

DISTRICT COUNCIL OF SEVENOAKS

Minutes of the Meeting of the Sevenoaks District Council held on 21 July 2015 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Raikes (Vice Chairman) (In the Chair)

Cllrs. Abraham, Mrs. Bayley, Ball, Bosley, Mrs. Bosley, Brookbank, Barnes, Brown, Clark, Dickins, Edwards-Winsor, Eyre, Firth, Fleming, Gaywood, Grint, Hogarth, Horwood, Mrs. Hunter, Lindsay, Lowe, Maskell, Mrs. Morris, Parkin, Pett, Piper, Purves, Raikes, Scholey, Searles, Ms. Tennessee, Thornton, Williamson, Dr. Canet, Clack, Dyball, Esler, Halford, Hogg, Kelly, Kitchener, Krogdahl, Lake, Layland, McArthur, McGregor, Parson, Pearsall, Reay and Rosen

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Cooke, London, McGarvey and Miss. Stack.

60. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 19 May 2015

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 19 May 2015 be approved and signed as a correct record.

61. 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

Councillor Brookbank declared an interest in Minute 64(a), Petition for the Regeneration of new Ash Green, as he was a Kent County Councillor, and would remain in the Chamber but take no part in the debate or vote thereon.

62. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman advised that there were free Summer Family Fun days, taking place across the District from Monday 27 July for four weeks and further information can be found on the website. He reminded Members that, along with the local community, there was the opportunity to comment on the Community Plan actions, at special consultation drop-in workshops on Tuesday 25 August and Thursday 3 September from 6pm until 9pm at the Argyle Road Offices. If Members were unable to attend one of the drop in sessions then there would also be an online survey.

The Licensing Partnership were holding two open sessions for Members welcome on Monday 27 July from 9.30am to 12.30pm and Wednesday 5 August from 1.30pm to 4.30pm. The objective was for all Members to have an understanding of how the Licensing Partnership's Administration Team worked, control measures that were in place and to understand how the policies set by the Licensing Committees worked in the back office.

He also advised that further sessions of Safeguarding and Dementia Friend training for Members were being arranged.

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63. 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.

64. 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:

- a) Petition for the Regeneration of New Ash Green Village Centre

Councillor Cameron Clark and the Lead Petitioner, Victoria Barnard, had submitted a petition with 1,550 signatures in the following terms:

“We, the undersigned, call upon Sevenoaks District Council to take a more active role in ensuring the current landowners (Piperton Finance, Gable Holt Ltd and the Co-operative Society Ltd) bring New Ash Green Village Centre up to an acceptable standard (details of major issues listed below):

- Upper Street South: semi derelict appearance of the walkways/paving slabs/empty units. Rat traps left for 2+ years without being changed/removed, rats living in empty units with pest control not carried out regularly. Trees/plants growing where they shouldn't be. Bridge over Link in very poor condition, stairs and railings covered in pigeon droppings.
- Upper Street North: derelict, evident damage caused by water, damaged windows, walkways/paving slabs in a bad state, pigeons living/breeding inside the empty units (with many dead pigeons inside empty units and the floors thick with pigeon droppings), empty units not boarded up properly (being constantly ripped down by vandals), broken cladding, barbed wire hanging down, unsightly boarding, woodwork rotting, inside of the units in a derelict state.
- The Row: Many empty units which cannot be filled due to the derelict state of the interiors. Landowners will not spend money to bring them up to standard for tenants to move in. Security shutters dirty and unsightly. Rats have been seen. Pigeons roosting above shops, anti-pigeon spikes do nothing to deter them. Pigeons now laying eggs and breeding above shops. Canopies either filthy or missing, clock tower flaking paint. Bus stop in centre inhabited by rats. Boarded up toilets and doors near the bus stop. Overall appearance of the centre downstairs (most of upstairs is not accessible) is neglected and derelict/borderline derelict.

The neglect and lack of care and maintenance over a number of years in the village centre has reached its limit and cannot be allowed to deteriorate any longer.

The residents of Upper Street South, the village shop owners and the residents of New Ash Green are not prepared to tolerate the neglect and derelict appearance of the centre. It is affecting home owners and shop owners alike.

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We urge the council to ensure the landowners make the necessary improvements and regenerate the village centre as a matter of urgency.

