

DISTRICT COUNCIL OF SEVENOAKS
Minutes of the meeting of the Sevenoaks District Council
held on 29 November 2011 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. R Orridge (Chairman)

Cllr. Mrs Morris (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr. L Abraham, Cllr. Mrs B Ayres, Cllr. L Ayres, Cllr. L Ball,
Cllr. K S Bayley, Cllr. I Bosley, Cllr. Mrs P Bosley, Cllr. R Brookbank,
Cllr. C Brown, Cllr M Butler, Cllr. C Clark, Cllr. Mrs C Clark,
Cllr Mrs A Cook, Cllr. P Cooke, Cllr Mrs J Davison, Cllr. R J Davison,
Cllr. M Dickins, Cllr. J Edwards-Winsor, 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. M Horwood, Cllr. Mrs A Hunter,
Cllr. J London, Cllr Ms M Lowe, Cllr. K Maskell, Cllr. Mrs F Parkin,
Cllr. A Pett, Cllr. R Piper, Cllr. Mrs E Purves, Cllr. S Raikes,
Cllr. B Ramsey, Cllr. G Ryan, Cllr. Mrs J Sargeant, Cllr. J Scholey,
Cllr. T Searles, Cllr. Miss L Stack, Cllr. J Thornton and Cllr. R Walshe

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr. Ms I Chetram,
Cllr. P McGarvey, Cllr. J Underwood and Cllr. G Williamson

PRAYERS

Reverend Griffin led the Council in prayers.

36. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 18 October 2011 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The declarations of interest made by Members at meetings held between 23 September and 7 November 2011 were received. No additional declarations were made.

38. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

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

The Chairman announced that a petition containing 1,317 signatures had been submitted by a member of the public in the following terms:

"We, the undersigned, in the interests of the future of Sevenoaks Town centre, call upon Sevenoaks District Council to abandon all plans to increase parking charges there in 2012."

The lead petitioner, Margaret Robarts, addressed the council in support of the petition. She explained that the signatures had been collected during a short period of time and that there was strong support for the petition from car park users. People felt that it was not a good time to introduce increases in parking charges in the current economic climate, particularly as there were many other places where people could park for nothing such as Bluewater and that increased parking charges would deter people from shopping in Sevenoaks. It would also be an additional burden for people working in Sevenoaks to face higher costs for parking.

Cllr Fleming thanked the lead petitioner for raising these concerns and moved that, as this was a matter on which the Council Executive was required to make the final decision, the petition should be referred to the Cabinet without further debate or recommendation. This would allow the petition to be considered at the same time as the outcome of the statutory public consultation currently being undertaken on the proposals for parking charges. In addition this would ensure that there was no predetermination and that the Cabinet could make an informed decision in the light both of the concerns expressed by the petitioners and as a result of the consultation exercise. This was likely to be completed in time for consideration at the Cabinet meeting in January 2012 and any Member or member of the public would be able to attend the meeting if they so wished. The motion was duly seconded.

A Member welcomed the proposal to refer the matter back to the Cabinet for decision but commented that the proposed increases would run contrary to the District Community Plan and felt that the petition merited further debate during the Council meeting. This view was supported by another Member and the point was made that under the Council's Constitution a petition with more than 1,000 qualifying signatures should be debated in Council. In response the Leader of the Council re-iterated that a significant reason for his motion was that a general debate in advance of the current public consultation would seriously risk pre-determination of that consultation.

The motion was put to the vote and duly carried.

Resolved: That, as this is a matter on which the Council Executive is required to make the final decision, the petition be referred to the Cabinet without further debate or recommendation in order that it be considered at the same time as the outcome of the statutory consultation process and in order not to predetermine that process.

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

- A. Joint Working Project between Sevenoaks District Council and Dartford Borough Council in Environmental Health – Proposed Forward Operating Model – Supplementary Budget Request

Cllr. Fleming moved and Cllr. Mrs Bracken seconded the recommendation of the Cabinet held on 13 October 2011 that provision of £243,000 be approved to support the implementation of the joint working project in Environmental

Health as a supplementary budget. In moving the recommendation the Leader of the Council emphasised the considerable savings and relatively short payback period associated with the project.

The report outlined the outcome of the feasibility study and business case for the joint working project between Sevenoaks District Council and Dartford Borough Council in Environmental Health, and set out the proposed operating model for the joint service. It was proposed that the Environmental Health Service for both Councils would be provided from the Dartford office, with a satellite office based at Sevenoaks, with existing face to face services for customers being retained. The proposals followed a similar methodology to that applied to the successful Joint Revenues and Benefits Service and would deliver £300,000 pa savings across the two authorities from 2012/13, improve capacity and resilience, deliver agreed service standards, and allow for further savings/generation of income whilst remaining accessible for customers. It was estimated that joint savings over a five year period would total £1.68 million and allowing for implementation costs of £486,000 this would deliver a pay back period of 1.6 years. The proposed service standards and organisational structure were outlined and feedback from the consultation exercise carried out with staff during August and September was reported. It was anticipated that the proposals should be implemented in full from April 2012.

