

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2017 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Abraham (Chairman)

Cllr. Mrs. Bosley (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Ball, C Barnes, J Barnes, Bayley, Bosley, Brown, Dr. Canet, Clack, Clark, Coleman, Dickins, Edwards-Winsor, Esler, Eyre, Firth, Fleming, Gaywood, Grint, Halford, Hogarth, Hogg, Horwood, Mrs. Hunter, Kelly, Kitchener, Lake, Layland, Lindsay, London, Lowe, Maskell, McArthur, McGarvey, McGregor, Mrs. Morris, Parkin, Pearsall, Pett, Piper, Raikes, Scott, Scholey, Searles, Miss. Stack, Ms. Tennessee and Thornton

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Dyball, Parson, Purves, Reay and Williamson

20. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 21 July 2017.

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 21 July 2017 be approved and signed as a correct record.

21. To receive any declarations of interest not included in the register of interest from Members in respect of items of business included on the agenda for this meeting

No additional declarations of interest were received.

22. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman advised that along with the Vice Chairman he had attended the funeral of the very first Chairman of Sevenoaks District Council the day before. Eileen Wickenden. She had been Chairman from 1973 to 1975, and ward Councillor for Cowden and Edenbridge from 1973 to 1983. She had been a very active member of her community and an incredible person. Members of the Council joined him in a moment's silence in her memory.

He reported that the dragon boat race at Chipstead Lakes members had taken part in had raised £675; and the quiz had raised £965.70 for Ellenor Hospice.

Friday had been Children in Need and he and the Vice Chairman enjoyed helping with the collection and judging the fancy dress and bake off style 'Signature Bake'. Over £580 had been raised.

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He announced that Claire Perry had been awarded the 2017 Jeremy Allen Award, her husband Adam and Richard Wilson collected it on her behalf. This award was by 3rd party nomination, and Claire had been nominated by nine individuals including colleagues within the Licensing Partnership for Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells, Maidstone and Bexley councils, and also more widely by colleagues in the South East region which she had supported through her commitment as an Institute of Licensing regional officer. The award recognises and awards exceptional practitioners.

Finally the Chairman asked all present to join him in applauding the Leader of the Council who had just been awarded Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) Council Leader of the Year.

23. To receive any questions from members of the public under paragraph 17 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution.

No questions had been received.

24. To receive any petitions submitted by members of the public under paragraph 18 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution.

No petitions had been received.

25. Matters considered by the Cabinet

- (a) Housing Assistance Policy

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Lowe seconded, the recommendation from Cabinet. The report sought approval of the Housing Assistance Policy.

Resolved: That, subject to amendments to the Hospital Discharge Grant (HDG) to include 'the repair or buying of furniture' which would include within Registered Social Landlord Properties, the proposed Housing Assistance Policy be approved in order to ensure increased funding provided via the Better Care Fund is delivered to those who have not previously been able to obtain financial assistance; and to update the criteria for the Council's own discretionary financial assistance.

- (b) West Kent Homelessness Strategy

The report sought adoption of the new West Kent Homelessness Strategy. Councillor Lowe drew attention to paragraph 8 of the report, that advised that a further paragraph was to be added to the Strategy in response to feedback on care leavers.

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Lowe seconded, the recommendation from Cabinet with this addition.

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Resolved: That the West Kent Homelessness Strategy be adopted, subject to the following paragraph being added to page 26 of the Strategy

‘Care leavers, of which Kent has a disproportionately large number, are a particularly vulnerable group. Kent County Council has duties under the Leaving Care Act 2000 towards eligible, relevant and former relevant children and young people and has a statutory duty to ensure that all such young people who meet the criteria for services as care leavers are placed in suitable accommodation when leaving care, transitioning to adulthood. In response to this, we must work in partnership with Kent County Council’s 18+ Care Leaver Service to find the best solutions for Care Leavers; This may require exploring more creative options including shared accommodation where suitable and appropriate.’

(c) Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2018/19

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Scholey seconded, the recommendation from Cabinet. The report set out a proposed revision to the existing Council Tax Reduction (CTR) scheme.

