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## COUNCIL

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**MINUTES** of the Virtual Meeting held via Skype on Wednesday, 31 March 2021 from 7.00 pm - 9.32 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mike Baldock, Cameron Beart, Monique Bonney, Lloyd Bowen, Derek Carnell, Roger Clark, Richard Darby, Steve Davey, Mike Dendor, Simon Fowle, Tim Gibson, Alastair Gould, James Hall, Ann Hampshire, Nicholas Hampshire, Angela Harrison, Alan Horton, James Hunt, Ken Ingleton, Carole Jackson, Elliott Jayes, Denise Knights, Peter Macdonald, Peter Marchington, Benjamin Martin (Deputy Mayor), Ben J Martin, Lee McCall, Pete Neal, Padmini Nissanga, Richard Palmer, Hannah Perkin, Ken Pugh, Ken Rowles, Julian Saunders, Paul Stephen (Mayor), Sarah Stephen, Bill Tatton, Eddie Thomas, Roger Truelove, Tim Valentine, Ghlin Whelan, Tony Winckless and Corrie Woodford.

**OFFICERS PRESENT:** Billy Attaway, David Clifford, Robin Harris, Kellie Mackenzie, Jo Millard, Larissa Reed and Nick Vickers.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors Simon Clark, David Simmons and Mike Whiting.

### 590 INTRODUCTION

The Mayor explained that the Council meeting would be conducted in accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panel (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 No. 392.

In welcoming all Members and members of the public, the Mayor explained which officers were in attendance.

The Mayor reminded Members that the pre-election period had started and asked Members to be mindful of the need for council decisions to be taken objectively rather than based on party politics.

### 591 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 February 2021 (Minute Nos. 456 – 475) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

### 592 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Nicholas Hampshire declared a Disclosable Non-Pecuniary Interest in respect of item 13 (Review of the current Street Trading Policy).

### 593 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor spoke about a presentation on 30 March 2021 that he had been very proud to give to Mr Richard Shrubsall on behalf of the Vice-Mayor and Alderman of Almere in the Netherlands, in memory of his father Sgt Leonard Richard James

Shrubsall whose plane had been shot down during WWII. The wreckage of the plane had been found in Lake Markermeer in the Netherlands. The Mayor said that it was his wish and also the wish of the Vice-Mayor and Alderman of Almere, that a piece of artwork and wreckage from the BK716 Short Sterling bomber shot down on 30 March 1943 be presented to Mr Shrubsall, as a reminder of the heroic actions his father and the crew made in defending our country during WWII.

The Mayor said that he had attended a virtual meeting with the Kent, Sussex and Surrey air ambulance team where he was made aware of their work and fundraising events. He said that he had been shocked to learn that it cost £41,000 a day to provide this service. The team had spoken about a weekly lottery they operated to fund the service and the Mayor stated that he had subscribed to the lottery and he encouraged other Members to do the same.

#### 594 LEADER'S STATEMENT

The Leader said that he had written to the MP for Sittingbourne and Sheppey, Gordon Henderson, on 14 March 2021, asking him to “press the Government to clarify as early as possible their position on extending the ability of councils at all levels to meet remotely after 7 May 2021.” This followed a telephone conversation with Mr Henderson.

The Leader said that he included the phrase “at all levels” because he was not just concerned for Swale Borough Council but also about parish and town councils if remote meetings were no longer legal. The Leader stated that he was also concerned for Upper Tier authorities but knew they would speak for themselves.

The Leader advised that he had pointed out to Mr Henderson how impractical it would be at this stage to force Councils to meet in civic venues, and that it would either be contrary to public health guidance or undemocratic. He had also pointed out the real benefits of meeting remotely, with improved attendances by visiting Members and by local residents, as well as environmental benefits including journey avoidance. Referring to the way forward, the Leader had also stressed the importance of local decision-making, a view shared verbally by Mr Henderson, who was supportive of his position.

The Leader advised that the following day, he had written much the same message to Helen Whately, MP for Faversham and Mid Kent, editing slightly to stress the impact on Faversham Town Council. He had received an office response to say the MP had raised the matter with ministers and would let him know the response. Last Thursday he received the response from Luke Hall MP, Minister of State for Local Government.

The Leader stated that the Minister had clarified that the Government would not bring forward legislation to extend the regulation to meetings beyond 7 May 2021. It cited the need for primary legislation and how that would have an impact on the Government legislative programme.

