

DISTRICT COUNCIL OF SEVENOAKS

Minutes of the Meeting of the Sevenoaks District Council held on 17 December 2013 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Pett (Chairman)

Mrs. Davison (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Mrs. Ayres, Ayres, Mrs. Bayley, Ball, Bosley, Mrs. Bosley, Brookbank, Brown, Butler, Ms. Chetram, Clark, Mrs. Clark, Mrs. Cook, Cooke, Davison, Dickins, Edwards-Winser, Eyre, Fittock, Fleming, Gaywood, Mrs. George, Hogarth, Horwood, Mrs. Hunter, London, Ms. Lowe, Maskell, McGarvey, Mrs. Morris, Orridge, Piper, Mrs. Purves, Raikes, Ramsay, Mrs. Sargeant, Scholey, Searles, Miss. Stack, Miss. Thornton, Towell, Underwood and Walshe

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Mrs. Bracken, Mrs. Dawson, Grint and Neal.

21. To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 1 October 2013

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 1 October 2013 be approved and signed as a correct record.

22. 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 further declarations of interest were received.

23. To receive any petitions submitted by members of the public.

No petitions were received.

24. Matters considered by the Cabinet and other committees:

- a) Amendments to the Constitution relating to the Council's Licensing Function

Cllr Fleming proposed and Cllr Ms Lowe seconded that the amendments to Part 8 and Part 13 of the Council's constitution attached at Appendix A and Appendix B to the report be approved as recommended by the Licensing Committee and Governance Committee. It had been necessary to update the Council's constitution to reflect changes that had been made to legislation and new legislation that had been implemented. There was also a minor amendment to the Terms of Reference for the Licensing Sub-Committees to enable referral of some reports on either an application by a Private Hire Driver or a Hackney Carriage Driver.

Resolved: That the amendments to Part 8 and Part 13 of the Council's Constitution attached as Appendices A and B to the report, be approved.

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b) Christmas Parking 2013

Cllr Fleming proposed and Cllr Hogarth seconded that the recommendation from Cabinet to fund the cost in terms of lost income, from the provision of free parking in all car parks and on-street parking areas throughout the district for two Saturdays before Christmas 2013 on the preferred dates expressed by the Town Councils, from Supplementary Estimates. As in previous years, to encourage people to shop locally and to help support local businesses in the face of competition from other shopping areas in the region, the Council had provided free parking in all car parks and on-street parking areas on two Saturdays before Christmas.

It was clarified that only the funding of this proposal was for consideration at Council. The substantive part of the report concerning the review of parking charges had already been agreed by Cabinet and was out for consultation and would be subject to a further report to Cabinet in the new year.

Resolved: That the cost in terms of lost income, from the provision of free parking in all car parks and on-street parking areas throughout the district for two Saturdays before Christmas 2013 on the preferred dates expressed by the Town Councils (7 and 14 December in respect to Westerham and 14th and 21st December in respect to Sevenoaks), be funded from Supplementary Estimates.

c) Climate Local Sevenoaks

Cllr Fleming proposed and Cllr Bosley seconded that Climate Local Sevenoaks be adopted as District Council policy as recommended by Cabinet. Climate Local was a Local Government Association initiative to drive, inspire and support local authority action on a changing climate. The initiative supported 'mitigation' measures (address the root causes by reducing greenhouse gas emissions) and 'adaptation' measures (lower the risks posed by the consequences of climatic changes). Climate Local superseded the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change, which had been previously adopted by the District Council. In response to this, Kent County Council and its public sector partners, which included all Kent district/borough councils, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue, and Kent and Medway NHS Trust, had jointly developed Climate Local Kent which was subsequently supported by the Kent Forum. Having agreed with the broad principles of Climate Local Kent, Districts were open to adopt targets in line with Climate Local. Option A as detailed within the report took County targets which had been scaled-down to district level by assuming an equal proportion for each respective authority. Consideration was then given to the local population, housing stock types/numbers and condition, major infrastructure and business, planning restrictions and deprivation. A reduction was subsequently applied to some targets to reflect limited scope for savings in the Sevenoaks District, which provided a more realistic set of commitments and targets to work towards at District level, whilst still demonstrating a local commitment to wider Kent outcomes.

A Member was in support in principle but was concerned about the impact on poorer more vulnerable residents and felt that certain aspects needed to be looked at in more depth. For example the reduction in domestic gas consumption versus the rise in commercial consumption. The Chairman of Local Planning & Environment Advisory Committee responded that this item had been well debated at Committee, and the same concern had been highlighted and was being investigated. Members' attention was also

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drawn to the report and the commitment to protect those most vulnerable to climate impacts.

Resolved: That Members adopt *Climate Local Sevenoaks* (Option A) as District Council policy.

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

a) Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2014/15

Cllr Fleming proposed and Cllr Ramsay seconded that: Members note that as resolved by Council on 27 November 2012 that from 1 April 2014 all residents of working age receive a deduction on the amount of council tax support they are entitled to, calculated on the basis of the previous council tax benefit scheme, of 18.5%; Note that the Council's local council tax support scheme will be amended for pension age claimants as required by Government regulations; and the Council amends its local council tax support scheme from 1 April 2014 to ensure that figures used in the calculation of council tax support for work age claimants are uprated in line with Government regulations for pension age claimants.

