

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2022 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Hunter (Vice Chairman in the Chair)

Cllrs. Abraham, Andrews, Ball, Barnes, Bonin, Brown, Dr. Canet, Carroll, Clayton, Penny Cole, Perry Cole, Collins, Dickins, Dyball, Edwards-Winsler, Eyre, Fleming, Foster, Griffiths, Grint, Harrison, Hudson, Hunter, Kitchener, Layland, London, Maskell, McGarvey, McGregor, Morris, Nelson, Osborne-Jackson, Pender, Pett, Purves, Raikes, Reay, Roy, Thornton, Waterton, Williams and Williamson

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Bayley, Cheeseman, Clack, G. Darrington, P. Darrington, Esler, Fothergill, Hogarth and McArthur

Cllrs. Barnett, Esler, G. Darrington and P. Darrington were also present via a virtual media platform which does not constitute attendance under the LGA 1972.

49. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 22 February 2022

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 22 February 2022, be approved and signed as a correct record, subject to the word 'exasperated' being changed to 'exacerbated' on page 4 of the minutes, fifth paragraph.

50. 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 made.

51. Chairman's Announcements.

The Vice Chairman announced that Members would have noticed that the Chairman of the Council had been unable to make the Council meeting, due to having caught Covid-19. The Chairman was joining on Zoom and had an announcement to make. Before handing over to Cllr Esler, Cllr Hunter advised that she had attended the Hosting Ukrainian Refugees event at the Stag Theatre on 20 April 2022, which was organised by Sevenoaks Welcome Refugees and supported by the Council. The Homes for Ukraine Scheme was launched by Government and as a District, there had been an overwhelming and extraordinary generosity by the residents who had offered their home or property as a safe place for a Ukrainian person or family.

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Like millions around the world, she was sure residents in the Sevenoaks District had watched on in horror at the escalating situation in Ukraine.

Her thoughts were with the people of Ukraine, who had shown great strength and character in response to this horrific attack.

Many would want to know how best to help Ukraine at this immensely troubling time. Thousands have fled the country while those that remain were not only suffering the effects of a military assault, but also from the dire consequences that accompany such a situation as resources like food, water and fuel become scarce.

The Vice Chairman also announced that on 9 March 2022, the Council won a bronze Community Focus award for the work with Eliza Ecclesstone, who took home the prestigious Chairman's Award for initiating 'Care for our Community' at the iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards and congratulated all.

The Vice Chairman, welcomed the Chairman, Cllr Esler to the meeting via zoom, who addressed the Council.

"Over the course of my year as Chairman, I have been made grateful for so many things. I am truly thankful to have had the opportunity to support such an important local charity, DAVSS - the Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Services. DAVSS is a charity not only close to my heart but also to the Council - Merle Bigden, one of its founding members, was an Officer of the Council before her retirement in 2003. I know the District Council supported them during the difficulties of the pandemic, so I was happy that I could support them further in my capacity as Chairman. Their work is fundamental to so many people in the local area, and we have been so thankful for the opportunity to help raise their profile at our events. It has been a privilege to fundraise for an organisation where you know that the money you raise will help so many with such serious issues as abuse and violence at home.

I am also grateful for the experiences I have had. We enjoyed a touching Civic service at St. Luke's Church, on the 17th July 2021. I would like to thank the Rev. Ann Bourne for the beautiful service, and Cllr Thornton and Cllr Maskell for their brilliant readings. I read the poem "Footprints" by Margaret Powers, and its message resonates with me even more now that I can look back on such a wonderful year.

Our visit to St Julians on the 29th July was another highlight. The bluebell walk with its wonderful views of the surrounding countryside was a reminder of our district's great beauty, and the talk from Nell Williams about the history of the club reminded us how rich the area's heritage is.

Our visit to Westerham Brewery on the 21st September made it clear to us that it was not just the history of the district that is rich, but its current business climate too. It was a delight to tour such a successful local business. Our visit to Eagle Heights on the 7th October, where we were treated to a flying display and were able to tour the sanctuary was a unique experience. It was a delight to see so many healthy native birds in a time where they are increasingly vulnerable. We so

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enjoyed seeing the huskies, servals and meerkats that the sanctuary also cares for - learning that the sanctuary also supports conservation work in West Africa was a reminder of the strength and kindness of everyone in this district.

Our visits to Coblands Garden Centre and Coakham Farm on the 13th and 14th of October similarly reminded us of the great work that the people of this area have been putting into sustainable development. The talk on plants from Tim Evans and Judith Kerr-Sheppard at the Garden Centre was very engaging, and it was interesting to see examples of the properties they described displayed by the plants in the centre. At Coakham Farm we learned about the pioneering work on sustainable development being undertaken there as well as having a ride sitting on hay bales on a trailer to view some of the farm. Despite having had to push the event back because of the pandemic, our visit inspired hope for the future.

We visited The Bricklayer's Arms on the 9th November, which was both a lovely opportunity to catch up with friends, but also to fundraise for DAVSS. We booked the private dining area, and it was a refreshing social experience after two years of the pandemic. Our visit to Mumbai Central on the 23rd February 2022 was similarly a trifecta of spectacular food, wonderful staff, and the generosity and great company of those we invited. At The Pheasant Plucker on the 16th March that "company" even extended to Sir Winston Churchill himself, as we enjoyed talking with a fantastic, and very knowledgeable, impersonator. We were treated to a fascinating talk on his life and achievements - and with Chartwell in the district, it also felt comfortingly local. Our Last Hurrah was held on the 13th April, and I could ask no more from my final event as Chairman. The speakeasy theme was enchanting, Coblands had truly gone to town with their decorations and the singing and dancing was thoroughly enjoyable. Carradine's Cockney Sing-a-long was enjoyed by all.