The Leader considered that to be a feeble answer. He stated that throughout the pandemic, ministers had continually stressed their appreciation of local government

and Mr Hall spoke of our rising “magnificently” to the challenge, yet when local government begs for an extension, the time could not be found.

The Leader stated that the Government really did not understand local government. He reported that Mr Hall did make suggestions as to how decisions could continue to be made without breaking Covid-19 guidance. These included delegating decisions to key individuals such as the Head of Paid Service or relying on single Member decision-making without the need for Cabinet meetings.

The Leader stated that no member of the Council would want to embrace such undemocratic procedure and he hoped in the feedback to that statement, Group Leaders would join him in condemning this appalling and insensitive approach to local government. The Leader considered that what local residents would ask was why on earth their local councils could not decide how to balance their meetings between civic venues and remote meetings, not just immediately but for the long-term.

The Leader stated that there was hope, and that the Association of Democratic Services Officers, along with Hertfordshire County Council, had issued proceedings in the High Court to enable remote meetings to continue with the existing legislation. However, in the meantime, the Council and others would risk wasting resources in preparing for circumstances which the High Court might override. The Leader stated that it was all a very sad return for the “magnificent way” local government had responded to the pandemic.

The Leader referred to a press report last week which said that the Light Cinema hoped to open in Sittingbourne before June 2021, and he hoped that it would herald a summer of opportunity for the local economy, building, as far as Sittingbourne was concerned, on our being the third most resilient town out of 222 in England. He said that the Council had great potential in our towns, if the extension of homeworking lead to an increase in demand in town centre services. He added that beyond this summer and for some time, the Council needed a clear focus on economic growth, recovery and resilience in order to play a lead role, and needed clarity about where it wanted to go.

The Leader said that Swale was typical of much of the country outside the metropolitan areas. There were people in good comfortable occupations but there were far too many who were not. He said that the pandemic had exacerbated inequalities that were not only socially unjust but also economically inefficient. He added that whilst the Council looked for growth, they wanted it to be good growth, a local economy with high levels of demand for local goods and services, with a high level of environmental sustainability.

The Leader said that prominent in the agenda, for the next decade or so, should be town centre improvements, support for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and Micro businesses, and a radical improvement in skills and education. The Council would resource this as best it could but there were also Government schemes in the pipeline for funding support, in which the criteria closely matched the priorities of the Council.

The Leader reminded Members that at the previous meeting he had acknowledged how much was owed to Council officers during the last year's crisis and also the leadership role played by councillors. He said that moving into the second year he was sure the Council would want to go further and thank all those who had worked heroically for the public good in the last year. He said it could not be an exhaustive list, but first and foremost:

- All NHS and care workers;
- police;
- prison officers;
- teachers;
- refuse collectors;
- supermarket staff;
- the voluntary sector;
- community groups
- KCC and parish councils;
- faith groups;
- foodbanks; and
- individuals helping neighbours.

The Leader said the list was endless, but above all the Council must remember all those who had suffered from Covid-19. He said that Swale had recorded 13,246 cases from positive tests, some of whom were now afflicted by long covid; had 449 deaths; and the suffering being endured not just by the patients but also by friends and families. The Leader asked the Mayor to allow a minute's silence to remember those who had suffered and those who had given so much to the local community.

The Mayor led the minute's silence.

In response, the Leader of the opposition thanked the Leader for his update and said that everyone probably knew of someone who had died of Covid-19. He considered that people who had been involved in the vaccine programme, which had provided light at the end of the tunnel, should also be included in the list of thanks. The Leader of the opposition spoke about the success of remote meetings and the benefits of both remote and face-to-face meetings and considered that something in-between was probably the way forward. He agreed with the Leader that the Council should be able to determine what was right for Swale. The Leader of the opposition also agreed that development of education was key to Swale's success and was pleased to see that Borden Grammar School were currently consulting on extending their offer to more young people in the local community.

