a greener aspect to the new normal, rather than encouraging the use of vehicles. He added that the £109k estimated costs offered poor value, it could not be implemented in the multi-storey car park or used efficiently via the Ringo app, it would not support the economic recovery and it worked against the priorities of the administration.

In response, the Leader said that residents were still reluctant to shop during the current pandemic and this was a modest, affordable proposal. He said that it would not increase footfall, but could encourage visitors to stay longer and visit cafes or other shops, and was a first step in trying to assist the local economy.

In the debate that following, points were raised including:

- A quick solution was needed;
- free parking might not be worthwhile but the country was in unusual times, and the proposals supported local businesses;
- this was not the right solution but a step in the right direction;
- the proposal did not go far enough to address the recent road closures which were not helping the towns' businesses;
- would support as a temporary mitigation measure;
- should not be encouraging the use of cars;
- should have consulted local businesses and people;
- was important that SBC helped town centre businesses;
- clarified that the 10mins extension time for parking was still included;
- encouraged people back into the High Street;

- suggested fencing every other bay in the High Street so that free bays could still be used safely;
- could not support due to impact on environment versus lack of impact in supporting businesses;
- free parking was not the answer, the safety of shoppers in town centres was the most important aspect; and
- a good solution to an ill-thought out policy to close the High Street to traffic.

Councillor Lloyd Bowen moved that the recommendation be put to the vote. This was seconded by the Deputy Leader. On being put to the vote, the motion was agreed.

Councillor Nicholas Hampshire, as seconder who had reserved his right to speak, thanked the administration for considering his idea of parking concessions to assist in the recovery response. He said that the proposal was a good compromise on the original proposals of 30 minutes free parking in a changed shopping environment, and could be implemented quickly without upfront costs to the Council. He added that the proposal showed that SBC were taking action to kick-start shopping in the town centres.

Councillor Angela Harrison, in her right to reply as proposer, reiterated that the proposal was not about increasing footfall but about giving extra time to those that now had to queue. She said there was little opportunity to consult as the situation evolved but the High Street needed to be made safer for residents and she hoped that, if agreed, the proposal would encourage more people to shop.

**Resolved:**

***(1) That a short-term car parking concession as part of the Council's response to Covid 19, specifically a free additional 30 minutes on all parking tickets purchased from 18 July to 30 September 2020, be agreed.***

**15 ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING**

The meeting was adjourned from 8.31pm to 8.41pm.

**16 EXTENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

At 10pm, 10.30pm and 11pm, Members agreed to the suspension of Standing Orders so that the Council could complete its business.

Chairman

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