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## Council

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**MINUTES** of the Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT on Wednesday, 3 April 2024 from 7.04 pm - 10.58 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mike Baldock, Monique Bonney, Andy Booth, Lloyd Bowen, Hayden Brawn, Ann Cavanagh, Lloyd Chapman, Shelley Cheesman, Roger Clark, Charles Gibson, Tim Gibson, Kieran Golding, Alastair Gould, James Hall, Angela Harrison, James Hunt, Carole Jackson, Mark Last, Rich Lehmann, Peter Macdonald, Peter Marchington, Claire Martin, Ben J Martin (Deputy Mayor), Charlie Miller, Lee-Anne Moore, Tara Noe, Tom Nundy, Chris Palmer, Richard Palmer, Hannah Perkin, Ashley Shiel, Paul Stephen, Sarah Stephen (Mayor), Terry Thompson, Mark Tucker, Angie Valls, Karen Watson, Mike Whiting, Tony Winckless, Ashley Wise and Dolley Wooster.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Lisa Fillery, Robin Harris, Jo Millard and Larissa Reed.

**OFFICERS PRESENT (VIRTUALLY):** Janet Dart.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Derek Carnell, Mike Henderson, Elliott Jayes, Pete Neal and Julien Speed.

795 **Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

The Mayor outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

796 **Declarations of Interest**

No interests were declared.

797 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 February 2024 (Minute Nos . 666 - 681) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

798 **Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor commented that there were just six weeks left of her term and the time had gone quickly. Recent engagements she had carried out included:

- Commonwealth 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary flag raising ceremony at County Hall, Maidstone;
- gave a speech on inclusion of Women in Today's Society at Diversity House on International Women's Day;
- spoke about life as a busy woman at the Criteria Theatre, Bluetown, Sheerness on International Women's Day;
- attended a celebration of Ramadam and interfaith cohesion at the Islamic Centre in Minster;
- Mother's Day celebrations at the Catholic Church, Sheerness;
- Young Rotary Musician of the Year competition;
- Murston School tree planting event;
- judged the Sittingbourne Carnival Court;

- Easter event starring students showcasing their talents at the Dementia Café, Oasis Academy;
- awards ceremony for Challenger Troop;
- staff award ceremony at Blair Park care home, Sittingbourne;
- Multiple Sclerosis Swale Spring lunch; and
- out of borough events with other mayors across Kent, including raising awareness for Ukraine

The Mayor said her Cadet, Lauren, had attended the two events on International Women's Day.

The Mayor advised there were still spaces available on her fund raising events 'All Aboard' and the handbag event.

Finally, the Mayor advised Members that a group of staff and her consort, Councillor Paul Stephen, would be taking part in a charity cycle ride on the Isle of Wight the following weekend and she encouraged Members to sponsor the group to raise funds for her Mayor's charities.

#### 799 **Questions submitted by the Public**

There were no questions from the public.

#### 800 **Questions submitted by Members**

There were no questions from Members.

#### 801 **Leader's Statement**

The Leader said:

*"Good evening members, I stand before you this evening on what is a truly momentous occasion for Swale Borough Council, an occasion when each and every one of you will be creating your own little piece of history participating in this full council meeting. On 01 April 1974 exactly 50 years ago on Monday this week the Council was formed as a District Council. A Council named after the stretch of water separating the Isle of Sheppey from the mainland which was awarded Borough status four years later in 1978. Interestingly the Council of the day in 1974 was one of no overall control and had no Mayor but instead had a Chairman the first of which was Councillor R D Sharrock. Had we not had the sad passing of Councillor Ken Ingleton last year I am sure that he would have been able to provide us with more in depth historical musings from those times.*

*Moving on we have successfully bid for funding of just over £227,000 pounds through Sport England's swimming pool support fund, working with Faversham Pools Trust, to retrofit Faversham Pools with new energy saving measures. The existing air handling unit, responsible for heating and filtering the air in the pool facility is in urgent need of replacing. The grant will fund a new Air Handling Unit, which aims to make heating more efficient, together with additional improvements including variable speed fans, greatly improving energy efficiency, air quality and importantly reducing costs, in turn helping the Faversham Pools offset significant increases in their energy costs. Further good news for us is that the council has been awarded nearly £33,000 from the*