Other Members raised points which included:

- A hybrid of virtual and physical meetings was the solution;
- public engagement had improved at council meetings since they had been held virtually;
- would be silly to lose all that had been learnt about holding remote meetings;
- disappointing that local government was in "limbo" about the way forward;
- it would be very difficult for parish councils to hold physical meetings given that most village halls were very small;

- welcomed any financial package from the government that could be sourced for work on a hybrid solution;
- needed to be mindful to stick to the distancing rules given that Covid-19 rates were rising in the Borough;
- unfair that parliament were still allowed to hold virtual meetings until June 2021, but not local government;
- the private sector functioned reasonably well by holding hybrid meetings so did not see why the public sector could not do the same;
- hybrid meetings could improve accessibility and reduce member travel expenses;
- agreed that it would be undemocratic to delegate decisions to officers and a single Cabinet Member;
- should get a quote for cost of installing the technology required to hold hybrid meetings;
- there was cross-party support to continue with remote meetings;
- it would be wrong and send out the wrong message if the Council were to start holding physical meetings at the present time;
- remote meetings added a fun, human element to proceedings; and
- the Council needed to encourage people to take-up the vaccine.

In response, the Leader thanked Members for their support. He warned that Covid-19 infection rates were increasing and he was concerned that many people in Swale were not taking-up the offer of a vaccine. The Leader said that it was important that the Council pushed Government for a permanent decision and legislation in respect of remote meetings.

## 595 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC

The Mayor advised that one question had been received by the public. Mr Collins was invited to put their question which was responded to by the relevant Cabinet Member.

Details of the question and response are set-out below:

### **Question 1 – Mr Martin Collins**

Will the Council ensure that appropriate electric vehicle rapid charging facilities are available for taxi operators in Swale and set a date for the amendment of Swale taxi operators' licences to require use of electric powered vehicles exclusively?

### **Response – Cabinet Member for Communities**

Thank you, Mr. Collins, for your question.

We (The Council) do not currently intend to provide electric vehicle rapid charging infrastructure for taxis. We will be reviewing the Taxi policy this year and will of course take into consideration the current climate emergency and how the policy could support our response to it and set a date to require green environmentally friendly vehicles.

We would not be able to make any immediate changes to the policy as taxi drivers and operators are currently allowed to keep their vehicles for a prescribed period so any changes should not disadvantage the current fleet. It would also not be wise to specify an all-electric fleet as this could rule out any developing clean technologies in the future.

We will be monitoring the progress of the availability of chargers within the borough and encouraging relevant businesses to increase capacity where we can.

### **Supplementary Question**

Would Swale Borough Council explore the early adoption of hydrogen-powered buses in Swale?

**Response:** Yes, the Council should encourage bus operators to use environmentally friendly buses where possible and would liaise with Kent County Council about this.

## **596 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS**

### **Questions submitted by Members**

The Mayor advised that two questions had been received. The relevant Member was invited to put their question which was responded to by the relevant Cabinet Member.

Details of the questions and responses are set-out below:

#### **Question 1 – Councillor Steve Davey**

With the recent news that nearly £5m of government funding that had been allocated to help rough sleepers has gone unspent, could the cabinet member confirm what funding the council received from the governments cold weather and protect programme, and if the amounts awarded equate to the bids made by the council?

#### **Response – Cabinet Member for Housing**

Thank you for your question. Swale was awarded £6,400 from the Cold Weather fund which is a fund we receive every year to help during the winter and support Councils with costs relating to SWEP. This year MHCLG also provided funding from Protect Plus due to the extra demands relating to dealing with COVID during the winter period, Swale was originally awarded £5k on the basis of our 'November Night Count'. Which was incredibly low due to us supporting the 'Everyone In' initiative and offering accommodation quickly and providing on-going support. This was challenged and we made a case to cover the true costs of this additional winter provision. We were successfully awarded £38,823 which was just over half of what we applied for. Though we appreciate every penny in grant funding received to support services, it is disappointing to see the government describe the lack of spending as a saving. There is a difference between saving money and not spending it, and this is certainly a case of the later. We believe that the bid we put into the fund was sound, an efficient and effective use of public funds and would

have covered the costs which are now being covered by the Council. No doubt other councils that received less than they bid for will feel the same way.

### Supplementary Question

Would Cabinet bid for remaining funds to cover the budget deficit?

**Response:** Yes, the Council would bid for any funding available to provide this service.

Question 2 – Councillor Steve Davey

How much has the recent letter regarding the Local Plan cost the Council, with a breakdown of the costs, and where the funds sourced from?

### Response – Cabinet Member for Planning

The cost of the recent letter regarding the Local Plan cost £36,242.61 in total. This consisted of printing and data processing costs of £15,187.52 and mailing costs of £21,055.09.

This cost will be allocated to the Local Plan budget, but as there will be other demands on this budget and since the budget was set without anticipating the cost of this correspondence the outcome will inevitably be an overspend for which no budget has been provided.

