

DISTRICT COUNCIL OF SEVENOAKS

Minutes of the Meeting of the Sevenoaks District Council held on 26 July 2011 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Mrs D Morris (Chairman)

Cllr. L Abraham, Cllr. Mrs B Ayres, Cllr. L Ayres, Cllr. L Ball, Cllr. I Bosley, Cllr. Mrs E Bracken, Cllr. R Brookbank, Cllr M Butler, Cllr. Ms I Chetram, Cllr. P Cooke, Cllr Mrs J Davison, Cllr. R J Davison, Cllr. Mrs A Dawson, Cllr. C Dibsdall, Cllr. M Dickins, Cllr. J Edwards-Winser, Cllr. A Eyre, Cllr. Mrs A Firth, Cllr. M Fittock, Cllr. P Fleming, Cllr J Gaywood, Cllr. Mrs A George, Cllr. J Grint, Cllr. R Hogarth, Cllr. Mrs A Hunter, Cllr Ms M Lowe, Cllr. K Maskell, Cllr. P McGarvey, Cllr. Mrs F Parkin, Cllr. A Pett, Cllr. R Piper, Cllr. Mrs E Purves, Cllr. B Ramsey, Cllr. Mrs J Sargeant, Cllr. J Scholey, Cllr. Miss L Stack, Cllr. J Thornton, Cllr. P Towell, Cllr. J Underwood and Cllr. R Walshe

Apologies for absence: Cllr. K S Bayley, Cllr. Mrs P Bosley, Cllr. C Brown, Cllr. C Clark, Cllr. Mrs C Clark, Cllr. M Horwood, Cllr. J London, Cllr. R Orridge, Cllr. S Raikes, Cllr. T Searles and Cllr. G Williamson

Cllr. Mrs Morris advised the Council that she was Chairing the meeting as Cllr. Orridge was unwell. Members wished Cllr. Orridge a speedy recovery and welcomed news that he was no longer in hospital and had returned home.

Prayers

Canon Paul Francis led the Council in prayers

14. TO APPROVE AS A CORRECT RECORD THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD ON 24 MAY 2011.

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 24 May 2011 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members declarations of interest at meetings from 19 March to 5 July 2011 were noted.

Cllrs. Mrs Dawson, Mrs Parkin, Pett, Piper and Underwood declared a personal interest in agenda item 5(a), Funding to Support the Paralympic Cycling Event, as they are members of the Sevenoaks District Access Group.

Cllr. McGarvey and Cllr. Mrs Parkin declared a personal interest in agenda item 5(a), Funding to Support the Paralympic Cycling Event, as they are members of a liaison group at Brands Hatch.

16. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that in view of Cllr. Orridge's absence she had no announcements to make.

17. TO RECEIVE ANY PETITIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

The Chairman announced that a petition containing 399 signatures had been submitted by Councillor Walshe in the following terms:

"We, the undersigned, call on Sevenoaks District Council not to cease expenditure on their minibus service but to provide the vehicles to other suitable organisations together with adequate finance to continue the service"

The Council was addressed by Mr Andrew Michaelides, a member of the public, who presented the petition to the Council. Mr Michaelides reminded the Council that last autumn a decision had been taken to withdraw the Council minibus service in order to make annual savings of £330,000. He recognised the need for savings to be made but felt that the minibus service provided a vital lifeline for the elderly and infirm who found it difficult to access alternative modes of public transport and was also used to provide evening transport to youth events. Mr Michaelides welcomed the gifting of the minibuses to local organisations but drew attention to alternative proposals for savings that were considered during the budget process which he contested could have also allowed the Council to provide financial support for the minibuses. He explained that Age Concern, Darent Valley had expressed concerns about funding and Age Concern, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and District had refused the opportunity to take on a minibus due to the lack of funding. Mr Michaelides asked the Council to re-consider its decision in the light of the petition.

The Council also heard from Cllr. Walshe who had submitted the petition. Cllr. Walshe endorsed Mr Michaelides comments and reminded the Council of the alternative budget proposals made by his Group during the budget process for 2011/12. He felt that these could be revisited in order to provide funding to support the voluntary organisations in continuing to run the minibuses that had been gifted to them.

In response the Leader of the Council said that he had no intention of re-opening debate on the budget but stressed that one of the reasons that the Council's budget had been set in December was to allow more certainty and time for the Council to work with the voluntary sector about the continuation of these services. It had been his Group's idea to gift the minibuses to appropriate organisations and the feedback that he had had from organisations such as Kent Compaid and Sevenoaks Area MIND were that the service had started well and that there had been good take-up. He

explained that the cost of the Council service had been £1,000 per permit holder and that this had not been sustainable. At the time the decision was taken an undertaking had been given that the use of the voluntary sector minibus service would be reviewed and it was the intention that this review would take place in September, although it would probably take a year for the service to become established. This would not be a like-for-like comparison but a review of the service being delivered at that time.

Cllr. Fleming moved and Cllr Mrs Davison seconded that no action be taken in response to the petition.

Cllr. Mrs Bracken commented that the Council's Petitions Scheme was designed to stop vexatious or repetitious petitions and that the Council had erred on the side of generosity in considering this petition. She felt that this had been misused to re-open debate on the budget and hoped that this would not happen again.

The motion was put to the vote and carried.

Resolved: That no action be taken in response to the petition.