*Rural Payments Agency to bolster our work tackling waste related crimes. As a Borough we have some of the highest levels of fly-tipping in Kent, which costs the council considerable time, money and resources to clear.*

*The funding amongst other things will be used to buy additional CCTV cameras, which will be used to deter fly-tippers, gather evidence and help the Council to catch repeat offenders. We will also be using part of the grant to fund a campaign to promote awareness of householder responsibility and duties when disposing of their waste. We will be highlighting the imperative to use licensed carriers and to ensure that the carriers provide waste transfer documents to them.*

*Op Assist an initiative that stops suspected fly-tippers and takes enforcement action for waste related crimes will also benefit from additional resources to bolster joint operations between Kent Police's Rural Taskforce and the Council. The funding announcement follows the council approving changes to waste-related fixed penalty notices last month, seeing the fine for serious fly-tipping increase to £1,000. As a council we will continue to work on preventing waste crimes, and identifying those responsible so that we can make Swale a cleaner and healthier place for all. It is worth highlighting that the Council's income from the Fixed Penalty Notices can only be used for environment-related schemes, and we use much of it to help fund initiatives which focus on tackling fly-tipping and littering.*

*Continuing on the anti social behaviour theme, uniformed marshals have been working to keep the town centres of Sheerness and Sittingbourne safer over the Easter school holidays. The marshals have once again been patrolling the high streets to help prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour, after receiving a positive response during previous school holiday periods. The initiative is part of Swale Borough Council's Safer Streets campaign, which aims to tackle antisocial behaviour and reduce violence against women and girls in Sittingbourne and Sheerness town centres.*

*Furthermore we are supporting domestic abuse charities in being able to provide vulnerable women and girls with a paid version of a personal safety app. We are funding 50 annual subscriptions of the Hollie guard app, which SATEDA, Newleaf and Clarion will provide to identified vulnerable women and girls that they work with. The app acts as a secure and discrete personal alarm and deterrent which can monitor a user's location, planned routes and meeting times. It can then raise an alert with emergency contacts and a 24/7 monitoring centre if the user doesn't confirm that they are safe.*

*We have also used safer streets funding to ensure that a Sheerness youth club will be able to operate for another year. Vibe's Sheerness Youth Club has been able to put on two sessions every week for young people on the island to meet, socialise and receive support from youth workers since October last year. Youth provision is fundamental in reducing levels of anti-social behaviour and the funding has enabled them to host two age specific sessions creating a safe space for both younger and older children, making for a tailored and effective experience for both. These sessions run every Thursday evening, from 4pm to 6pm for the 8-12 age group and 6pm to 8pm for the 13-16 age group and will be funded until March 2025. The club offers a wide range of activities including pool, table tennis, gaming, darts and even a stage for budding artists. On average 40 children attend each session and they are provided with a free meal. Our support has meant that Vibes have also been able to recruit an additional female youth worker to support the young girls attending, providing a mentor that they can relate to and who understands the unique challenges and experiences that they may be facing.*

*We have hosted a bike donation day together with the Sittingbourne Rotary Club as part of the Cycle-re-Cycle programme which is a partnership between the council, HMP Swaleside and the Canterbury Bike Project. The project provides an excellent opportunity to save bikes from ending up in the tip or just rotting away in gardens or sheds.*

*HMP Swaleside inmates refurbish the unwanted bikes, while working towards qualifications including the City & Guilds in Bicycle Mechanics, giving inmates the opportunity to upskill themselves and make a positive step towards rehabilitation. The programme provides residents with affordable, environmentally friendly transportation, that keeps them active and healthy. The bikes are sold on for just £10 through local community groups, making the scheme self-funding and sustainable.”*

The Leader of the Conservative Group acknowledged the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Swale Borough Council. He expressed his pleasure that Faversham Pools had received grant money for improvements, and hoped it would secure a long future for the important asset, whilst the organisation was reminded that funding from other sources would be required in the future. The Leader of the Conservative Group welcomed the funding to tackle waste related crimes and referred to the news in the Leader’s Statement around anti-social behaviour, pointing out that it was not just an issue for the high streets of Sittingbourne and the Isle of Sheppey. Whilst welcoming news of providing subscriptions to 50 women for the Holly Guard app, he wished that every person who was the victim of domestic violence could be given the app. The Leader of the Conservative Group said more news on how support could be given to residents from internal functions was needed. Finally, he thanked the Mayor for her work during her term and wished the Mayor-elect good luck.

