
COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting held in The Sapling Room, The Appleyard, Avenue of Remembrance, Sittingbourne ME10 4DE on Wednesday, 12 October 2022 from 7.00 pm - 9.46 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Mike Baldock, Cameron Beart, Monique Bonney, Roger Clark, Simon Clark (Mayor), Richard Darby, Steve Davey, Mike Dendor, Oliver Eakin, Tim Gibson, Alastair Gould, Ann Hampshire, Nicholas Hampshire, Angela Harrison, Alan Horton, James Hunt, Ken Ingleton, Carole Jackson, Elliott Jayes, Peter Marchington, Ben J Martin, Lee McCall, Pete Neal, Padmini Nissanga, Richard Palmer, Hannah Perkin, Ken Pugh, Ken Rowles, Julian Saunders, David Simmons, Paul Stephen, Sarah Stephen (Deputy Mayor), Bill Tatton, Eddie Thomas, Roger Truelove, Tim Valentine, Mike Whiting, Tony Winckless and Corrie Woodford.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Philippa Davis, Robin Harris, Jo Millard and Larissa Reed.

PRESENT REMOTELY: Councillor Lloyd Bowen and Councillor James Hall.

OFFICERS PRESENT REMOTELY: Flo Churchill, Lisa Fillery and Emma Wiggins.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Derek Carnell, Denise Knights, Peter Macdonald and Ghlin Whelan.

373 **EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Mayor outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

374 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on 27 July 2022 (Minute Nos. 219 – 229) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

375 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No interests were declared.

376 **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor said that the highlight of the most recent engagements he had attended was the Faversham Hop Festival and he was pleased to see so many people enjoying themselves. The Mayor reminded Members that details had been circulated for his Mayor's Charity Quiz on 18th November at The Appleyard, Avenue of Remembrance, Sittingbourne.

Due to illness, the Mayor had been unable to attend some engagements and he thanked the Deputy Mayor Councillor Sarah Stephen for attending on his behalf. He said he was disappointed not to be able to attend the Pride of the Island awards which the Deputy Mayor had attended instead, and she had done a sterling job of representing the Council.

Councillor David Simmons then led the tributes to former Councillor and Mayor of Swale Honorary Alderman George Bobbin who sadly passed away recently. He said Alderman Bobbin worked hard for his residents, particularly in encouraging the return of a village Police Officer, and he had sat on Boughton-under-Blean Parish Council for nearly 40 years. Councillor Simmons referred to Alderman Bobbin's term as Mayor from 2014-15 and said he would be sadly missed. Councillor Mike Henderson said he had known Alderman Bobbin before he was elected as a Councillor, when he was a customer at Alderman Bobbin's butcher's shop, and he was always polite, thoughtful and friendly. He sent his condolences to family and friends. Councillor Roger Truelove said he admired Alderman Bobbin for never making political comments and he spoke of his successful term as Mayor and on his time sitting on the Planning Committee.

There was a minute's silence in memory of former Councillor and Mayor of Swale, Alderman George Bobbin.

The Mayor informed Members he would be bringing forward the Urgent Motion, Item 7 – Condolences to the Royal Family to be heard before the Leader's Statement.

377 URGENT MOTION - CONDOLENCES TO THE ROYAL FAMILY

In proposing the motion, the Leader said he had felt numb at the news of the Queen's passing. He said that the Queen had been a constant for so many people, had united generations across the world and she was inspirational. In seconding the motion, Councillor Alan Horton reserved his right to speak.

A member spoke in support of the motion.

Councillor Horton then spoke of watching the crowds of public on the TV, passing the body in state, which showed the depth of feeling of people throughout the world. He said the Queen had a role in people's hearts. Councillor Horton then sympathised with the Royal Family who had to share their grief in public.

In summing up the Leader referred to the final line of the motion and then said 'God save the King'.

The motion was then put to the vote and members voted unanimously to support it.

Resolved:

(1) That the Council joins with the Mayor in sending its sincere condolences to His Majesty King Charles III and the entire Royal family on the death of Queen Elizabeth II. We remember with affection, respect and sincere gratitude the Queen's lifetime of duty and of tireless service to the people of our

country, the Commonwealth and the world. We are consoled in our sadness by the hope which is inherent in the passing of the Crown to a new generation, and we look forward with optimism to the coronation of our new Sovereign. God save the King!

