
COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Meeting held in The Sapling Room, The Appleyard, Avenue of Remembrance, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 4DE on Wednesday, 7 December 2022 from 7.00 pm - 7.53 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors Mike Baldock, Cameron Beart, Monique Bonney, Lloyd Bowen, Derek Carnell, Roger Clark, Simon Clark (Mayor), Richard Darby, Steve Davey, Mike Dendor, Oliver Eakin, Tim Gibson, Alastair Gould, James Hall, Ann Hampshire, Nicholas Hampshire, Angela Harrison, Alan Horton, James Hunt, Carole Jackson, Peter Marchington, Lee McCall, Padmini Nissanga, Richard Palmer, Hannah Perkin, Ken Rowles, Julian Saunders, Paul Stephen, Sarah Stephen (Deputy Mayor), Bill Tatton, Roger Truelove, Tim Valentine, Mike Whiting, Tony Winckless and Corrie Woodford.

PRESENT (virtually): Councillors Ken Ingleton, Denise Knights, Peter Macdonald and Ghlin Whelan.

OFFICERS PRESENT: David Clifford, Philippa Davies, Jo Millard and Larissa Reed.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Simon Fowle, Ken Ingleton, Elliott Jayes, Denise Knights, Peter Macdonald, Ben J Martin, Pete Neal, Ken Pugh, David Simmons, Eddie Thomas and Ghlin Whelan.

497 **EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

The Mayor outlined the emergency evacuation procedure.

498 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2022 (Minute Nos. 446 – 457) were taken as read, approved and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

499 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No interests were declared.

500 **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor expressed his condolences concerning two former Mayors of Swale, Alderman Ben Stokes and Alderman Adrian Crowther who had recently passed away. He said that as the sad news of Alderman Crowther had only just been received, tributes would be made to him at the Council meeting in January 2023. The Mayor invited the Leader to pay tribute to Alderman Stokes.

The Leader spoke fondly of Alderman Stokes and of the interesting stories he had recounted of his life as a travelling showman. He said Alderman Stokes had disliked the Cabinet system and approved of the Committee System. The Leader said that Alderman Stokes was a gentleman and a friend who would be sadly missed.

The Leader of the main opposition group, Councillor Alan Horton, said that Alderman Stokes was quiet and thoughtful, and residents voted for him personally rather than his party. He said that since moving to Somerset, Alderman Stokes had remained active and sat on the Town Council. He sent his condolences to his family.

Councillor Mike Whiting said that Alderman Stokes was committed, diligent, willing to help and was a team player and along with his mayoress Sylvia, had a fantastic mayoral year.

The Mayor led a minute's silence in memory of Alderman Ben Stokes.

The Mayor had attended a number of events since the last Council meeting including the Royal Society of St. George lunch, the opening of the new nursery block at Sunnybank School, Murston along with other members of the Council, the Upchurch Choral Society concert and the Medway Voluntary Action and MacMillan Year of action event. He thanked the Deputy Mayor for attending the Challenger Troop Awards at Meadowfield School and Eastchurch Christmas Lights on his behalf and said that it was a very busy time in the lead up to Christmas.

501 LEADER'S STATEMENT

In opening his statement, the Leader shared the good news that Swale Borough Council (SBC) had finally received confirmation of the full funding applied for from the Shared Prosperity Fund from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DELUP) for 2022-23, with indicative allocations for the two following years up to 2024-25. He set out the annual breakdown as follows:

2022 – 2023	-	£141,929
2023 – 2024	-	£283,858
2024 – 2025	-	£743,709

The Leader said this represented a total investment of £1,169,496.00 in the borough across a range of revenue and capital projects which were developed with input from a member working group and local partners focusing on town centres, supporting local community organisations, incentivising investments in net zero measures, boosting the visitor economy and supporting local skills development.

The Leader went on to say feedback from Government was expected in the New Year on the Rural Prosperity Fund which could potentially provide an additional half a million pounds top up in capital funding.

The Leader said there was further good news from Government that the Levelling Up Bill would include the abolition of housing targets and give greater flexibility to Councils such as more affordable housing. He referred to SBC pausing the Local Plan review to enable a more sustainable level of future development. The Leader praised and thanked Gordon Henderson MP for his input.

Turning to the Christmas season, the Leader encouraged Members to support local volunteers and groups. He acknowledged that this Christmas would be difficult for

many in the community and gave praise to those that gave up their time or worked unsociable hours during the festive season to provide for others.