We urge the council to take urgent steps towards making sure the landowners achieve this so the village centre is brought back to an acceptable standard so it can thrive for the local community.”

The lead petitioner, Victoria Barnard, addressed the council in support of the petition.

The Leader responded expressing shared frustration with the situation and difficulties dealing with the three different landlords of the site. There were multiple ongoing responses and it did need to be more coordinated and better communicated.

Local and neighbouring Councillors spoke in support of the issues raised and the need for improvements, with all interested parties working together as a coordinated team to renew the vision for New Ash Green.

Resolved: That the petition be referred to the Cabinet, where the Council’s approach could be coordinated across the Council and communicated to residents, with a report back in six months.

65. Matters considered by the Cabinet

a) Otford Palace Tower

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Searles seconded the recommendations from Cabinet. The report outlined the immediate requirement to maintain the structural stability of the Otford Palace Tower and requested that the works be authorised with the appropriate budget allocated from the General Fund Reserve.

In response to questions Cllr. Fleming advised that the Council held a [Land and Property Asset register](#) which was updated annually. It was not possible to obtain external funding for the immediate stabilisation works, however other sources were being investigated for future works, and with regards to possible future uses such as a tourist attraction this was a debate for another day however it was the intention to investigate self funding for the future.

Resolved: That the allocation of £130,699 from the General Fund Reserve for the completion of essential stabilisation works at the Otford Palace Tower, be approved.

b) Property Investment Strategy

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Searles seconded the recommendations from Cabinet. The report sought additional funding to enable further property acquisitions to help ensure that the Council remained in a financially sustainable position going forwards. Cllr. Fleming clarified that this was providing an opportunity to borrow should an appropriate investment scheme come forward. In response to questions he reported that it was the intention to always have a mixed investment portfolio, at the moment there had been no borrowing and were trying to reduce any risk to the Council or residents, however the risk of doing nothing was greater. The expectation was a 6%

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return and this was already being achieved from two of the three investments made so far.

Resolved: That

- a) a further £10m for the Property Investment Strategy be set aside from borrowing; and
- b) the Amendment to the Treasury Management Strategy 2015/16, be approved.

66. Matters considered by Governance Committee

- a) The Local Authorities (Standing Orders)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2015 – Appointment and Dismissal of Senior Officers

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

Resolved: That the amendments to Officer Employment Procedure Rules (Appendix M of the Constitution) and paragraph 6 of the Constitution entitled “Functions of the Full Council” within Part 2 – The Council and District Council Members, in relation to the dismissal of statutory officers, attached as an appendix to the report, be approved.

- b) Kent County Council Electoral Division Review

A new alternative ‘[Option 4](#)’ was tabled. Councillor Firth proposed that the holding response sent to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on 3 July 2015 be amended in accordance with the tabled alternative Option 4 and the alternative proposed division names also detailed on the map, and this was duly seconded by Councillor Mrs. Hunter.

Speaking to the amended proposal from what was recommended from the Governance committee, Councillor Firth advised that the District was merely a statutory consultee to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England’s (LGBCE) consultation document and its draft proposals for new county council division boundaries for Kent County Council (KCC). The review was being carried out because of electoral imbalances and had little to do with communities. Since the meeting of the Governance Committee some more work and consultation had been carried out and the newest proposal was trying to put forward the best division possible in light of the reduction from 7 to 6.

Councillor Thornton proposed an amendment, which was duly seconded, that the word ‘and East’ be inserted into the proposed division named Sevenoaks Darent Valley, to read ‘Sevenoaks East and Darent Valley.’

The amendment was put to the vote and carried.

The substantive motion was then put to the vote and it was

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Resolved: That the holding response sent to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England on 3 July 2015 be amended in accordance with the amended alternative option 4, along with the alternative proposed division names detailed on the map, to include the amended name 'Sevenoaks East & Darent Valley'.

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

a) Committee Memberships

It was moved by Cllr Fleming, seconded by Cllr. Ms. Lowe and noted that as Councillor Horwood was unable to complete training until 31 July 2015 his membership to the Development Control Committee would run from that date.

Resolved: That the amended memberships attached as an Appendix to this report, be approved subject to Cllr Horwood's appointment to the Development Control Committee not taking effect until 31 July.

68. 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 had been received.

69. 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.

70. 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 21 March to 6 July 2015.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.05 PM

Chairman