Resolved: That

- a) the outcome of the public consultation, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be noted;
- b) responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty and potential impacts of the proposed change on working age claimants with the protected characteristics of disability, age and sex, as set out in the Equality Impact Assessment in Appendix B to the report be noted; and
- c) the current CTR scheme be amended as follows and adopted to take effect from 1 April 2018:
 - i) That a self-employed applicant and/or his/her self-employed partner who is in receipt of the Personal Independence Payment (standard or enhanced rate of the daily living component) or Disability Living Allowance (middle or high rate of the care component) or Armed Forces Independence Payments be made exempt from the Minimum Income Floor.

(d) Affordable Housing Company

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Lowe seconded, the recommendation from Cabinet. The report sought authority to progress the proposal to set up an Affordable Housing Company.

Resolved: That

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- a) it be noted that expert external advice to develop a comprehensive business case to deliver Members ambition for the Council to develop its own affordable housing within the District has been commissioned;
- b) subject to a sound business case being established, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to incorporate a standalone Affordable Housing Company first taking detailed advice and assistance from specialist external lawyers on the delivery model and set-up process;
- c) the broad governance and funding arrangements as set out in the report be noted;
- d) delegated authority be given to the Portfolio Holders for Finance, Housing & Health and Legal and Democratic Services in consultation with the Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer and Head of Legal and Democratic Services to settle the detailed arrangements for the establishment of the company; and
- e) in the event that a sound business case to deliver affordable housing through an affordable housing company cannot be established Officers report back to Members setting out further options to deliver on Members ambition to develop its own affordable housing within the District.

(e) Christmas Parking 2017

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Lowe seconded, the recommendation from Cabinet. The report sought funding for free parking being provided for two weekends leading up to Christmas, on Saturdays and Sundays, 9 & 10 and 16 & 17 December 2017.

Resolved: That the cost in terms of lost income for free Christmas parking be funded from a supplementary estimate.

26. Matter considered by Governance Committee

(f) Review of the Scheme for Members' Allowances

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Pett seconded, the recommendations from the Governance Committee.

Cllr. Hogg stated that he could not support the recommendation when local government workers were restricted to a 1% raise which amounted to a decline. Cllr. Halford was pleased that it was not the same increase Kent County Councillors were receiving and felt that it was acceptable and fair.

Cllr. Fleming responded that, apart from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Spending Board Chairman and Vice Chairman and the Vice Chairman of

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Development Control allowances, the proposed increases would not come into force until 2019, after the next district council election.

Resolved: That

- a) the Chairman of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Spending Board be remunerated at the same rate as the Chairs of other committees, namely £2,144 p.a. with immediate effect;
- b) the Vice Chair of the CIL Spending Board be remunerated at the same rate as other Vice Chairs of committees, namely £534 p.a. with immediate effect;
- c) the allowance for the Vice Chair of Development Control committee be increased to £1,000 p.a. with immediate effect; and
- d) otherwise the recommendations of the JIRP be instituted with effect from the commencement of the municipal year 2019/20, namely:

(a) The basic allowance shall remain unchanged.

(b) Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) should be:

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| a. Council Leader | £20,000 p.a. |
| b. Deputy Leader | £12,000 p.a. |
| c. Opposition Group Leaders
member | £270 p.a. per group |
| d. Cabinet Members | £7,000 p.a. |
| e. Deputy Cabinet Members | £1,600 p.a. |
| f. Committee Chairs
p.a. | £1,500 - £5,000 |
| g. Advisory Committee Chairs | £2,500 p.a. |
| h. Development Control Ctte Vice Chair | £1,000 p.a. |
| i. Vice Chairs of other committees shall not receive a SRA. | |
| j. Development Control Ctte Members | £500 p.a. |
| k. Licensing Ctte Members | £135 p.a. |
| l. Standards Co-optees | £480 p.a. |

(c) Child Care Allowance be payable at the actual amount charged,

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subject to a maximum rate of £7.20 per child per hour.