### Supplementary Question

What other Council services could the £36,242.61 have been used for? And would a breakdown of the effectiveness of the letter be provided for Members?

**Response:** The £36,242.61 could have been used for repairs to war memorials. A report detailing the effectiveness could be provided for Members.

## 597 MOTION - DYSLEXIA

Councillor Ben J Martin proposed the following motion:

“1. That this Council Notes that:

- a) 1 in 10 are dyslexic.
- b) Dyslexia is genetic and thus runs in families.
- c) 80% of dyslexics are never spotted at school, so they never truly understand their full potential.
- d) 4 in 5 successful Dyslexics attribute Dyslexic Thinking Skills to their success.
- e) Methods to identify and support Dyslexia has been known since the 1930's.
- f) The important work undertaken by the “British Dyslexia Association” and of the “Made by Dyslexia” campaign.
- g) Unidentified dyslexia results in low self-esteem.
- h) 40% of dyslexics said they were aware they couldn't do what their classmates could aged 5.

- i) 70% said they were aware they couldn't do what their classmates could aged 7.
- j) Dyslexics often fail tests & exams despite having great knowledge & ability of subject:
  - 9 in 10 have poor spelling, grammar, punctuation, but can be great creative writers; and
  - 3 in 4 struggle with times tables. But around half of dyslexics are great at maths.
- k) That people with dyslexia have different strengths for example:
- l) 75% of dyslexics are above average at visualising, interacting with space, senses, physical ideas & new concepts.
- m) 71% of dyslexics are above average at crafting & conveying clear & engaging messages.
- n) 84% of dyslexics are above average at creating an original piece of work or giving ideas a new spin.
- o) 84% of dyslexics are above average in reasoning skills, such as understanding patterns, evaluating possibilities & making decisions.
- p) The positive contribution made by dyslexics in various fields, such as business, invention, science, sport and entertainment, including by;
- q) Sir Richard Branson, Steve Jobs, Albert Einstein, Sir Lewis Hamilton, Sir Jackie Stewart, Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, Keira Knightly, Orlando Bloom, Mollie King, Jamie Oliver, Holly Willoughby, Agatha Christie, Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock, Dame Darcy Bussell, Chris Robshaw and many others.

2. This Council believes that:

- a) It's time we all understand dyslexia properly as a different way of thinking, not a disadvantage.
- b) Dyslexic brains are 'wired' slightly differently meaning they have a different way of processing information. That this difference results in a pattern of strengths like critical thinking, creativity & communication skills as well as challenges affecting traditional learning such as reading, writing, spelling, rote learning, memory, concentration. Each dyslexic will have a different pattern of strengths & challenges.
- c) Early identification is key to success in education & in preserving self-esteem. If we place as much importance on dyslexic strengths as difficulties, then those with dyslexia can achieve their potential.
- d) That it is important for parents, teachers and schools to arrange for children to have a dyslexia screening as soon as a "problem" is noticed.
- e) This Council understands
- f) That multisensory teaching techniques, which often benefit dyslexic students are also effective for all learners.
- g) That free dyslexia screening tools are available, which indicate if an individual may have dyslexia, but that formal diagnosis can only be obtained from a professional in the field such as an Educational Psychologist.

3. That this Council understands:

- a) That multisensory teaching techniques, which often benefit dyslexic students are also effective for all learners.



- b) That free dyslexia screening tools are available, which indicate if an individual may have dyslexia, but that formal diagnosis can only be obtained from a professional in the field such as an Educational Psychologist.
4. That this Council recognises and appreciates:
- a) The efforts made by schools, educators, parents and guardians, both in continuing to provide education during the current pandemic, both in school and via virtual means, and in supporting those with neurodiversity.
  - b) The difficulty schools face with regard to funding SEND provision.
  - c) The Work of the British Dyslexia Association and the Made By Dyslexia campaign.
5. That this Council commits to:
- a) Signing the Made by Dyslexia pledge
  - b) The Made by Dyslexia pledge reads “We will endeavour to: Recognise dyslexia as a different and valuable way of thinking. Understand the importance of identifying each dyslexic and their pattern of strengths and challenges. Support which is targeted to enable dyslexics to harness their strengths and flourish. We'll achieve this through: Knowledge skilling up staff in schools and workplaces to recognise, understand and support dyslexia. Discover using digital screeners which make it easy and cost effective to check if you're dyslexic. Adjustments in tests and assignments so dyslexics can demonstrate their full knowledge and skills.”
  - c) Contacting every school within the council area, to encourage them to take up the Free training available from the Made by Dyslexia campaign ( <https://connect-the-spots.madebydyslexia.org/> )
  - d) to sign the Made by Dyslexia pledge.
  - e) To encourage them to work towards achieving BDA Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark
  - f) To share links to resources such as;
  - g) Free Dyslexia Screening tools <https://www.nessy.com/uk/screening-for-dyslexia/>

Councillor Hannah Perkin seconded the motion and reserved her right to speak.