In response, the Leader of the main opposition group welcomed the news on the grant funding and said it was desperately needed. He said SBC were in a financially difficult position and the steady flow of money from Government would help. Referring to housing numbers, the Leader of the main opposition group said he was encouraged but cautious, and SBC needed to show they were making progress and identify sites for development as the call for sites had gone out in the Spring. The Leader of the main opposition group praised the contribution made by everyone to help at Christmas. He referred to the NHS, saying that it should be cherished but did need sorting.

Members were invited to respond to the Leader's Statement and made points including:

- Thanked officers and community groups who helped in the bidding process for funding;
- raised concern for some aspects of the Levelling Up bid, specifically Michael Gove's statement that housing needs should be a starting point and nothing more;
- advised that Faversham Food Bank now opened on a Monday evening for those in work that needed to use them and expressed concern that those in work needed to rely on food banks;
- praised those that made lives less difficult for others in times of need;
- requested information on key contacts open over the Christmas period to be circulated; and
- wished everyone a peaceful and restorative yuletide period.

The Leader thanked Members for their comments and wished everyone the best wishes of the season.

502 MOTION - PLANNING POLICY

Before Councillor Cameron Beart proposed the motion, Councillor Tim Valentine raised a point of order under 3.1.14.3 of the Council's constitution:

"Motions may seek to set a tone or general direction for future more detailed policy development work by the appropriate Council committees, or to provide an initial stimulus to that work, but the wording of a motion or an amendment must not be such that it could be interpreted as circumventing or seeking to circumvent the Council's constitutional decision-making processes."

The Monitoring Officer said that because the Council had taken an informed decision about the policy recently it was reasonable for the decision to be reviewed in light of experience, and to rescind the decision should it so wish.

Councillor Beart proposed the motion as set out on the agenda. He said that 22 planning applications had been submitted on the Isle of Sheppey since the policy was agreed in June 2020, using the policy as a basis in applications. Of those, four were withdrawn, 17 were refused under officer delegation and one refused at

Planning Committee. Councillor Beart said that six appeals had been lodged and of those that had been decided by the Planning Inspectorate, it was clear that the policy did not hold up to scrutiny. He gave a summary of comments from the Planning Inspectorate which included reference to limited weight as a material consideration being afforded to the Policy, and the Policy conflicting with the Council's development policy. Councillor Beart said that many of the concerns raised in the original debate of the policy had materialised, and Planning Officers were having to defend applications at appeal, on a policy that conflicted with the Council's Local Plan.

In seconding the motion, Councillor James Hunt reserved his right to speak.

Under Section 3.1.15.4 of the Council's constitution, Councillor Alan Horton proposed a motion without notice that the motion be considered by the appropriate body, the Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group. This was seconded by Councillor Richard Palmer. On being put to the vote, the motion without notice was agreed.

Resolved:

(1) That the decision taken by Full Council on 17th June 2020 to adopt an Interim Planning Policy for Park Home Residences and its appropriateness as a material planning consideration be re-considered at the Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group.

503 MOTION - USE OF DISPOSABLE BBQ'S

Before inviting the proposer of the motion to speak, the mayor drew attention to the tabled amendment. Councillor Lloyd Bowen proposed the motion as set out on the agenda. He reminded members of the fire at Barton's Point in the summer, and referring to the high summer temperatures said that whilst extreme, would likely not be unique in the future. Councillor Bowen spoke of the possible damage to wildlife as a result of a spark to dry grass. He said that other authorities were also considering banning BBQ's in public areas and he urged the Council to lead so that others would follow.

Councillor Bowen spoke of the Climate Emergency and said the motion would help protect and preserve open spaces. He said that he supported a ban on the sale of disposal BBQ's but it was unlikely that Government would consider this a priority, so it was important to take action to preserve areas for the enjoyment of all.

Finally, Councillor Bowen suggest that the Environment Committee should discuss, develop, improve, and act on the motion.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Mike Dendor reserved his right to speak.

Under Section 3.1.15.4 of the Council's constitution, Councillor Alan Horton proposed a motion without notice, that the motion be considered by the appropriate body, the Environment Committee. This was seconded by Councillor Mike Whiting. On being put to the vote, the motion without notice was agreed.

Resolved:

(1) That the content of the motion to ban the use of disposable BBQ's as set out on the Full Council Agenda of 7 December 2022 at item 8 be considered by the Environment Committee.

504 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY THE PUBLIC

No questions were submitted by the public.

505 QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS

No questions were submitted by Members.

506 CONSTITUTION AMENDS - PETITION SCHEME

The Leader proposed the recommendation which was seconded by the Leader of the main opposition group who praised the constitution working group for their work on the new petitions scheme.

In response to a member's question, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that a petition could be submitted online and by paper.

Resolved:

(1) That the revised petitions scheme at Appendix II be agreed.

Chairman

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