378 LEADER'S STATEMENT

The Leader said that it had been a momentous period since the last Council meeting in July 2022, with the country sadly losing a Queen, and gaining a King and a new Prime Minister. He referred to the high temperatures during the hot summer and of the highest levels of inflation, not experienced for decades. In referring to the impact of the cost of living crisis, energy crises and chaotic Government, the Leader spoke of the uncertainty the country were experiencing.

The Leader said that the Government were continuing to expect Councils to respond to proposals with tight schedules without sufficient details and he recounted a recent example of Kent County Council (KCC) being invited by Government to offer an expression of interest in an Investment Zone Project bid without any details being available, forms to provide information continually changing or not being available online, detailed information required at short notice, and liaison with district Councils necessary to collate information. The Leader said that officers had spent a lot of time working to provide information but whilst criteria had still not been set out, information was then received from Government that there was an expectation that additional development including housing would be built in an Investment Zone. He said that given the unsustainable levels of housing numbers already forced upon Councils by Government, the bid was therefore not pursued by Swale Borough Council (SBC). The Leader said that it would be easier and cheaper for developers of those other authorities that were pursuing the grant to push through development, and he spoke about the resource impact on officers collating information. He was critical of the chaotic processes inflicted by Government and the rampant inflation, economic mayhem, energy uncertainty and constant changes by Government and he warned of the impact it would have on what SBC could do for its residents. The Leader said a miracle was needed.

In response, the Leader of the main opposition group thanked the Leader for his statement and said he agreed with much of what had been said. He said he had recently spoken with the Council's Section 151 Officer about the difficult processes required to receive funding from Government. The Leader of the main opposition group then gave his own example from schools in the area who had similar difficulties due to criteria in applying for grant funding.

Other members were invited to speak, and points raised included:

- The Government was in chaos yet expected Councils to set their own budgets without providing any information on grant funding they would be allocating;
- was critical of Government's mini budget and the resultant doubling of the interest borrowing rates for local Councils;
- expressed fears over the impact on contracts;
- spoke of the effect that the current financial issues would have on affordable housing projects;

- referred to the ever changing goalposts from Government when bidding for funding;
- was critical of the Government encouraging more housing when public were struggling to afford mortgages;
- needed to address the impact on SBC's budget and suggested it work with other Kent authorities and the Local Government Association to approach Government ministers for help;
- concerned that SBC could just about provide statutory obligations provided it did not provide non-statutory obligations, such as leisure facilities and enforcement, and said Local Government had to stand up to Government;
- with reference to the hot summer, said that Government was still not addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency;
- spoke about how lack of action from Government was affecting nature and wildlife and said the Climate Emergency would cause mass immigration as large parts of the world became uninhabitable;
- said that alliances between organisations had been formed to lobby Government to take action;
- said that growth lay in a 'green economy' and taking action such as insulating homes;
- agreed with all the content of the Leader's Statement;
- would the Leader be sending his Leader's Statement to Government?;
- spoke positively that members from all groups agreed with the Leader's Statement;
- shortness of funds and constant changing of criteria had been an issue with Government for a long time and suggested that all district Councils and relevant bodies including the LGA should lobby Government together; and
- spoke of how issues raised from residents had changed with more now needing help from food and warm banks, losing their homes and struggling with finances.

In response, the Leader thanked members for their comments, in particular the Leader of the main opposition group for understanding concerns, and he said he hoped he would feed back those concerns. The Leader said his message to Government was that when the country was in a hole, it did not need a spade.

379 MOTION - WATER

Before inviting Councillor Alastair Gould to speak on the motion, the Mayor said there had been some discussion at the Mayor's briefing about whether motions should be read out in full. He said that the Constitution Working Group should consider how motions were put forward and suggested that training and guidance on this could be provided. He advised that Councillor Gould would read his motion out in full.

Councillor Gould read out the motion in full, as set out in the Agenda. In proposing it, he said he hoped the motion would start to resolve some of the issues of water supply and treatment. Councillor Lee McCall seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak.

