

Council – 29 March 2011

DISTRICT COUNCIL OF SEVENOAKS

Minutes of the Meeting of the Sevenoaks District Council
held on 29 March 2011 commencing at 7 p.m.

Present: Cllr. Loney (Chairman)

Cllr. Orridge (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Arnold, Mrs Bracken, Brigden, Brookbank, Mrs. Broomby, Bruce, Mrs. Clark, Mrs Cook, Cooke, Darrington, Davison, Mrs. Davison, Mrs Dawson, Dean, Dibsdall, Fleming, Fodor, Gaywood, Gilbert, Grint, Harrod, Mrs. Hunter, Lankester, London, Maskell, McGarvey, McInnes, Mrs. Morris, Mrs. Parkin, Piper, Mrs. Purves, Ramsay, Ryan, Miss Stack, Underwood, Waller, Walshe, Wigg and Williamson.

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Bosley, Mrs Bosley, Coates, Cole, Mrs Lowe, Ms Moore, Pett, Mrs Sargeant and Scholey.

67. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 22 February 2011 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

68. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members declarations of interest at meetings from 8 February 2011 to 18 March 2011 were noted.

69. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that during the Civic Year he and the Vice Chairman had attended events in 25 of the 30 parishes in the District. He advised Members that any invitations to attend events in the remainder of the Municipal Year should be sent to his personal assistant.

The Chairman thanked those Members who would be retiring from the Council in May for their service to the District. He noted that the current estimate was that 17 Members might be retiring and that their combined service to the Council was 142 years. He invited Members to join him for light refreshments at the end of the meeting to say farewell to colleagues who would be retiring from the Council.

The Chairman presented an engraved plaque to Councillor Nick Dean who was retiring after 35 years on the Council and thanked him for his service during that time.

In response Councillor Dean thanked the Council for honouring his service and recalled the many changes that had taken place in local government and at Sevenoaks during his time as a Councillor. He commented that he had enjoyed his time as a member of the Council and would miss his colleagues.

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70. TO RECEIVE ANY PETITIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

The Chairman announced that no petitions had been submitted.

71. MATTERS CONSIDERED BY THE CABINET AND/OR OTHER COMMITTEES

No matters had been referred to the Council for consideration by the Cabinet or other committees.

72. REPORTS FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OR OTHER DIRECTORS ON MATTERS REQUIRING THE ATTENTION OF COUNCIL

A. Draft Calendar of Meetings 2011/12

The Council considered the draft calendar of meetings for the Municipal Year 2011/12. It was noted that the calendar of meetings would be subject to confirmation at the Annual Meeting of the Council in May but that early agreement would allow forward planning and the booking of meeting rooms.

Councillor Mrs Cook requested that further consideration be given to the scheduling of the meetings of the Social Affairs Select Committee on 14 June and 13 September 2011.

Councillor Fleming moved and Councillor Mrs Davison seconded the recommendation in the report which was duly carried.

Resolved: That the Draft Calendar of meetings for the Municipal Year 2011/12 be approved subject to confirmation at the Annual Meeting on 24 May 2011.

73. TO CONSIDER ANY QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER PARAGRAPH 19.3 OF PART 2 OF THE CONSTITUTION

None were received.

74. TO RECEIVE ANY QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC UNDER PARAGRAPH 17 OF PART 2 OF THE CONSTITUTION

None were received.

75. TO RECEIVE THE REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL ON THE WORK OF THE CABINET SINCE THE LAST MEETING

The Leader of the Council reported on the work that he and the Cabinet had

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undertaken in the period 11 February to 15 March 2011. He added his thanks to those members of the Council who were retiring in May, or who may not be re-elected, for their service to the Council.

The Leader informed Members that there had been one meeting of the Cabinet since the last Council meeting and drew attention to the Public Health White Paper – Healthy Lives, Healthy People – Funding. This highlighted the changing nature of the delivery of public health services and the important role that local councils would play in scrutinising health services and in the provision of services through GP consortia and public bodies.

The Leader also highlighted the success of the Greatness Residents Association, and the role of Councillor Gilbert, in securing grant funding for improvements to the Millpond, Seal Road, Sevenoaks which would receive an element of match funding from the Council and would result in significant environmental improvements to this important local landmark.

The Leader was asked to explain the rationale behind the report on Streamlining the Democratic Process and why this had not reflected on the opportunity provided in the Localism Bill for authorities to return to the committee system. The Leader informed the Council that the new provisions would not permit district councils to return to a committee system until 2015 at the earliest. However he advised that one of the key tasks for the new Council after May 2011 would be to examine how decision making processes could be best aligned to support the needs of the Council at a time of reduced resources.

The Leader was also asked about the press release issued after the Cabinet meeting arising from the Community Grant Scheme Draft Allocations 2011/12 which one member considered could be construed to promote party advantage and asked for assurances that this would not be repeated in the period before the Municipal elections. The Leader stressed that Council staff were well aware of the need to respect “purdah” and that this press release had been issued well in advance of the purdah period and that great care had been taken to ensure that any information released which could be published during purdah observed these requirements. In terms of the grant allocations the biggest reduction had been in the grant given to the Citizens Advice Bureau but this had been a managed reduction of which the CAB had been well aware and which had been put in place to allow the CAB greater certainty over its future funding arrangements. Most applications which had met the Council’s guidelines had been awarded grants and the new guidelines had resulted in greater clarity. Those organisations who had not been successful had been informed of the reasons for that decision.

A Member commented on the decision to withdraw officer support for Town Forum meetings and felt that this was a retrograde step as she considered the Forums deliver a valuable service. The Leader of the Council explained that the Council no longer had the resources to provide officer support for these meetings but stressed that there was no reason why the Forum’s should not continue to meet but that would have to be self-supporting. He explained that the three Town Forums had different needs and operated in different ways and stressed the importance of extending engagement with the wider

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community.

76. TO RECEIVE A REPORT FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SOCIAL AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE SINCE THE LAST COUNCIL MEETING

The report from the Chairman of the Social Affairs Select Committee Chairman on the matters considered by the Committee at its meeting on 8 March 2011 was received.

The Chairman thanked Members for attending the meeting and other Council meetings throughout the year and also thanked Officers for their support.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.25 PM.

Chairman