18. MATTERS CONSIDERED BY THE CABINET AND/OR OTHER COMMITTEES:

A. Funding to Support the Paralympic Cycling Event

The Leader advised the Council that the Cabinet had considered requested revenue and capital budget carry forwards at its meeting on 23 June including a request to carry forward funding to support the Paralympic Cycling event being held in the District in 2012. However the Cabinet felt that the request did not meet the criteria for carry forward requests but was nevertheless worthy of support. In view of this it resolved to recommend to the Council that an underspend of £35,000 in the Community Development Budget for 2010/11, made up of an underspend of £10,000 plus additional income of £25,000, should be set aside as an earmarked reserve for this purpose. The Cabinet would monitor any spending proposals from the earmarked reserve.

Cllr. Fleming moved and Cllr. Mrs Davison seconded that the recommendation of the Cabinet held on 23 June 2011 be adopted.

Resolved: That the Council agrees the Cabinet's recommendation that the £35,000 underspend in the Community Development Budget 2010/11 be set aside as an earmarked reserve to support the Paralympic Cycling event"

19. REPORTS FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OR OTHER DIRECTORS ON MATTERS REQUIRING THE ATTENTION OF COUNCIL

A. Appointment of a Council Representative to the Sevenoaks Conservation Council

The Leader of the Council advised that a vacancy in the Council representation on the Sevenoaks Conservation Council had arisen following the Annual meeting as one of the Councillors nominated did not wish to take up the appointment. Councillor Raikes had agreed to fill the vacancy.

Councillor Fleming moved and Councillor Mrs Davison seconded the recommendation in the report which was duly carried.

Resolved: That Councillor Raikes should replace Councillor Towell as one of the Council's representatives on the Sevenoaks Conservation Council for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

20. TO CONSIDER ANY QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER PARAGRAPH 19.3 OF PART 2 OF THE CONSTITUTION

Councillor Brookbank asked the following question of which notice had been given in accordance with Paragraph 19.3 of Part 2 of the Constitution:

“Could the Leader/Cabinet Member please describe what action the Council is taking to further the installation of disabled facilities at Swanley Station before the Paralympic events taking place at Brands Hatch , for which it is the nominated station.”

The Leader of the Council replied that there was good news on the badly needed improvements to Swanley Railway Station and that £250,000 had been allocated to the station from the Access for All Programme. This funding was in addition to funds already allocated to upgrade the lifts at the station. He referred to an email from Southeastern Railways forwarded to him by Michael Fallon MP which listed the following improvements to be made to the station:

- Two lifts to be installed serving all four platforms. Work to include refurbishment of the stairs and installation of new handrails;
- Commissioning a design review to look at remodelling the main station entrance and ticket office foyer;
- Upgrading existing CCTV to digital technology and installing additional cameras;
- New departure screens to the ticket hall and additional screens to all platforms at the foot of the stairs;
- Complete refurbishment of the toilets on platforms one & two, and three & four including provision of a disabled toilet;
- Additional cycle parking to both station entrances;
- Installation of automatic doors to the main station entrance and platform waiting rooms;
- Six additional sets of seating to platforms one and two;

- A new disabled access ticket office counter;
- Anti-slip flooring in the ticket hall;
- Upgrading lighting in the ticket hall;
- Removal of obsolete cycle lockers within the footbridge;
- New directional signage;
- Provision of electrical and water provision for the retail unit on the footbridge;
- Replacement of the station's plumbing system;
- Refurbishment of waiting rooms to include windows, heating, flooring and repainting.

All works would be completed ahead of the Paralympics.

Members welcomed the proposed work and noted the role that the Sevenoaks District Access Group had played in lobbying for station improvements over a long period of time.

21. TO RECEIVE ANY QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC UNDER PARAGRAPH 17 OF PART 2 OF THE CONSTITUTION.

None were received.

22. TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL ON THE WORK OF THE CABINET SINCE THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING.

The Leader of the Council reported on the work that he and the Cabinet had undertaken in the period 24 May to 7 July 2011.

The Leader highlighted the meeting that he had attended at the Ministry of Defence with the Minister, Peter Luff MP, and Michael Fallon MP and Jo Johnson MP to discuss Fort Halstead. The Minister had been clear that jobs at Fort Halstead would disappear but had been very supportive. This was reflected in a letter that he had subsequently sent to the Leader of the Council setting out the issues discussed at the meeting and the support given at the meeting, including an undertaking to assist with dealing with any blockages to efforts to secure new uses for Fort Halstead. The Council would be working very closely with Kent County Council (KCC) and other organisations as a group to do whatever it could to lever-in new jobs and uses for Fort Halstead.

The Leader informed the Council that following the Council's representations over the withdrawal of the Sevenoaks Weald element of the 402 bus route, the bus company had reviewed its decision and would maintain the route whilst looking at the viability of the service. He felt that this illustrated the importance and vulnerability of public transport in rural areas. He also

highlighted work that he had been undertaking through the LGA on welfare reform and the universal credit.

In response to a question the Leader clarified the role of the Kent Forum Ambition Board 2. He explained that the Kent Forum was the new name for the Kent Leaders and CEO's and that the Kent Police and Fire Authorities were also members of the Forum. KCC had established 3 ambitions for Kent and Ambition Board 2, of which he was the Vice-Chairman, was looking at tackling poverty in rural Kent by examining how public services could work together to deal with historic issues.

The Leader announced that Councillor Mrs Davison would be the Deputy Leader of the Council until the Annual Meeting in May 2015.

23. TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMEN OF THE SELECT COMMITTEES ON THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEES SINCE THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING.

The Council received the reports from the Chairmen of the Select Committees as follows:

- Environment Select Committee – 7 June 2011
- Social Affairs Select Committee – 16 June 2011
- Services Select Committee – 21 June 2011

24. TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PERFORMANCE AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ON THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE SINCE THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING.

The Council received the report from the Chairman of the Performance and Governance Committee on the work undertaken by the Committee at its meeting on 28 June 2011.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.39 pm

Chairman