Members were invited to speak and made points including:

- This was an excellent motion;
- lack of investment had caused issues;
- privatising public utilities, including water authorities, had led to a lack of accountability and public being let down;
- profits had been prioritised instead of delivering on infrastructure;
- gave examples of leaks in the borough, and lack of action by water companies;
- agreed with the motion in principle but there was a danger that motions committed resources from SBC;
- all groups were united in addressing the issues;
- referred to providing necessary water infrastructure when considering housing development;
- referred to the information within the tabled update from Southern Water Services (SWS) including how the costs of meeting water demands could not be met by Section 106 funding and would have to be met by an increase in water bills;
- there were many different aspects of water supply and treatment that needed to be scrutinised as set out in the motion;
- spoke of the compensation SWS had to pay to customers;
- independent analysis and meaningful dialogue to address the risks of future planning was necessary;
- spoke of how the supply of water impacted on agriculture; and
- praised the research, information and detail that went into the motion and spoke in full support.

In summing up, Councillor Gould said the water motion had focussed mostly on the impact on the planning system but the need for enforcement, regulation and monitoring was also very important.

On being put to the vote, Members voted to agree the motion.

Resolved:

(1) That the Leader of the Council makes a formal complaint to the Water Services Regulation Authority (Ofwat) over the recent outage of water supply on the Isle of Sheppey, covering both their handling of the emergency, and their failure to act to improve resilience of supply following the 2016 and 2017 outages

(2) That the Leader of the Council writes to the CEO of Southern Water to notify them of this decision. A copy of this complaint should also be issued to the MP for Sittingbourne and the Isle of Sheppey and the Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

(3) That the Leader of the Council writes to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, asking him to review the legislation concerning the role of the statutory undertakers and utilities providers, in the local plan making process, to require them to give evidence at the public

examination of the local plan of their ability to meet their obligations with regard to supplying proposed housing development, taking full account of the effect of climate change scenarios.

(4) That the Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group be asked to consider commissioning an independent study into the sustainability of water supply to form part of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan for the Local Plan Review.

(5) That the Council notes that residents are deeply concerned about the regular untreated wastewater discharges into our local rivers, estuaries and seas and the cumulative impact this is having on wildlife and on human health.

And that this Council:

(6) Recognise this Council's obligation to protect its rivers, estuaries and seas, including from the cumulative impacts of pollution, in line with its local planning policy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

(7) Recognise that there is clear evidence of deterioration of water quality due to cumulative impact of multiple sewage discharge events or 'sewage overload'.

(8) Ensure that an evidence base is compiled that assesses the cumulative impact of sewage discharge so that this is factored into decisions made in new iterations of the local plan, including the overall level of future development, if necessary, independently from the evidence produced by the utility providers.

(9) Seek to better understand the cumulative impact of wastewater discharge including untreated sewage on our local rivers, estuaries, wildlife and the health of our residents.

(10) Takes a lead on addressing this issue, working constructively with other agencies.

(11) Ask the Policy and Resources Committee to invite the Chief Executive of Southern Water plus senior representatives from the Environment Agency and Ofwat and Natural England to attend a meeting to answer questions on the current levels of CSO and sewage plant discharge, and to put pressure on Southern Water to stop all CSO discharges into chalk streams in and around Faversham (Cooksditch and Thorne Creek); asking why nutrient neutrality rules aren't deemed to apply to water flowing from Faversham Creek into the Swale; and encouraging SW to upgrade the Faversham WTW to include tertiary water treatment so that it can either be recycled into the SEW water supply or else pumped back into the aquifer.

(12) Ask Southern Water, from this date onwards, in its planning consultation responses for major development, to clarify which treatment works will be managing the sewage; whether it has the information available to assess the

impact on the number or duration of sewage discharges into local rivers or seas, and if it does have this information to share it (noting that at present this can only be requested not required).

(13) Request that planning officers, from now onwards, include in all reports relating to major development a specific section on the impact on watercourses, including the potential for the development to affect sewage outflow into watercourses (i.e. cumulative impact), or to flag if this information is not fully available, so that this information (or the lack of it) is clearly and transparently set out.