In acknowledging the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group suggested celebrating the diversity of Swale Borough Council (SBC). She thanked officers for their work in the successful bid of grant funding for Faversham Pools and welcomed the funding to tackle waste crime. Referring to anti-social behaviour the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group said she would like to see SBC being proactive to reduce violence against women and girls in Faversham also. She praised SATEDA for the excellent work they did to help keep women safe and said she wished the Holly Guard app did not have to exist but was glad it did. The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group said the Mayor had been a fabulous representative for the Borough. Finally, she drew attention that it was Autism Awareness month and she wanted everyone to recognise the contribution that autistic people made in society, whilst pointing out there was still some way to make things equitable for children and young people with Autism.

Other Members were invited to respond and a Member thanked the Leader for highlighting the historical fly tipping issues in the Borough, and for the initiatives coming forward, and thanked officers.

The Leader said the Police and Crime Commissioners (PCC) restricted the areas to which the Safer Streets campaign could provide marshalling and acknowledged that anti-social behaviour did not apply only to town centres. He agreed that providing 50 subscriptions appeared to be a relatively small number but said it could save lives. The Leader said conversations had already taken place on how internal processes could be improved to support residents. He thanked Councillor Perkin for continuing to champion diversity and highlighting Autism awareness.

802 **Motion - Action to address violence, threats, harassment, bullying and intimidation against elected representatives**

In proposing the motion as set out in the Agenda, the Leader said that the motion should not have to be presented and everyone pulling together, regardless of political background, was important. He acknowledged the diversity of Members in the chamber was lacking but said it was difficult to positively encourage younger people to become Councillors, referring to the abuse that many in politics were subjected to. The Leader said toxicity in politics could damage democracy.

Referring to the murders of MP's Jo Cox and David Ames, which were extreme, the Leader said there should be zero tolerance and any form of abuse was unacceptable. He said all Members should play their part in setting the tone, respecting each other to inspire trust in those they served. The Leader said all authorities should step up and use their powers to deal with abuse appropriately. He gave an example of abuse he had received and said others had received similar abuse, either personally or on line. The Leader said the abuse had to stop and hopefully the motion would provide the impetus for ensuring it did.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Hannah Perkin reserved her right to speak.

The Mayor advised that an amendment to the motion had been received, circulated to Members and added to the website. She invited Councillor Lloyd Bowen to propose the amendment. Councillor Bowen said the amendment was the inclusion of the words “.. *all levels of local government*..” so the amended motion proposed now read:

*“This Council utterly condemns the increasing levels of violence, threats, harassment, bullying and intimidation against our elected representatives in Parliament and, including **all levels of local government**, and calls on the Government to keep up the pressure on Chief Constables to use the legislation they already have at their disposal to deal with it.*

*This Council calls on the Leader to raise at Kent Leaders with a view to a joint meeting with the PCC and Chief Constable to discuss their plans to deal with this escalation.”*

Councillor Bowen said the reason for the proposed amendment was to make it clear that the threat applied to all levels of Local Government.

Councillor James Hunt seconded the amendment.

In response, the Leader said he did not consider that the additional wording brought anything extra to the motion.

Members were invited to speak on the amendment and they made comments including:

- Supported the amendment as the addition made it more clear;
- shared information on the numbers of serving police officers, military and NHS staff attacked or murdered whilst on duty and said it was not just people in politics that needed protection; and
- SBC officers also needed protection;

On being put to the vote, Members voted in support of the amendment.

Members then debated the amended motion and made points including:

- Supported the amended motion;
- threats of violence undermined democracy;
- disagreements should be settled by peaceful and lawful dialogue and the Police should thoroughly investigate any threats of violence and take appropriate action to ensure the safety of elected officials;
- a culture of respect and tolerance should be encouraged;
- quoted figures setting out the numbers of Councillors who had been the subject of abuse and who had stated they would not stand in the next election, influenced by the increase in abuse;
- gave an example of an SBC Councillor who was threatened, and Police took no action;
- said the Police needed to use their powers to deal with incidents;
- suggested a letter to the Justice Minister and the Minister for Police;
- referred to others in society who had been subjected to abuse;
- gave personal experiences of being threatened;
- questioned whether others who worked in emergency or other services and had been subjected to abuse might consider they had been ignored by not being included in a motion;
- could not support the motion as considered it was self-serving;
- Councillors were there to represent their residents and should be allowed freedom of speech and to raise issues;
- emergency services were protected against via the crime of assault of an emergency worker;
- the Police did not take the issues seriously enough;
- Councillors should not be receiving special treatment;
- more than half of the Councillors in the Chamber had been subject to threats or abuse;
- there was value in the motion;
- the point of the motion was in setting the tone for society;
- understood why some were reluctant to support as it was for protection of local politicians but without local politicians there was no local democracy; and
- outlined some of the abuse that female Councillors received which was often worse than that directed at male Councillors.

Councillor Perkin referred to a recent LGA survey and said there was an alarming number of Councillors who had received abuse serious enough to involve the Police. She gave an example of how the Police had worked quickly and efficiently when she was the subject of abuse. Councillor Perkin said those with protected characteristics were more likely to be targeted with personalised abuse and this would discourage some in society to stand in politics, leading to under representation. She said the motion was about looking for solutions to stop the abuse of local and national politicians and the motion was not about self-serving but protecting decision making for residents by diversifying the voices that were included in local government.

The Leader said he made no apology for bringing the motion forward and urged all to support it.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 3.1.19(2), a recorded vote was taken, and

voting was as follows:

**For: Bowen, Booth, Brawn, Cavanagh, Chapman, Cheesman, R Clark, C Gibson, T Gibson, Golding, Gould, Hall, Harrison, Hunt, Jackson, Last, Lehmann, MacDonald, Marchington, B J Martin, C Martin, Miller, Moore, Noe, Perkin, Shiel, P Stephen, S Stephen, Tucker, Valls, Watson, Wooster, Whiting, Winckless and Wise. Total equals 35.**

**Against: Bonney, C Palmer and R Palmer. Total equals 3.**

**Abstain: Baldock and Nundy. Total equals 2.**

**Resolved:**

***(1) That this Council utterly condemns the increasing levels of violence, threats, harassment, bullying and intimidation against our elected representatives in Parliament and, including all levels of local government, and calls on the Government to keep up the pressure on Chief Constables to use the legislation they already have at their disposal to deal with it.***

***(2) That this Council calls on the Leader to raise at Kent Leaders with a view to a joint meeting with the PCC and Chief Constable to discuss their plans to deal with this escalation.***

### 803 **Motion - Housing Emergency Motion**

In proposing, Councillor Angela Harrison read out the motion as set out on the Agenda. Councillor Harrison said that following the last Housing and Health Committee, she and the Leader had written to the Borough's MP's seeking support in lobbying Government to address the housing emergency and had received an acknowledgement from Helen Whatley MP that the issue had been raised with Ministers and an update was forthcoming. Councillor Harrison said the crisis was not going away and every effort needed to be made to assist residents.

Councillor Alastair Gould seconded the motion and reserved his right to speak.

The Mayor advised that an amendment to the motion had been received, circulated to Members and added to the website. She invited Councillor Ben J Martin to propose the amendment. Councillor Martin thanked those Members for bringing forward the original motion. He said there were still things that the Council could do to address the housing crises without it costing money. Councillor Martin gave examples such as policies that could be tweaked to encourage registered providers to spend money in Swale or discounts could be given on pre-applications. He referred to the static Local Housing Authority rate still at 2011 levels. Finally, Councillor Martin said nothing within the amendment was controversial and it improved the original motion.

Councillor Claire Martin seconded the amendment and reserved her right to speak.

Councillor Harrison welcomed any suggestions that would assist, drawing attention that there were some financial implications in the amendment but the suggestions were worthy of a debate and all possibilities should be considered.

Members were invited to speak and made comments including:

- All suggestions in the amendment were actions to consider and explore, and added to the motion; and
- the amendment gave a commitment to doing the work, not the outcome.

Councillor Claire Martin gave some statistics in the decrease in home ownership of young people and the increase in salary required to purchase a home. She said there would be a rise in pensioner poverty and the housing benefit bill in the future and referred to the increase in numbers of sofa surfing. Finally, Councillor Martin said the amendment gave strength to the motion.