The Leader supported the motion which he considered was in-line with the inclusive nature of the current Council administration. He stated that dyslexia could be a major barrier and lead to low self-esteem issues and was very often not detected. He spoke about his previous role as a teacher and that he had never received any help or training to support people with dyslexia.

The Leader of the Minority Group spoke in support of the meaning of the motion and said that supporting it was the right thing to do.

Some Members spoke of their personal struggles with dyslexia and the impact it had on their life and the importance of ensuring that the correct support and understanding was given.

Members spoke in support of the motion and points raised included:

- Many adults with dyslexia had not been able fulfil their potential and it was important to invest in our young people; and
- it was important to diagnose dyslexia at an early age.

Councillor Hannah Perkin, seconder of the motion, spoke in support of the motion, and thanked Members for sharing their personal experiences. She spoke about the Marmot Review 2021 which had noted how important equality and accessibility were to improving people's self-esteem.

In conclusion, Councillor Ben J Martin thanked Members for their support. He said that it was clear from Members personal stories just how many people were affected by dyslexia. Councillor Martin hoped that the Council would lead the way in supporting people with dyslexia.

The Mayor put the motion to the vote, which was agreed unanimously.

**Resolved:**

**(1) That this Council Notes that:**

- a) **1 in 10 people are dyslexic.**
- b) **Dyslexia is genetic and thus runs in families.**
- c) **80% of dyslexics are never spotted at school. So they never truly understand their full potential.**
- d) **4 in 5 successful Dyslexics attribute Dyslexic Thinking Skills to their success.**
- e) **Methods to identify and support Dyslexia has been known since the 1930's.**
- f) **The important work undertaken by the "British Dyslexia Association" and of the "Made by Dyslexia" campaign.**
- g) **Unidentified dyslexia results in low self-esteem.**
- h) **40% of dyslexics said they were aware they couldn't do what their classmates could aged 5.**
- i) **70% said they were aware they couldn't do what their classmates could aged 7.**
- j) **Dyslexics often fail tests & exams despite having great knowledge & ability of subject:**
  - **9 in 10 have poor spelling, grammar, punctuation, but can be great creative writers; and**
  - **3 in 4 struggle with times tables. But around half of dyslexics are great at maths.**
- k) **That people with dyslexia have different strengths for example:**
- l) **75% of dyslexics are above average at visualising, interacting with space, senses, physical ideas & new concepts.**
- m) **71% of dyslexics are above average at crafting & conveying clear & engaging messages.**
- n) **84% of dyslexics are above average at creating an original piece of work or giving ideas a new spin.**
- o) **84% of dyslexics are above average in reasoning skills, such as understanding patterns, evaluating possibilities & making decisions.**

- p) The positive contribution made by dyslexics in various fields, such as business, invention, science, sport and entertainment, including by;**
- q) Sir Richard Branson, Steve Jobs, Albert Einstein, Sir Lewis Hamilton, Sir Jackie Stewart, Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, Keira Knightly, Orlando Bloom, Mollie King, Jamie Oliver, Holly Willoughby, Agatha Christie, Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock, Dame Darcy Bussell, Chris Robshaw and many others.**

**(2) That this Council believes that:**

- a) It's time we all understand dyslexia properly as a different way of thinking, not a disadvantage.**
- b) Dyslexic brains are 'wired' slightly differently meaning they have a different way of processing information. That this difference results in a pattern of strengths like critical thinking, creativity & communication skills as well as challenges affecting traditional learning such as reading, writing, spelling, rote learning, memory, concentration. Each dyslexic will have a different pattern of strengths & challenges.**
- c) Early identification is key to success in education & in preserving self-esteem. If we place as much importance on dyslexic strengths as difficulties, then those with dyslexia can achieve their potential.**
- d) That it is important for parents, teachers and schools to arrange for children to have a dyslexia screening as soon as a "problem" is noticed.**