(14) Requests that the Leader of the Council is asked to write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, asking him to review the legislation concerning the role of the statutory undertakers and utilities providers, in the local plan making process, to require them to give evidence at the public examination of the local plan of their ability to meet their obligations to safely dispose of sewage from proposed housing development.

(15) Requests that the Leader of the Council is asked to request the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to review the legislation concerning local plan reviews, so that in the event that the statutory undertakers and utilities providers are unable to provide adequate evidence that both supply of water, and effective wastewater treatment, are deliverable, this would be grounds for a deviation from the standard method of calculation for housing numbers.

380 MOTION - CUTS TO KCC BUS SUBSIDIES

The Leader read out and proposed the motion as set out on the Agenda

Councillor Alan Horton raised a point of order that a decision had not yet been made by KCC to cut subsidies and the motion as set out was factually incorrect. He proposed an alteration that the word 'anticipated' be added in the first line of the motion to read 'This Council believe that the **anticipated** decision by KCC to cut.....'.

In the discussion that followed a member, who was also a KCC member, said that the decision for withdrawal of subsidies to buses in Swale was still being reviewed, but had been decided in some other boroughs. He also drew attention to the penultimate paragraph and said that the word 'cancel' did not apply to a decision not yet made. In addition to adding the word anticipated to the first line, the Leader and the proposed seconder of the original motion accepted a minor alteration to replace the word 'cancel' with '**reconsider**'.

The Leader concluded proposing the motion by highlighting the impacts the anticipated decision would have on residents, particularly those that might not be able to meet friends or attend medical appointments. He said it would be an attack on the young, old and vulnerable and he urged KCC to re-think their anticipated decision and to continue with their bus subsidies.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Tim Valentine reserved his right to speak.

The Mayor invited members to speak. Points raised during the debate included:

- Full support for the motion;
- would negate all the work carried out on Active Travel;
- bus services had already ceased in some parts of the borough;
- was the Leader and/or officers aware that Stagecoach buses might be able to extend services in Swale if there was a depot and suggested a discussion with Stagecoach was worthwhile?;
- questioned whether SBC should be telling KCC to spend money on a non-statutory service in difficult financial times for all;
- KCC were not cutting bus services but subsidies to bus companies who were cutting some bus services as they were not commercially viable;
- should encourage more people to use buses;
- 98% of bus services were not subsidised and there were other ways members could help;
- should express our view, as Swale's KCC members do on our behalf, but not necessarily tell another authority how to do its business;
- supportive of Active Travel but questioned whether buses were the best way of moving people around the Borough;
- tampering with bus services caused commercial bus services to collapse;
- KCC were not open to exploring options;
- gave examples round the UK that provided good bus services to their residents;
- gave possible explanations why buses were no longer viable such as reduced morning and late services so not viable to workers;
- needed to look at the bus service overall but this was a starting point;
- sympathetic to motion but could not support as KCC also had to find budget savings and were making difficult choices;
- investment needed to be higher up the chain than KCC, a new approach to public transport from Government was needed;
- the motion was a first step, a total rethink was needed;
- a car culture had jammed the country and the public needed a good way of getting around; and
- train and cycling were alternatives in some parts of the Borough but many areas relied on buses.

Councillor Tim Valentine, who had seconded the motion, compared the carbon figures for car drivers against using the bus. He said that Government did not fund the bus services properly and everyone needed to work together for Government to fund bus services properly. Councillor Valentine said that buses should be a big part of how people travelled in the future and that making a profit should not be the priority.

In summing up, the Leader said the motion sought to ask KCC to re-consider, not to tell them how to spend their budget which had been agreed in February 2022. He said that Councils regularly spoke to each other about the impact of decisions on residents.

In accordance with procedure rule 3.1.19 (2), recorded vote was taken and voting was as follows:

For: Baldock, Bonney, S Clark, Darby, Davey, Eakin, Gibson, Gould, A Hampshire, N Hampshire, Harrison, Henderson, Horton, Hunt, Jackson, Jayes, Marchington, B J Martin, McCall, Neal, Nissanga, Palmer, Perkin, Pugh, Rowles, Saunders, Simmons, P Stephen, S Stephen, Tatton, Thomas, Truelove, Valentine, Whiting, Winckless and Woodford. Total equals 36

Against: Total equals 0

Abstain: Beart, R Clark, Dendor, Ingleton. Total equals 4.