On being put to the vote, Members voted in support of the amendment.

Members then debated the amended motion and made points including:

- It was regrettable that the motion was necessary;
- the motion was a crucial step towards prioritising the well-being of residents;
- it was important to mobilise resources and collaborate with stakeholders;
- referred to the number of empty properties in the Borough;
- said that the increase in enquiries from residents to find appropriate housing had overtaken enquiries on bins, overhanging trees and boundary disputes;
- referred to overcrowding of houses and the need for housing for women fleeing domestic violence;
- the housing situation felt bleak;
- highlighted the financial impacts on Council budgets in supporting the homeless and those in temporary accommodation;
- homes should not be considered a sense of wealth but essential to residents;
- compared the housing situation in Germany where long term leasing enabled residents to save and then purchase property later in life;
- there was a lack of stability in the private rented sector;
- the Government treated landlords as poorly as those wishing to rent;
- a change in the social housing system was necessary;
- years of under investment by housing associations had led to poor quality homes; and
- some landlords provided a very poor standard of housing.

Councillor Gould said good points had been made and the part of the motion that called for the Government to urgently seek proper solutions was the key message. He said housing was a human right. Councillor Gould referred to the report that went to the Housing and Health Committee which illustrated the benefits of investment in social need. Councillor Gould said whichever Government was in power needed to take the long view and investment could bring huge benefits. He thanked Councillor Martin for the amendment which he said benefited the motion.

In summing up Councillor Harrison said staff resources would need to be considered and repeated that the topic was an important issue to the Council and its residents.

On being put to the vote, the motion was agreed.

**Resolved:**



**(1) That the Council declares an Affordable Housing Emergency for the Borough of Swale.**

**(2) That the Council recognises and endorses the work of the Leader of the Council in working with District Council's Network in highlighting and tackling the Housing Emergency.**

**(3) That the Council continues to work with the sector and tries to engage Government to develop long-term solutions to fix the national housing crisis.**

**(4) That the Council calls on the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and the Housing Minister to urgently seek proper solutions to the Housing crisis.**

804 **Urgent Motion - Use of Ocean Heights, Minster to house unaccompanied asylum seeker children**

The Mayor used her discretion and brought forward Item 15 on the Agenda. She explained that in accordance with Procedure Rule 3.1.14 she had agreed an urgent motion of the Use of Ocean Heights to house unaccompanied asylum seeking children. The motion had been published on the Council's website and circulated to Members electronically.

In proposing the urgent motion, Councillor Nundy proposed an amendment to the wording in the motion as he considered that the original wording in the motion may be perceived as divisive and cruel. He said the motion was not about whether migrants should be allowed into the country or not but was about how Kent County Council (KCC) had dealt with the situation. Councillor Nundy said his amended motion now read:

*"Swale Borough Council condemns the lack of transparency in the process taken by KCC and the Home Office to use Ocean Heights as a site to house unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Swale Borough Council recognises that Sheppey is a deprived area that desperately needs funding infrastructure to support the vulnerable and elderly residents on the island and the Leader of the Council will write to KCC asking them to stop Ocean Heights being used to house unaccompanied asylum seeking children and to ask for Ocean Heights to be taken on as a KCC funded care home."*

Councillor Nundy apologised for the incorrect language used in his original motion and explained the reason for amending it was because it was not appropriate to condemn KCC and the Home Office to house unaccompanied asylum seeking children. He said the site was not an appropriate location and referred to the closure of Blackburn Lodge Care Home, Sheerness, stating that Ocean Heights should be used as a care home. Councillor Nundy explained that the decision to use Ocean Heights for unaccompanied asylum seeking children was announced by KCC immediately prior to the bank holiday weekend and he very quickly received feedback from residents who were concerned at the lack of facilities on the Isle of Sheppey to look after and support elderly residents and the lack of information, consultation or opportunity for residents to give their opinion. He said it was his duty to serve his residents by bringing forward the motion to say the site was not suitable and that the Isle of Sheppey lacked KCC-funded care homes.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Peter MacDonald said that nobody was consulted

locally. He added that KCC had been letting down Isle of Sheppey residents for decades.