**(3) That this Council understands:**

- c) That multisensory teaching techniques, which often benefit dyslexic students are also effective for all learners.**
- d) That free dyslexia screening tools are available, which indicate if an individual may have dyslexia, but that formal diagnosis can only be obtained from a professional in the field such as an Educational Psychologist.**

**(4) That this Council recognises and appreciates:**

- d) The efforts made by schools, educators, parents and guardians, both in continuing to provide education during the current pandemic, both in school and via virtual means, and in supporting those with neurodiversity.**
- e) The difficulty schools face with regard to funding SEND provision.**
- f) The Work of the British Dyslexia Association and the Made By Dyslexia campaign.**

**(5) That this Council commits to:**

- h) Signing the Made by Dyslexia pledge**
- i) The Made by Dyslexia pledge reads "We will endeavour to: Recognise dyslexia as a different and valuable way of thinking. Understand the importance of identifying each dyslexic and their pattern of strengths and challenges. Support which is targeted to enable dyslexics to harness their strengths and flourish. We'll achieve this through: Knowledge skilling up staff in schools and workplaces to recognise, understand and support**

***dyslexia. Discover using digital screeners which make it easy and cost effective to check if you're dyslexic. Adjustments in tests and assignments so dyslexics can demonstrate their full knowledge and skills."***

- j) Contacting every school within the council area, to encourage them to take up the Free training available from the Made by Dyslexia campaign ( <https://connect-the-spots.madebydyslexia.org/> )***
- k) to sign the Made by Dyslexia pledge.***
- l) To encourage them to work towards achieving BDA Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark***
- m) To share links to resources such as;***
- n) Free Dyslexia Screening tools <https://www.nessy.com/uk/screening-for-dyslexia/>***

#### **598 MOTION TO SUPPORT THE CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY BILL**

The Mayor advised that this item had been withdrawn from the agenda.

#### **599 CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS: MOTIONS AND AMENDMENTS**

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning introduced the report and proposed that Members agreed the changes to Procedure Rules 15 (Motions with Notice) and 17 (Amendments to Motions). He considered the proposals would ensure clearer motions and improve the quality of debates at meetings.

In seconding the recommendation, the Leader of the opposition noted that the report had been considered and agreed by the General Purposes Committee and considered the proposed amendments would be an improvement.

Members spoke in support of the report.

***Resolved:***

***(1) That the changes to the Council procedure rules set-out in the appendices to the report be agreed.***

#### **600 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME - PARENTAL AND SICKNESS LEAVE**

The Leader introduced the report and proposed that Members agreed the changes to the Members' allowances scheme following a recommendation by Swale's Independent Remuneration Panel.

In seconding the recommendation, the Leader of the opposition supported the proposal and stated that the Council needed to be representative of their community and the proposal would ensure inclusivity.

In the debate that followed Members made points which included:

- Well intentioned report but considered it needed developing further;
- concerned that the proposal was to be 'tied' to Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) as it would lead to inequality;
- was a step in the right direction to ensure the Council was inclusive;

- both the Policy Development and Review Committee and General Purposes Committee had considered and supported the report;
- should support the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel;
- would take the pressure-off Members having to attend meetings even though they were unwell; and
- considered that if Members were not doing the work, they should not receive the SRA.

On being put to the vote, Members agreed the recommendation.

**Resolved:**

**(1) That the changes to the Members' allowances scheme set-out in paragraph 3.3 of the report be agreed.**

**601 REVIEW OF COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES - AREA COMMITTEE SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCE (SRA)**

The Leader introduced the report and proposed that Members noted the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel and agreed to amend the allowances scheme to include a SRA for Area Committee Chairmen. He considered that the SRA was over-due and that it was right that it should be backdated to September 2020.

In seconding the recommendations, the Leader of the opposition spoke in support of the proposal. He noted that the Area Committees were not easy meetings to chair and the SRA would support Members in their role.

In the debate that followed Members made points including:

- Considered that the proposal should be delayed until after the review of Area Committees;
- would result in too many Members with SRAs;
- it was hoped that the chairman of the Area Committees would have more responsibility, so the SRA was important;
- the Chairman of the Area Committees had already sat for a year in what were very challenging meetings; and
- important to note that not all SRAs would be claimed.

The Leader hoped that more decisions could be devolved to Members via the Area Committees and spoke about the importance of good chairmanship.