Resolved:

(1) That it be noted that this Council believes that the anticipated decision by KCC to cut bus subsidies is a seriously retrograde step that will have a hugely negative impact on many people in our communities for the following reasons:

- (i) It goes against policies supported by both KCC and this Council to improve the use and accessibility of public transport.***
- (ii) It unfairly impacts the elderly, the disabled, young people those who are unable to afford their own private transport.***
- (iii) It will increase rural isolation and the impact of loneliness on vulnerable people.***
- (iv) It undermines the local plan review which, to meet the Government housing target, will need to see a significant shift from journeys being made by private motor car towards greater use of public transport and active travel.***
- (v) It is contrary to Kent County Council and Swale Borough Council policies to achieve net zero carbon emissions.***

(2) For these reasons we call on the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport at KCC to cancel this anticipated withdrawal of bus subsidies with urgent effect.

(3) Furthermore, we call on the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport at KCC to instigate a review of how bus services can be made more relevant to people's daily travel requirements, more accessible and more affordable to increase use of bus services in line with the policies cited above.

381 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC

No questions were submitted by members of the public.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS

The Mayor advised that 3 questions had been submitted by members.

Question 1 – Councillor Mike Whiting

While the Council provides lots of services on behalf of council tax payers, the only tangible service the vast majority of our residents receive directly for their council tax is the bin collection service.

Since we last met, there have been further issues with collections, with some not having bins collected for four weeks, and others forced to leave bins out on pavements for days waiting for collection.

Is the Chairman of the Environment committee happy that this is under control, and that the service can be guaranteed moving forward?

Response – Councillor Julian Saunders, Chair of Environment Committee

Thank you for your question Cllr Whiting. I agree with you that the waste collection service is an important service and that its reliability is a key issue for residents. As Chair of the Environment Committee, I am committed to supporting officers as much as I can in ensuring the reliability of the service.

Although there are occasional exceptions to consistent bin collection, it is worth emphasising that the overall volume of missed bins is extremely small and that we set a very stringent target for missed bins. The Council contractor makes approximately 90,000 bin collections a week in Swale and across June, July, August and September, figures show that on average just 57 bins were missed per week, fewer than one in a 1,000 weekly. It is also worth emphasising that it costs just under £50 a year to provide the standard waste collection services that a household receives, which I hope you will agree is good value.

The post pandemic economic environment is challenging for delivering a wide range of public services with particular problems in the waste sector related to staff recruitment, vehicle supply and increasing costs. Weather conditions can also impact, so for example vehicles were more prone to breakdown in the hot weather we had during the summer.

I am pleased to say that we have had fewer problems in waste collection than many other local authorities. I am also clear that our Officers work hard to ensure that risks to collection are controlled and are very focused on minimising negative impacts on residents. They often have to take tough decisions on whether our contractor should try and return for missed bins or residents be asked to hold onto waste until the next collection. Wherever possible we will opt for a collection a few days later rather than cancel the collection completely, but there are a few occasions where staff resources or vehicle availability don't allow this. During the current waste contract tendering process officers are also looking at all options to try and increase resilience in the service.

In conclusion, while I am not complacent about the quality of our waste collection environmental services and do my best to support officers in maintaining services standards in a difficult environment I believe there is plenty to be positive about based on our achievements in maintaining the service, the costs involved and the positive feedback we got from the public in the waste survey last year.

Supplementary Question:

Is the Chair looking at hydrogen vehicles to replace current diesel vehicles?

Response:

As the Council is in the middle of a tender process and various providers may put in proposals, I would direct you to the tender documents which the Head of Environment and Leisure can share with you.

Question 2 – Councillor Mike Whiting

The Council's recently adopted Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy says that the provision of charging for residents who do not have off-street parking at their homes is a short-term aim of his administration. Can the chairman of the Environment Committee give my residents in Teynham and Lynsted his timeframe for providing them with local charging points?

Response – Councillor Julian Saunders, Chair of Environment Committee

The Strategy is clear that Swale Borough Council is only part of the solution to achieving a charging network suitable for all. The best solution for all where residents have the ability, is for residential charging. However, in the strategy we acknowledge that not all residential areas are feasible for this. In it we recognise that KCC, as the highways authority, will be the key driver in developing on-street parking, but in the meantime, Swale will continue with its policy of installing EV charging units in its public car parks, with a focus on sites within close walking distance of areas with a high proportion on homes without off-street parking.

