

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2020 commencing at 5.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Edwards-Winser (Chairman)

Cllr. Esler (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Andrews, Bayley, Ball, Barnes, Barnett, Brown, Dr. Canet, Carroll, Cheeseman, Clayton, Penny Cole, Perry Cole, Coleman, Collins, G. Darrington, P. Darrington, Dickins, Dyball, Eyre, Firth, Fleming, Foster, Fothergill, Griffiths, Grint, Hogarth, Hudson, Hunter, Kitchener, Layland, Maskell, McArthur, McGarvey, McGregor, Nelson, Osborne-Jackson, Parkin, Pender, Pett, Purves, Reay, Thornton and Waterton

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Clack, Harrison, London, Morris, Piper, Raikes, Roy and Williamson

60. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 21 April 2020.

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 21 April 2020 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.

No additional declarations of interest, not already registered, were received.

62. Chairman's Announcements.

The Chairman stated that it had been four months since the country entered lockdown in response to the growing threat of coronavirus, and in those four months there had been some extraordinary efforts to support the most vulnerable, to help businesses and those unable to work or go to school, and to keep the council services running that residents relied on.

More than four and a half thousand people across the Sevenoaks District were asked to shield. The Government had supported almost 600 people every week with food and supplies, but the District Council and its partners: Town & Parish Councils; and an army of more than a thousand volunteers, supported many more.

The Council had spoken with 4,000 people to help them with their Covid-19 related concerns. Whilst some had contacted the Customer Solutions team, council staff were telephoning residents to ensure that they were keeping well and had all of

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the support that they needed. Where there was an urgent need the Council had delivered 250 of its own urgent food parcels, before the wonderful ‘Care for our Community volunteers’ and other local organisations stepped in and provided help and assistance to fifteen hundred people.

The housing team had provided accommodation for 40 people that would otherwise have faced coronavirus without a place to live, and the team were now working hard to find move-on accommodation for when the urgent support that the council had been able to provide came to an end.

The Council’s HERO Team had supported 160 people who had been referred to them with concerns about their housing or finances as a direct result of Covid-19. There were many more examples of people being supported across Council services, and he took that moment to thank all Council staff for their efforts: from the staff at Dunbrik who had collected, what at times, had felt like mountains of rubbish and recycling as people took the opportunity of being at home to spring clean, only to find the tips temporarily closed; to those in council tax and benefits who had sought to help people pay their bills; and of course to those in business rates who had made more than £25m in Covid-19 specific grants to more than 2,000 local businesses.

He advised that as focus shifted to recovery and supporting the high street, the Council remained absolutely committed to continue with the effort it had shown in recent months.

He asked Members to join him in giving our thanks to all of those people, organisations, volunteers and key workers that had responded so brilliantly across the District in response to the unprecedented situation that Covid-19 had brought upon us.

The Chairman reported that in the absence of any face-to-face social meetings, he and the Vice Chairman had been contacting and virtually meeting with local community and charity groups to see how they were adapting to the situation, and as ever they were quite inspiring.

He advised that he had organised a virtual meeting with the Chairmen and Mayors of other Districts and Towns in Kent, and that together with the Vice Chairman, had visited in person, the “Community Cupboard” at West Kingsdown, which he had had the honour of opening last year. They had both been amazed at how this facility, which had started as a food bank opening for a couple of hours a week serving local needs, had grown into an organisation which was open all day, every day of the week, providing emergency rations for residents not only from within the District, but outside the District as well, with deliveries being undertaken by an army of Community Wardens. It had been explained that this facility was likely to expand exponentially once the furlough system drew to a close.

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.

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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.

No petitions had been received.

65. Changes to memberships of Committees and appointments to other organisations.

Cllr Fleming proposed and Cllr Dickins seconded, the report which sought approval to some mid-year committee and outside organisation membership changes.

Resolved: That

- a) the changes to memberships for the remainder of the municipal year 2019/21, as set out in the Appendix to the report, be approved; and
- b) the Standards Hearing Sub Committee, and Standards Assessment Working Party membership, be agreed.

66. To note the appointments to the Cabinet made by the Leader.

The Leader of the Council advised that Councillor Piper was becoming the Deputy Portfolio Holder of Housing and Health, swapping with Councillor Maskell who he welcomed as the new Portfolio Holder. He extended his thanks to Councillor Piper for all his work in the Cabinet, as Portfolio Holder for Planning and more recently Housing & Health.

Resolved: That the appointments to the Cabinet, be noted.

67. 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.

68. 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.

69. 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 30 March 2020 to 3 July 2020.

He took the opportunity to thank officers and cabinet colleagues for all their work during lockdown, and stated that local government as a whole had done a good job

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over the last four months. He displayed a booklet that would be going out to those still in receipt of central government food parcels, which signposted them to services they might find useful once this ended. The booklet had also been sent out to Members.

70. Quarterly report on Special Urgency decisions.

Members considered the quarterly report on special urgency decisions.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 5.14 PM

CHAIRMAN