

ANNUAL COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2021 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Edwards-Winser (Chairman of the Council)

Cllr. Esler (Vice Chairman of the Council)

Cllrs. Abraham, Andrews, Ball, Barnett, Bayley, Bonin, Brown, Dr. Canet, Carroll, Cheeseman, Clack, Clayton, Penny Cole, Perry Cole, Collins, Dickins, Dyball, Edwards-Winser, Esler, Eyre, Firth, Fleming, Fothergill, Griffiths, Grint, Harrison, Hogarth, Hudson, Hunter, Layland, Maskell, McArthur, McGarvey, Morris, Nelson, Osborne-Jackson, Pender, Reay, Roy, Thornton, Waterton and Williamson

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Barnes, Coleman, G. Darrington, P. Darrington, Foster, Kitchener, London, McGregor, Parkin, Pett, Purves and Raikes

1. To elect a Member to be Chairman for the ensuing year.

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Dickins seconded that Councillor Diana Esler be elected Chairman of the Council for the next municipal year.

Resolved: That Councillor Diana Esler be elected Chairman of the Council for the municipal year, 2021/22.

Councillor Diana Esler made the declaration of acceptance of office and took the chair. The new Chairman thanked the Council for her election and expressed her appreciation for the many good wishes she had received.

The new Chairman led the Council in expressing sincere thanks to the outgoing Chairman, Councillor Edwards-Winser, for his service to the Council and to the District and to Mrs Francis Edwards-Winser, in her role as Chairman's Consort. Members expressed their appreciation. The new Chairman presented the past Chairman's badge, shield and gift to Councillor Edwards-Winser, and a gift to Mrs Edwards-Winser.

In response to the thanks expressed, Councillor Edwards-Winser thanked Councillor Esler for her support as her Vice Chairman, and offered particular thanks to his wife.

Councillor Esler announced that her Consort for the year would be her husband, Mr Michael Pearsall and presented him with the badge of office and a gift. She announced that Reverend Anne Bourne, Parish of St Lukes, would continue and be her Chaplain, and invited her to say a few words. The Chief Executive presented the Chairman with a gift as she took her seat.

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COUNCILLOR ESLER IN THE CHAIR

2. To elect a Member to be Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year.

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Dickins seconded that Councillor Avril Hunter be elected Vice Chairman of the Council for the ensuing municipal year.

Resolved: That Councillor Hunter be appointed Vice Chairman of the Council for the municipal year, 2021/22.

Councillor Hunter made the declaration of acceptance of office and expressed her thanks to the Council for her appointment. Her husband, Mr Alan Hunter would be her consort, and he was presented with the badge of office.

3. To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 20 April 2021.

The Chairman moved that the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 20 April 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 20 April 2021 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. Declarations of Interest.

There were no additional declarations of interest.

5. Chairman's announcements.

The Chairman, Cllr Esler, announced that after what seemed a lifetime of lockdown, isolation and general doom and gloom, she planned to offer many events over the year, all celebrating getting back to normality with good food, socialising and conversation in different locations, showcasing some of the lesser-known attractions the District had to offer. Her first event being a Civic Service at St. Lukes on 17 July 2021, which she hoped many fellow councillors would attend. The planned events were mostly outdoors and would highlight some of the many less visited places in the District. For example, a visit to Coakham Farm in Crockham Hill. Truly an eco-farm of tomorrow, an eye opener as to what farming could and should be.

She also wished to thank and celebrate the District's remarkable volunteers, who were the reason the district had not only been able to weather the Pandemic, but the reason the district had been able to offer caring support of many kinds and in so many ways to residents. She was planning a thank you event at the end of September/October to honour and acknowledge the contribution to the District made by so very many.

She further announced that she would be hosting a Dinner Dance at the end of January 2022, at the Westerham Golf Club. The function room was large and so she was delighted to be able to ask SDC staff and officers if they would like to

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attend and celebrate with her. She hoped many would be able to join her at what promised to be a fun night featuring Cllr Peter Fleming, as Auctioneer.

It was her intention to be able to support not just the usual voluntary bodies but also expand the role to encourage innovation and new business ventures within the District. In addition to supporting new and established business ventures she also wanted to raise the profile of the armed services organisations such as the Royal British Legion and the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) amongst others.