Through the Local Government Finance Bill the Government had abolished council tax benefit and placed a requirement on local authorities to introduce their own local council tax support schemes with effect from 1 April 2013. In November 2012 Council had agreed the form of the local council tax support scheme to be administered for three years from 1 April 2013. However, the Government had recently announced that they would be making changes to Prescribed Requirements for pension age claimants within the scheme and would require local authorities to update their own schemes in light of these changes.

A Member expressed concern that there was not enough information as yet for a comprehensive equality impact assessment and requested that when information on funding was available this be referred back to the appropriate committee. He was also concerned over the administration costs and how these would be funded after the initial three years. Councillor Fleming agreed that the impacts of the scheme would have to be reviewed and that the current agreement was in place until 2015.

Resolved: That

- a) it be noted that as resolved by Council on 27 November 2012, from 1 April 2014 all residents of working age receive a deduction on the amount of council tax support they are entitled to, calculated on the basis of the previous council tax benefit scheme, of 18.5%;
- b) it be noted that the Council's local council tax support scheme would be amended for pension age claimants as required by Government regulations; and
- c) the local council tax support scheme be amended from 1 April 2014 to ensure that figures used in the calculation of council tax support for work age

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claimants are updated in line with Government regulations for pension age claimants.

b) Membership of Standards Board

Cllr Fleming proposed and Cllr Ms Lowe seconded that Councillor Lindsay be appointed to the vacancy on the Standards Committee.

Resolved: That Councillor Lindsay be appointed to the Standards Committee.

26. 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.

No questions were received.

27. 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.

Councillor Walshe proposed, and Councillor Mrs Purves seconded the following motion:

This Council, noting

- that England is now widely recognised to be the country with the most centralised system of government in Europe;
- that devolution has brought decisions about tax and spending, and the quality of public services, closer to voters in Scotland and Wales, while English voters have not gained comparably greater influence over decision-making that affects their taxes and services; and

considers

- that the likely scale of change in how public services are funded and provided makes it democratically unsustainable for those changes to be decided within the existing over-centralised model;
- that services need to be reformed and integrated across local agencies to enable them to prevent problems rather than picking up the pieces;
- that voters should be given back a meaningful say on a wider range of tax and spending decisions, through place-based budgetary arrangements, the abolition of the discredited Barnett formula and the reinstatement of fair financial distribution agreed among English councils, the re-creation of a municipal bond market, and the certainty of multi-year funding settlements for the life of a Parliament;
- that central government should enable that local decision-making by joining up and reducing in size Whitehall departments in order to facilitate local place-based budgets, by reducing Ministers' powers to intervene in local decisions, and

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replacing bureaucratic tick-box inspection regimes with local service users champions; and

- that such a new more mature settlement between central and local government should be put beyond future revision by giving formal constitutional protection to local democracy; and

resolves

- to support the Local Government Association's *Rewiring Public Services* campaign, which embodies these objectives;
- to ask the District's Members of Parliament to support the *Rewiring Public Services* campaign to improve local voters' influence over services, tax and spending; and
- to make the council's position clear to the Secretary of State.

Councillor Walshe spoke to the motion stating that it was a suggested one by the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Council should show support of their campaign. This Country had the most centralised government in Europe, and he referred mainly to England rather than Scotland and Wales. It was an all party campaign many other authorities had already shown support for. [A video clip](#) from the LGA website was shown to support the motion.

Councillor Fleming agreed with the motion in principle and supported its key aims, but advised that since the suggested motion by the LGA had been published, things had moved on. For example different language was now being used. Also it was such an important debate and involved more than just the local authority but the wider community and partners too, and at this stage it would be more beneficial to have the Chairman attend and address the Council at this stage.

Councillor Fleming therefore moved an amendment, which was seconded by Cllr Ms Lowe,

“that a decision on the motion be deferred until such time as the Chairman of the LGA could attend and enable a wider debate with the community and partners.”

Members debated the amendment. The amendment to the motion was then put to the vote and it was carried.

The substantive motion therefore being considered was:

“That a decision on the motion be deferred until such time as the Chairman of the Local Government Association could attend and enable a wider debate with the community and partners.”

Members were keen that the wider debate also involve local MPs and be expedited. It was noted that a wider debate would not be as part of a formal council meeting due to the number of people and groups to be consulted, but that any findings from such a debate would progress through the committee system. Councillor Fleming undertook to complete the process by the end of the municipal year 2013/14.

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Resolved: That a decision on the motion be deferred until such time as the Chairman of the Local Government Association could attend and enable a wider debate with the community and partners.

28. 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 were received.

29. 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 18 September to 6 December 2013.

Highlighting some of the work, he advised that he had attended a strategic aviation meeting with South East England Councils (SEEC) and South East Strategic Leaders (SESL). This had since been overtaken by the release of the Airport Commission's interim report that day. He had taken the opportunity to raise the concerns of the middle and south east parts of the district with regards to any increases or flight changes at Gatwick Airport.

In October he had attended a presentation by CBRE with QinetiQ and Regeneris who were hoping to remain in Fort Halstead. In November he had attended a District Council Network Executive meeting where the issue discussed was the new single fraud investigations service, a letter had been sent to Lord Freud concerning this issue. This Council had a good record for combatting fraud and he would not want to see something less effective imposed.

In response to a question he advised that the Peer Challenge review had taken place at the beginning of December. A report to Members on the findings would follow.

A request was made that Chairmen of Advisory Committees should write an update report to Council, this would be investigated.

The Chairman closed the meeting wishing everyone a peaceful and joyous Christmas season.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.58 pm

Chairman