Members were invited to speak and made comments including:

- It was crucial to acknowledge that shelter, support, protection and assistance should be given to vulnerable individuals seeking asylum, including unaccompanied children;
- there was a moral obligation to provide refuge and uphold human rights regardless of whether a location was perceived to be unsuitable;
- the children proposed to be housed at the site were not illegal immigrants and would be following the protocols put in place;
- SBC should use its influence to get more support for the needs of those on the Isle of Sheppey;
- solutions should be found to address the needs of the local community;
- the last minute proposal by KCC and lack of engagement was guaranteed to cause concern, confusion and division in the local community;
- KCC and the Government were failing in old peoples' rights by closing care homes;
- acknowledged the apology from Councillor Nundy;
- gave an example of the experience of a refugee child and said refugee children deserved to be treated with dignity;
- many refugee children were victims of crime, exploitation and human trafficking;
- was horrified that the original motion sought Council's support to say no to housing unaccompanied for refugee children;
- the two arguments in the motion had become conflicted;
- lack of infrastructure and support for the elderly and vulnerable on the Isle of Sheppey was a valid argument but should not be used as the reason to refuse housing for unaccompanied refugee children;
- the motion flew in the face of the UK's commitment to the 1951 Refugee convention and Swale history of supporting refugees;
- should be making a case for the inclusion and community support for vulnerable children not neglecting responsibilities;
- urged all Members to vote against the motion;
- it was not a choice to either support refugee children or the elderly;
- understood the frustration in the lack of communication from KCC;
- the unaccompanied, vulnerable children were part of the national transfer scheme and would be kept at Ocean Heights on a short term basis being supported by Social Services;
- should be supporting the refugees;
- KCC and the Home Office were the issue;
- disappointed that the urgent motion was accepted;
- if Ocean Heights was good enough for the elderly, it was good enough for refugees and children;
- gave examples of countries welcoming refugees;
- the Council have delivered facilities as part of the local plan, based on need, and that included a care home;
- spoke about the lack of NHS services and support for the elderly;
- KCC was not planning for or delivering for residents;
- a balanced approach was needed;
- SBC were not in control of KCC and could not demand they stopped the proposal;

- would prefer to see a motion that urged KCC to re-engage with its own community and take responsibility for the misinformation that has been created;
- lack of information had caused fear;
- every child deserved a champion and SBC members needed to be champions;
- there was a lack of understanding in the process;
- the whole care sector was falling apart;
- urged everyone to get round the table to talk and share information with local representatives;
- KCC Councillors needed to lead from the front; and
- the High Court ruled that KCC were unlawful in capping the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children and the decision could only be appealed by the appeal courts.

A Member said that more information was needed and suggested a deferral. The Mayor advised that if the motion was deferred, the earliest it could come back for discussion at Full Council was late July 2024 which would likely to be too late. The meeting was adjourned from 9.29pm to 9.43pm whilst a discussion on how to progress took place.

When the meeting was reconvened, a Member, who was also a KCC Councillor, said that whilst he had not received an influx of emails on the topic as some others had, some emails received had been racist, threatening and aggressive.

Councillor Monique Bonney proposed the following amendment:

*“We call on KCC to urgently engage with the local representatives and residents to provide information and reassurance and local liaison. The Leader of the Council will write to KCC asking them to stop Ocean Heights being used to house Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children without the necessary local engagement and reassurance as to where elderly residents will be accommodated on the Isle of Sheppey”*

In seconding the amendment, Councillor Ashley Shiel reserved his right to speak.

The proposer and seconder of the original motion agreed with the amendment.

In response to a Member who queried the change to the original motion, the Monitoring Officer clarified that ideally the amendment would be closer in words to the original but it was sufficiently close enough to be accepted as an amendment.

A discussion then took place on a potential further amendment. The Monitoring Officer explained that the new proposed amendment would not be acceptable as an amendment as it was not sufficiently close enough to the original motion.

Members continued to discuss a way forward and several suggestions were considered.

In accordance with procedure rule 3.1.19(2), a recorded vote was taken on the amended motion and voting was as follows:

**For: Baldock, Bonney, Chapman, MacDonald, Nundy, C Palmer, R Palmer, Shiel, P Stephen, Wooster and Wise. Total equals 11.**

**Against: Booth, Cheeseman, R Clark, C Gibson, T Gibson, Golding, Gould,**

**Harrison, Last, Marchington, Miller, Noe, Perkin, Thompson, Tucker, Valls and Winckless. Total equals 17.**

**Abstain: Bowen, Brawn, Cavanagh, Hall, Hunt, Jackson, Lehmann, B J Martin, C Martin, Moore, S Stephen, Watson and Whiting. Total equals 13.**

The Mayor announced that the amendment had fallen.