She also aimed to continue to lend her support to those activities that ensured and promoted physical fitness and mental health amongst the less abled, not so young, sometimes lonely, and sometimes those who were either ill or vulnerable. To name a few groups she had already been associated with, forget me not cafes, every step counts, various care homes, Age UK and new initiatives not yet started.

She wanted to mention the outstanding and tireless hard-working officers and staff at SDC who had coped with enormous pressures and a never ending workload during the last many months. Often working from home with children who needed home schooling and a partner who also needed space to work. She thanked everyone who made Sevenoaks District Council truly an example of how a Council should and could be.

She also gave an enormous vote of thanks to all at Democratic Services, who she thought were an incredible team, and thanked them for all their support and advice and what they would be doing for her during the year.

She thanked her wonderful husband and consort, Michael. Not only for his endless support but also for taking it upon himself to create the administrative backstop to her Chairmanship. They looked forward to attending most events together and to being a team.

It had been an enlightening experience to have supported Cllr Edwards-Winser as his Vice Chairman. She thanked him for including her in almost everything and his wife for her warm and friendly welcome and continuing support.

Finally, she announced that she would be particularly supporting the charity DAVSS. DAVSS stood for Domestic Abuse Voluntary Support Services, and was conceived and innovated by a group of three ex council officers with ongoing financial support from their various councils. She was proud to have DAVSS representatives present and looked forward to helping raise their profile and supporting them over the next year.

6. Returning Officer's report.

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

7. To agree the allocation of seats to political groups in accordance with the political balance rules.

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Councillor Fleming moved, and Councillor Dickins seconded and it was unanimously

Resolved: That

- a) the political balance of the Council be noted as: 46 Conservative; 3 Liberal Democrat; 2 Hextable Independent; 1 Labour; 1 Independent; and 1 no party description;
- b) the following political groupings be noted: 46 Conservative Group; 3 Liberal Democrats Group; 3 Sevenoaks Independent Group, leaving 2 ungrouped; and
- c) the allocation of seats as set out in the Appendix to the report be agreed.

8. Scheme of delegations:

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Dickins seconded that the delegations to Committees and Officers, and delegations of executive functions by the Leader of the Council be agreed, and appointments to the Cabinet and the composition of the Cabinet Portfolios be noted.

Resolved: That

- a) the delegations to Committees (Parts 3 - 12 of the Constitution) and the delegations to Officers (Part 13 of the Constitution) be agreed; and
- b) the delegations of executive functions and appointments to the Cabinet, be noted.

9. To appoint the Chairmen, Vice-Chairmen and Membership of Committees for the ensuing year.

Councillor Fleming proposed and Councillor Dickins seconded that the appointments of Chairmen, Vice Chairmen and Membership of Committees for the municipal year 2021/22 as detailed in the appendix to the report, be approved.

Resolved: That the appointments of Chairmen, Vice Chairmen and membership of Committees for 2021/22, be approved.

10. To confirm the calendar of ordinary meetings for the ensuing year.

Councillor Fleming moved and Councillor Dickins seconded that the Calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2021/22, be confirmed.

Resolved: That the Calendar of ordinary meetings for the municipal year 2021/22 be confirmed.

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11. To appoint representatives on other organisations.

Councillor Fleming moved and Councillor Dickins seconded that the appointment of representatives on outside organisations for the municipal year 2021/22 be agreed.

Resolved: That the appointments to other organisations for the municipal year 2021/22 be confirmed.

12. To note the outgoing Chairman's Report.

Councillor Edwards-Winser presented his outgoing Chairman's report adding that he wanted to thank the Chief Executive and all SDC Officers, for all their hard work during the pandemic. He had only received thanks and congratulations from local residents for the services provided and asked that the Chief Executive ensure all Officers were aware how greatly appreciated they were from the issuing of business benefits to Direct Services and refuse collections.

The report was noted.

FAREWELL

The Chairman informed Members that it was the last Council meeting attended by Vanessa Etheridge, Democratic Services (Team Leader) as she would be leaving the Council after nearly ten years. On behalf of all Members, she thanked her for her excellent service and wished her well for the future.

Members showed their appreciation.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.30 PM

CHAIRMAN