Lastly, but by no means least, I am grateful to have met Michael, my husband. When I was preparing to step into this role I never imagined I would meet the man I love, and it has made these three years so extremely special to me. He is the most wonderful husband I could ask for. He has truly been my prop and stay throughout this time. He has supported me in everything - no matter what I needed, I knew I could rely on him. Throughout this speech, I have referred to "our" activities - this is because Michael has been by my side, with me every step of this fantastic journey. None of this year as Chairman would have been possible without him. He was involved with all the arrangements for all the events, down to the flyers we sent out. I cannot express enough how lucky I am to have him as my husband. With his hard work, we were able to raise over £5400 for such a great organisation. DAVSS do such valuable, important work and we are so proud to be able to contribute to it.

Thank you all for supporting me in a truly unforgettable year that has not only been so personally meaningful, but also has supported this great charity."

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Cllr Esler, invited Cllr Irene Collins, Merle Bigden and Jan Berry from DAVSS to come forward to the front of the Council Chamber, where they were presented with a large cheque.

Cllr Collins expressed her own thanks to Merle and Jan for the invaluable work which DAVSS carry out.

Merle Bigden took the opportunity to thank Sevenoaks District Council as without them the Charity would not be in its existence, and it would not have been able to have helped over 16,000 people. She thanked Cllr Esler for her fundraising and the amount raised said it all.

Members showed their appreciation.

52. 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.

53. 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.

54. Matters considered by the Cabinet and/or Scrutiny Committee:

- a) **Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy 2022 - 2025**

Cllr Fleming moved and Cllr Dyball seconded the recommendation from Cabinet which sought the adoption of the updated Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults policy.

Resolved: That the updated Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy be adopted.

- b) **Air Quality Action Plan**

Cllr Fleming moved and Cllr Dickins seconded the recommendation from Cabinet which sought the adoption of the Air Quality Action Plan.

In response to questions Members were advised that an Air Quality Officer had been appointed and would be assisting with campaigns looking at alternative ways to get children to school, as the shortest journeys were often the ones which caused the most pollution. Members were also reassured that any major changes to the policy, such as fines would require Full Council's approval. The delivery of the actions would be as soon as possible to continue the year on year improvements. It

was noted that there was a transport issue and it was hoped by Cabinet agreeing Kent's first movement strategy this would help.

Resolved: That

- a) the results of the statutory consultation, be noted;
- b) the proposed changes made to the draft Air Quality Action Plan following consultation, be noted;
- c) that the adoption of the Air Quality Action Plan and its publication be supported; and
- d) delegated authority be given to the Environmental Health Manager to agree future amendments and changes to the Air Quality Action Plan following consultation with the Portfolio Holder to ensure it remains relevant and effective for its stated duration.

c) Environmental Health Enforcement Policy

Cllr Fleming moved and Cllr Dickins seconded the recommendation from Cabinet which sought the adoption of the Environmental Health Enforcement Policy. The policy outlined the statutory and non-statutory duties of the Environmental Health Team and how they would be carried out. The updated policy also reflected various changes to legislation and incorporated the return of environmental health to Sevenoaks as an 'in house' service.

Resolved: That the Environmental Health Enforcement Policy contents be noted, and be adopted.

55. Matters considered by other standing committees:

a) Electric Vehicle Mileage

Cllr Eyre moved and Cllr Nelson seconded the recommendation from Governance Committee which recommended the Monitoring Officer be authorised to amend the Members' Allowance Scheme to reflect the rates for mileage for electric vehicles.

Resolved: That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to amend the Members' Allowance Scheme, so as to reflect the HMRC rates for mileage payments in respect of electric vehicles.

b) Electronic Summons

Cllr Eyre moved and Cllr Nelson seconded the recommendation from the Governance Committee for the legal service of meeting documents by email. The proposed an alteration to Part two of the Constitution would allow formal summons to meetings to be provided electronically by email.

Resolved: That

- a) the revisions to Part 2 of the Constitution as set out in the report, be approved.
- b) pursuant to the Council's Net Zero 2030 ambitions, Members agree to accept formal legal service of meeting documents by email; and
- c) paper copies of meeting agendas and report will continue to be available in advance of meetings notwithstanding electronic service, be noted.

c) Monitoring Officer Annual Report

Cllr Ball moved and Cllr Raikes seconded the recommendation from the Standards Committee to note the Monitoring Officer's annual report.

Resolved: That the Monitoring Officer's annual report be noted.

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

a) Returning Officer Report

Cllr Fleming moved and Cllr Dickins seconded the report which provided the result of the by-election held for the Brasted, Chevening and Sundridge seat.

Resolved: That the Returning Officer's report be noted.

b) LGA Peer Review

Cllr Fleming moved and Cllr Dickins seconded the motion. The report set out the results of the recent peer review and the nine recommendations made by the Peer Review Team. Cllr Fleming spoke to the motion also thanking Members who took the time to be involved in the meetings. He highlighted that some of the recommendations were already in action, others were being looked at for how to implement and others would take longer.

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Resolved: that

- a) Members thanks to the LGA Peer Challenge Team for giving their time and expertise in undertaking the peer review of the Council be noted; and
- b) the findings of the Peer Challenge and the nine recommendations set out in this report, be noted.

57. 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.

58. 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.

59. 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 from 5 February to

60. To receive reports from the Chairmen of the Audit and Scrutiny Committees on the work of the Committees since the last Council meeting.

a) **Annual report from the Audit Committee Chairman**

Members noted the report presented by the Chairman of the Audit Committee, Cllr McGarvey.

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b) Annual report from the Scrutiny Committee Chairman

Members noted the annual report presented by the Chairman of The Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Brown.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 19:45

CHAIRMAN