We already have charging units at Central car park Faversham, Swallows car park and the multi-storey car park in Sittingbourne and Rose Street in Sheerness. The Environment committee agreed the next wave of installations back in June, part funded by Swale Borough Council with funding support from Government, which should be starting this side of Christmas at Queens Hall car park Faversham, Albany Road car park Sittingbourne and further units at Rose Street Sheerness.

Officers are now working on further bids for funding to continue this progress. Unfortunately, with Teynham and Lynsted, Swale does not own the public car parks, nor suitable land. We understand that the sites in the area are owned by the Parish Council and would therefore recommend that they look at the funding grants available. We would be happy to provide advice from officers on where to start.

Finally on a wider basis we are continuously monitoring the demand for EV charging across the borough. Locations for electric vehicle charge points can be suggested on our website, as we collect data on this issue to support future funding

bids and continue conversations with KCC to encourage the adoption of new EV charging solutions and submissions to the upcoming Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure fund.

Supplementary:

As there are no plans to provide residents in my ward with charging facilities, are you discussing the relaxing of rules for trailing cables on pavements with KCC and if so, what is their response?

Response:

Officers are having discussions with KCC, but the whole strategy is to focus on areas with the most need and we will get to other areas.

Question 3 – Councillor Alan Horton

The Chair of a Parish Council has sought clarification about the assertion made to Parish Councillors at the recent LCLF meeting that a six-week consultation period on the forthcoming Regulation 19 consultation had been agreed. He has been informed that it was agreed at the P&R meeting on 13 July which you chaired. I believe that assertion is unfounded.

I recall that an indicative timetable was recommended and agreed. I do not recall a recommendation regarding the length of consultation or a clear statement of a six-week consultation within the report.

Given that confusion would the Chair highlight where in the meeting the members of P&R specifically approved a six-week consultation period for the revised Regulation 19.

Response – Councillor Mike Baldock, Leader

I'd like to thank Councillor Horton for his question, and indeed the variations of it he submitted at various points. In the first question, a chair of an unspecified Parish Council allegedly asked me at a date and place unspecified about an assertion I had allegedly made with no evidence to specify where this alleged assertion was made, about an agreement at a meeting where you don't recall such an agreement being made. You then asked me to highlight where in that meeting an agreement you don't believe was made, was in fact made. At some point the question was then changed that the chair of the Parish Council sought clarification on the aspersion. No wonder you find it confusing. The simple answer is there was no such agreement and none had been sought. There was a recommendation at Policy and Resources Committee where the LDS was discussed and approved and which identified that the Reg 19 consultation period would run through October, November and December. This included the time the documents and reports would be taken to the Planning and Transportation Working Group, Policy and Resources and then to Full Council.

Officers indicated that the 6-week consultation was the norm in such circumstances. Beyond that I cannot recall there being any specifics regarding the

period of time and at that point no specific period of time had been agreed and a number of options were being considered including a full 12 week period which would run over the yuletide break, an option that I personally favoured. These matters might soon be somewhat academic and it is always interesting to note that some members of the Conservative opposition seek to engage in issues that have little current relevance. The reason this is now hopefully academic is that the Planning and Transportation Working Group are recommending that the Policy and Resources Committee delays submission of the Reg 19 until this Government decides what it is up to next. It is ironic that Conservatives frequently warn about coalitions of chaos when they have managed so much chaos within one governing party – three housing ministers within a single year, statements about protecting green fields one minute then slashing planning regulations the next, levelling up here there but nowhere, withdrawal of 300k pledge from one speaker refuted by another, u-turns that are not u-turns but everyone knows they are, development zones one week and protecting our countryside the next. It would be madness to continue before the Government gets its house in order so no, there is no 6-week consultation or indeed any other length of consultation.

Supplementary:

Are we now moving to a point where it is acceptable that when somebody changes a motion or a question, we ridicule them over the fact they worked to get it accurate?