**In accordance with Standing Order No. 19(2), a recorded vote was taken and voting on Recommendation (1) was as follows:**

**For: Baldock, Bonney, Bowen, Carnell, Gibson, Gould, Harrison, Horton, Hunt, Jackson, Knights, MacDonald, Marchington, Ben A Martin, Ben J Martin, McCall, Palmer, Perkin, Pugh, Rowles, Saunders, P Stephen, S Stephen, Thomas, Truelove, Valentine, Whelan, Winckless and Woodford. Total equals: 29.**

**Against:** Beart, R Clark, Darby, Dendor, Hall, A Hampshire, Nissanga and Tatton. Total equals: 8.

**Abstain:** Davey, Fowle, N Hampshire, Ingleton, Jayes and Neal. Total equals: 6.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel be noted.**
- (2) That the Scheme of Members' Allowances be amended to include the Panel's recommendation for Area Committee Chairman Special Responsibility Allowance.**

## **602 REVIEW OF THE CURRENT STREET TRADING POLICY**

The Cabinet Member for Community introduced the report and explained that following a review and public consultation on the Council's existing Swale Street Trading Policy 2013 -2016 a new draft Swale Street Trading Policy 2021 – 2024 had been produced. The Cabinet Member reported that the General Licensing Committee had agreed at their meeting on 21 January 2021 that the draft policy be adopted by Council. The Cabinet Member proposed that the draft policy, as attached at Appendix I of the report, be adopted and published to come into effect from 1 April 2021.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Derek Carnell, Chairman of the General Licensing Committee, reserved his right to speak.

The Leader of the opposition recognised and thanked the work of the Resilience and Licensing Manager and Licensing Officer on the Policy document.

A Member also thanked officers in Licensing for their hard work in producing the Policy document.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That the draft Swale Street Trading Policy 2021 - 2024 as attached at Appendix I of the report, be approved and published to come into effect from 1 April 2021.**

## **603 REVIEW OF THE STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY UNDER THE LICENSING ACT 2003**

The Cabinet Member for Community introduced the report and explained that the existing Statement of Licensing Policy had expired on 16 December 2020, and a new policy had to be adopted for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2026. The new draft policy had been subject to a public consultation and then presented and endorsed by the Licensing Act 2003 Committee on 11 March 2021. The Cabinet Member noted the slight delay in adopting the Policy which he said was due to additional work pressures caused by the Covid-19 pandemic which he considered took precedence. He assured Members that the Council had not been exposed to any risk because of this, as the acts that supported licensing were still in place.

The Cabinet Member proposed that the Statement of Licensing Policy as attached at Appendix I of the report be adopted and published to come into effect from 1 April 2021.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Derek Carnell thanked the licensing team for all their hard work on the draft policy.

The Leader of the opposition supported the policy.

**Resolved:**

***(1) That the Statement of Licensing Policy under the Licensing Act 2003 as attached at Appendix I of the report, be approved and published to come into effect from 1 April 2021.***

**604 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR APPROVAL**

**Resolved:**

***(1) That Minute No 442 from the General Licensing Committee meeting held on 21 January 2021 be noted.***

***(2) That Minute No. 552 from the Appointments Sub-Committee held on 17 March 2021 be noted.***

***(3) That Minute Nos. 556 – 557 from the General Purposes Committee held on 17 March 2021 be noted.***

**605 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**Resolved:**

***(1) That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 – Information relating to any individual.***

**606 MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE**

The Leader introduced the report which proposed a new Senior Management Structure, deleting two senior posts and creating two new Director posts and a fixed term Head of Service post. In proposing the recommendations, the Leader said that the proposals provided a more sustainable and robust management structure with more defined lines of responsibility.

In seconding the proposal, the Leader of the opposition said the proposals made perfect sense, and he thanked all those individuals who had successfully taken the Council through some turbulent times.

A Member thanked the Head of Financial Services and Head of Commissioning, Environment and Leisure for their work.

**Resolved:**

***(1) That the report be agreed and the proposed Senior Management Structure be adopted.***

***(2) That the minutes of the Appointments Sub-Committee held on 17 March 2021 in relation to the makeup of the appointment panels for the two Director posts be noted.***

**607 ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING**

The meeting was adjourned at 21:03 and reconvened at 21:08.

Chairman

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All Minutes are draft until agreed at the next meeting of the Committee/Panel