Members then voted on the substantive motion. In accordance with procedure rule 3.1.19 (2), a recorded vote was taken and voting was as follows:

**For: Baldock, Bonney, Chapman, MacDonald, Nundy, C Palmer, R Palmer and P Stephen. Total equals 8.**

**Against: Booth, Brawn, Cavanagh, Cheesman, R Clark, C Gibson, T Gibson, Golding, Gould, Harrison, Last, Lehmann, Marchington, B J Martin, C Martin, Miller, Noe, Perkin, Shiel, Thompson, Valls, Watson, Whiting, Winckless and Wise. Total equals 25.**

**Abstain: Bowen, Hall, Hunt, Jackson, Moore, S Stephen and Wooster. Total equals 7.**

The Mayor announced the motion had fallen.

#### 805 **Nomination of Mayor**

The Mayor explained that the Nominations of Mayor and Deputy Mayor were due to be considered by Council at the February 24th Council meeting but had been withdrawn and would be considered at this evening's meeting instead.

Councillor Claire Martin nominated Councillor Ben J Martin for the role of Mayor elect for the 2024/25 civic year and gave a supporting speech. The nomination was seconded by Councillor Charles Gibson who gave a supporting speech. On being put to the vote, the nomination was agreed.

***Resolved:***

***(1) That the Mayor elect for the Civic Year 2024/25 be Councillor Ben J Martin.***

#### 806 **Nomination of Deputy Mayor**

The Mayor explained that two nominations had been received for Deputy Mayor elect 2024/25.

The Leader, Tim Gibson, nominated Councillor Karen Watson for the role of Deputy Mayor elect 2024/25 and gave a supporting speech. The nomination was seconded by Councillor Angela Harrison who also gave a supporting speech.

The Deputy Leader, Mike Baldock, nominated Councillor James Hall for the role of Deputy Mayor elect 2024/25 and gave a supporting speech. The nomination was seconded by Councillor Richard Palmer who also gave a supporting speech.

All Members were then invited to cast a vote for their preferred nomination by way of a secret ballot and the Mayor announced that Councillor Karen Watson was Deputy Mayor elect 2024/25.

**Resolved:**

**(1) That the Deputy Mayor elect for the civic year 2024/25 be Councillor Karen Watson.**

807 **Corporate Plan 2023 - 2027**

The Leader introduced the report which set out the Council's ambitions and priorities for the next four years. He proposed the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Baldock who reserved his right to speak.

The Mayor advised that an amendment was received, as published on the website, but the proposer and seconder subsequently withdrew the amendment.

A Member drew attention to the top of page 23 of the agenda papers, which had excluded the title Environment/the current picture.

**Resolved:**

**(1) That the Corporate Plan 2023-2027 be adopted.**

808 **Member/Officer Protocol**

The Chair of the Standards Committee, Councillor Ashley Wise, thanked the previous Chair of the Standards Committee, Councillor Perkin, and all members of the Standards Committee for their input in the protocol. He referred to the briefing on the protocol prior to that evening's Council meeting

Councillor Perkin seconded the recommendation and reserved her right to speak.

Members were invited to speak and made points including:

- Supported the protocol but considered it was a poor reflection that it was required;
- could not support the protocol as it stood as some information was unclear and it was not balanced;
- was the protocol needed?; and
- the protocol had been discussed for two years, been to Full Council and Members had previously been consulted on it.

Councillor Perkin said that all Members should aspire to the behaviours set out in the protocol but many were not. She said it was also necessary to comply with the Members' Code of Conduct.

**Resolved:**

**(1) That the Member/Officer protocol be approved for adoption**

**(2) That delegated authority be given to the Monitoring Officer to make any final**

***or consequential amendments to the text, in consultation with the Chair of the Standards Committee***

***(3) That the Standards Committee be delegated to review the operation of the protocol after 12 months.***

809 **Standing Orders**

Members agreed to extend Standing Orders at 10pm and 10.30pm in order that Council could complete its business.

Mayor

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