Response:

When a question is submitted, it requires an answer. I was given 3 different versions of your question and had written a response to an earlier version. We do need to ensure that when people are asking a question, we know what it is they are asking as the answer is specific to the question.

383 MISCELLANEOUS CONSTITUTION UPDATES

The Leader introduced the report which set out minor amendments to the Constitution and had been discussed by the Constitution Working Group. He proposed the recommendations which were seconded by the Leader of the main opposition group.

Resolved:

That Council is asked to agree the following constitutional changes:

(1) Changes to the Environment committee areas of responsibility (paragraphs 3.1-3.3 of the report).

(2) An update to the Audit Committee areas of responsibility (paragraphs 3.4-3.6 of the report).

(3) Changes to the table at section 3.6.7.4 of the Contract Standing Orders (paragraphs 3.7-3.9 of the report).

(4) An addition to the list of areas to which the Contract Standing Orders do not apply (section 3.6.2.3 of the constitution) (paragraph 3.10 of the report).

(5) Changes to the preamble to the scheme of officer delegations (sections 2.8.1.13 and 2.8.1.15 of the constitution) (paragraphs 3.11-3.14 of the report).

(6) A further change to the preamble to the scheme of officer delegations (section 2.8.1.5 of the constitution) (paragraphs 3.15-3.16 of the report).

(7) A new delegation to the Director of Resources (paragraph 3.17 of the report).

384 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW LUCAS CLOSE, QUEENBOROUGH – SECOND STAGE CONSULTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The Leader introduced the report which set out the second stage consultation results of the Community Governance Review at Lucas Close, Queenborough, and sought Council's agreement on the next steps. In proposing the recommendations, he advised members that during the first stage of consultation four out of five residents who responded did not support the changes but at the second stage, all had supported the changes.

In seconding the recommendations, the Leader of the main opposition group thanked the Elections Manager and his team for their work.

A ward member spoke of the long process involved and he praised the Elections Team, saying that the changes were a success for common sense.

Resolved:

(1) That the results of the second stage consultation for the Community Governance Review conducted at Lucas Close, Queenborough – Sheerness Town Council area be noted.

(2) That having considered the results of the second stage consultation, the Council agrees the following:

The Queenborough Town Council boundary is redrawn, so that Lucas Close becomes part of the Queenborough Town Council area and is no longer part of the Sheerness Town Council area.

The new Queenborough Town Council boundary is moved north, from Moat Way to Brielle Way (A249).

385 SITTINGBOURNE TOWN CENTRE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD)

The Leader introduced the report and praised Alison Peters, Principal Urban Design and Landscape Officer for her exemplary work. He proposed the recommendations which were seconded by Councillor Monique Bonney who reserved her right to speak.

A member gave thanks to officers and acknowledged that the request to include the Network Rail bridge on the map had been actioned.

Councillor Bonney thanked the Interim Head of Planning and the Principal Urban Design and Landscape Officer and said that the comprehensive document was very much needed and put SBC on the right course. She added that there had been interesting discussions, particularly with Network Rail, and a recognition of the constraints on traffic. Councillor Bonney said although more work might be needed, the document provided something to work towards in the future.

The Leader drew attention to a typing error in recommendation (2), which should have read '...adoption **by** Full Council'.

Resolved:

(1) That the revisions, due to feedback, to the Sittingbourne Town Centre SPD be agreed.

(2) That the Sittingbourne SPD be adopted by Full Council.

386 AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

In the absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee introduced the report and referred to the statement from the Chair in the report's introduction. He said that the Audit Committee had discharged its responsibility to provide independent and accurate information, there had been robust scrutiny of financial performance of the Council, and it had provided unqualified accounts and value for money. The Vice-Chair acknowledged that it had been a difficult year both financially and in changes in personnel in Finance. He thanked the former Financial Services Manager, Phil Wilson and members of the Audit Committee. The Vice-Chair warned that a difficult year would follow and there would be heavy demands.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Angela Harrison praised the former Head of Audit Services, Rich Clark.

A member praised the former Financial Services Manager and also thanked and praised the Mayor who had chaired the Audit Committee the previous year.

Resolved:

(1) That the Audit Committee Annual Report 2021/22 be agreed.

387 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned from 9 pm to 9.11pm.

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