- (d) Dependent Carer's Allowance be payable at the actual amount charged, subject to a maximum of £16.00 per hour.
- (e) Allowances be updated in line with any annual increases in pay awards to Council staff.
- (f) Travel expenses continue to be based upon the HMRC approved rate.
- (g) The existing scheme for meal and subsistence allowances continue.
- (h) The existing IT allowance be stopped.

27. To consider the following reports from the Chief Executive or other Chief Officers on matters requiring the attention of Council:

(a) Mid-year Appointments 2017/18

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Lowe seconded the report which sought approval of the revised committee memberships.

Resolved: That the committee and outside organisation vacancies be appointed to as follows -

- Development Control Committee - Cllr. Coleman
- Health Liaison Board - Cllr. Miss Stack
- Licensing Committee - Cllr. Clack
- Citizens Advice: Edenebridge & Westerham - Cllr Coleman
- Dartford & Gravesham NHS Trust Stakeholder Council - Cllr Searles

(b) Draft calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2018/19

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Lowe seconded the report which sought approval of the draft calendar of meetings 2018/19.

Resolved: That the draft calendar of meetings for 2018/19 be approved subject to formal adoption at the Annual Meeting of the Council on 15 May 2018.

28. To consider any questions by Members under paragraph 19.3 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution, notice of which have been duly given.

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One question had been received from a Member in accordance with paragraph 19.3 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution.

Question 1: Cllr. Hogg

“As it is now well over two years since the District Council evicted Age Concern from their Meeting Point venue in Swanley High Street and its acquisition of Swanley Working Man’s Club, could the Leader explain to the people of Swanley why it has taken the Council so long, except for the demolition of the Club, to take any action in developing these sites?

What is the cost to the council of securing and maintaining these sites?

Could he also explain why the Working Man’s Club was purchased without any firm plans for the site or predicted income from it, counter to the Council's property purchase policy?

When are the people of Swanley going to see any action?”

Response: Leader of the Council

I thank Councillor Hogg for his question about the Meeting Point building and Working Men’s Club in Swanley.

The District Council acquired the Working Men’s Club in February 2015 and spent £1.437 million on its acquisition, demolition and erection of the hoardings. The Council acquired the property to enable the regeneration of this key gateway site in the town and to generate either revenue income or capital receipts from its redevelopment. The regeneration of this site, together with the former Meeting Point building, formed a key part of the Swanley Mastervision, which the Council consulted on in late 2016 and was debated in Cabinet in February 2017.

The feasibility work that we have been undertaking since the completion of the Mastervision reflects the aspirations for both sites together to form a landmark at an important location in the town including residential development together with retail and restaurants on the Bevan Place site, the potential for start up business space and the diversity of the Town Centre, all of which were supported in the consultation.

The costs for the Meeting Point building, since it became vacant, are for the building insurance, £5224.16, and business rates, £40,324.15, together with £200 for securing for rear of the property.

The feasibility work will be concluded within the next couple of months. There will then follow meetings with local members prior to any proposals being made public.

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It is however important that any proposals that the District Council have for the redevelopment are both deliverable and provide the appropriate level of required financial return to allow us, with the White Oak site included, to fulfil our stated ambition to provide Swanley with new leisure facilities.

In response to Cllr. Hogg's supplementary question, the Leader of the Council stated that at the Development Control Committee an application to regenerate Swanley Town centre had been unanimously rejected. The Council was not a slum landlord as there were no tenants. That it had been an acquisition in order to safeguard and provide a gateway to Swanley at such an important junction, and that it had formed part of the Master Vision which residents had been consulted on and it was the wishes of the people of Swanley to bring these sites into use.

In accordance with the Constitution, no further discussion was allowed.

29. To consider any motions by Members under paragraph 20 of Part 2 (The Council and District Council Members) of the Constitution, notice of which have been duly given.

No motions had been received.

30. 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 3 July to 3 November 2017, and Members took the opportunity to ask questions.

Members noted the revisions to the Cabinet portfolios.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.25 PM

CHAIRMAN