A Member accepted the economic justification for the project but asked how the proposals could be squared with localism. The Leader of the Council responded that the project would not only deliver necessary financial savings but would also meet operational imperatives by providing the robust and comprehensive level and quality of services to which the Council's residents had become accustomed. In doing so these services would be delivered by employees of Sevenoaks and Dartford Councils rather than by an outsourced company.

Resolved: That a provision of £243,000 investment costs be agreed to support the implementation of the Joint Working Project between Sevenoaks District Council and Dartford Borough Council in Environmental Health as a supplementary budget request (this figure representing a 50% share of the costs).

B. Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy

Cllr. Fleming moved and Cllr. Mrs Bracken seconded that the recommendation of the Licensing Committee on 26 October 2011 that the Council should adopt the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy should be approved. The Leader of the Council thanked the Portfolio Holder for Safe Community and the Licensing Committee for their work on the new policy.

The report provided detailed feedback from the consultation on the Draft Statement of Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Policy which ran for six weeks from the 26 August 2011 until the 7 October 2011. The proposed policy amended the current policy that Sevenoaks District Council had in operation which was last issued in January 2008. The new policy would take

effect from 3 January 2012 for a minimum of three years.

Resolved: That the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy attached to the report be adopted as District Council Policy.

C. Polling District and Polling Places Review 2011

Cllr. Fleming moved and Cllr. Mrs Bracken seconded that the recommendations of the Electoral Arrangements Committee held on 27 October 2011 be approved.

The report informed Members of the outcome of the review of Polling Districts and Polling Places which had been carried out in the autumn. The District was required to carry out a review every four years and the last review had been undertaken in 2007. The review had considered the existing provision in terms of the division of the District into polling districts and the designation of polling places within those polling districts in terms of their suitability for electoral purposes. This had included seeking the views of the Returning Officer, identifying opportunities for change where appropriate and undertaking public consultation on the proposals.

Resolved: That

(1) the proposed polling scheme contained in appendix B to the report, as amended by the Electoral Arrangements Committee held on 27 October 2011, be approved; and

(2) the timetable contained in paragraph 9 of the report (in relation to the next phase of the review) be adopted.

D. Community Governance Review

Cllr. Fleming moved and Cllr. Mrs Bracken seconded that the recommendations of the Electoral Arrangements Committee held on 27 October 2011 be approved.

The report advised Members that Government and Electoral Commission guidance recommended that District Councils should carry out a review of the boundary and electoral arrangements of the parishes within their areas every 10-15 years. The last review had been carried out in Sevenoaks in 1999 and it was proposed that a review should be carried out now both to meet the recommended timeframe and to take advantage of a small window of opportunity ahead of scheduled elections. The review would have to be completed within 12 months and it was proposed that the review should commence on 30 November and be completed by August 2012 with the publication of the Council's decisions in respect of parish boundaries and electoral arrangements. Proposals could relate to the creation, merging, grouping, alteration or abolition of parishes, or relate to the name of a parish

or to the number of councillors or warding arrangements for parishes. Any changes would take effect from the date of the next full parish council elections in May 2015.

Resolved: That

- (1) a Community Governance review be undertaken;
- (2) the terms of reference for the review set out in the Appendix to the report be adopted; and
- (3) the timetable for the review contained in paragraph 5 of the report be adopted.

E. Annual Review of Parking Charges and Christmas Parking 2011

Cllr. Fleming moved and Cllr. Mrs Hunter seconded that the recommendation of the Cabinet held on 3 November 2011 relating to the provision of free Christmas parking be agreed.

The report outlined the annual review of car parking charges and the options for increases in respect of car park and on-street parking charges to meet the budget for 2012/13. These had been considered by the Cabinet on 3 November which had proposed increases which were currently subject to public consultation for decision by the Cabinet in the New Year. The Council was asked to approve funding to support the proposal to provide free parking throughout the district on two Saturdays before Christmas.

Resolved: That free parking be provided for Christmas 2011 in all car parks and on-street parking areas throughout the District on Saturdays 10th and 17th December and that the cost be funded from Supplementary Estimates.

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

There were no items under this heading.

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

No questions were submitted by Members in accordance with Paragraph 19.3 of Part 2 of the Constitution.

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

No questions had been received from members of the public.

44. 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 5 October to 15 November 2011.

The Leader drew attention to the Chancellor's announcement as part of the Autumn Budget Statement on new initiatives to support infrastructure projects. It was hoped that the work being undertaken by the Council in association with Kent County Council, East Sussex and Council's along the A21 corridor to promote the dualling of the A21 might benefit from this. In response to a question the Leader clarified that his visit to Chevening House had been at the invitation of the trustees to see the work being carried out by the Trust.

45. 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 – 25 October 2011
- Social Affairs Select Committee – 1 November 2011
- Services Select Committee – 8 November 2011

46. 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 15 November 2011.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.32 pm

Chairman