

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, HIGH STREET, MAIDSTONE ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2011

Present: Councillor B Mortimer (The Mayor), and
Councillors Ash, Barned, Beerling, Black, Brindle,
Burton, Butler, Chittenden, Collins, Cox, Cuming,
Daley, English, Field, FitzGerald, Garland, Mrs Gibson,
Mrs Gooch, Greer, Ms Griffin, Mrs Grigg, Harwood,
Hinder, Hogg, Hotson, Mrs Joy, Lusty, D Mortimer,
Nelson-Gracie, Newton, Paine, Parvin, Mrs Parvin,
Paterson, Mrs Ring, Robertson, Mrs Robertson, Sams,
Sharp, Springett, Mrs Stockell, Thick, Vizzard,
Warner, de Wiggondene, J A Wilson and Yates

34. MR GORDON BONNER

The Council stood in silence for one minute in memory of Mr Gordon Bonner, a former Mayor of the Borough, who died in July 2011.

35. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Mrs Hinder, Naghi, Pickett and Mrs Wilson.

36. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Councillor Barned disclosed a personal interest in the report of the Cabinet relating to the draft Housing Strategy 2011/12 - 2014/15 by virtue of being the Vice-Chairman of the Board of Golding Homes, the Chairman of Golding Homes Vision and an employee of the Hyde Housing Association.

The Mayor and Councillors Ash, Burton, Cuming, English, Mrs Gibson, Mrs Gooch, Harwood, Hinder, D Mortimer, Nelson-Gracie, Sams and J A Wilson disclosed personal interests in the question to be asked of the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services relating to concurrent functions by virtue of being Parish Councillors.

During the discussion on the report of the Standards Committee relating to self regulation following the abolition of the Standards regime, Councillor Daley disclosed a personal interest by virtue of being a Member of Kent County Council's Standards Committee. Councillor English also disclosed a personal interest in the report as he was the Secretary to the Maidstone Area Committee of the Kent Association of Local Councils and had prepared that Committee's response to the consultation on what local Parish Councils wished to see happen in the future.

37. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

38. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That the items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

39. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD ON 22 JUNE 2011

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Borough Council held on 22 June 2011 be approved as a correct record and signed.

40. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor announced that:-

- Both he and the Deputy Mayor had been very busy during the summer.
- Sculptor Mary Cox had been commissioned to cast a life-size bronze statue of an engineer from the 36 Engineer Regiment to be paid for by public subscription and placed in Brenchley Gardens. An appeal had been launched to raise the sum of £35,000 needed to pay for the statue. He would like to take the opportunity to urge all Members to make a donation to the 36 Engineer Statue Appeal.

41. PETITIONS

Mr Jonathan Gershon presented a petition in the following terms:-

We the undersigned call upon Maidstone Borough Council to maintain and secure the beauty, tranquillity and rural character of the unique areas of Wierton, Chart Sutton, Boughton Monchelsea and the Greensand Ridge. In order to halt the destruction of the rural landscape, we demand that:-

1. The Greensand Ridge and the Greensand Way are protected from development. That the access to and rural nature of the walk, and views across and from the Weald are maintained.
2. Any planning development is in keeping with the open countryside.
3. Any development at Wierton Place is in keeping with the scale, appearance and character of the Grade 2 designation, involves the restoration of the Manor House and Greenhouse and is restricted to those buildings currently used as residential.
4. Maidstone Borough Council co-ordinate with Kent County Council and other agencies to act swiftly to enforce established planning policies in dealing with all unlawful developments.

RESOLVED: That the petition be referred to the Cabinet (to be considered as a representation on the Core Strategy), the Planning Committee (in so far as it relates to “live” planning applications and enforcement generally) and the Regeneration and Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee (to consider the policy implications and make recommendations to the Cabinet as appropriate).

42. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Questions to the Leader of the Council

Mr Stuart Jeffery asked a question of the Leader of the Council.

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

Councillor Harwood, on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, and Councillor FitzGerald, the Leader of the Independent Group, then responded to the question.

Mr Robin Kinrade asked a question of the Leader of the Council.

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

Councillor English, on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, and Councillor FitzGerald, the Leader of the Independent Group, then responded to the question.

43. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Questions to the Leader of the Council

Councillor Hinder asked a question and a supplementary question of the Leader of the Council.

The Leader of the Council responded to these questions.

Questions to Cabinet Members

Councillor FitzGerald asked a question and a supplementary question of the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services.

The Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services responded to these questions.

Councillor Paine asked a question of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Transport.

The Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Transport responded to this question.

Councillor FitzGerald asked a question and a supplementary question of the Cabinet Member for Environment.

The Cabinet Member for Environment responded to these questions.

44. CURRENT ISSUES - REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND RESPONSE OF THE GROUP LEADERS

The Leader of the Council submitted his report on current issues.

After the Leader of the Council had submitted his report, Councillor Harwood, on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, and Councillor FitzGerald, the Leader of the Independent Group, responded to the issues raised.

The Leader of the Council then responded to the points raised by Councillors Harwood and FitzGerald.

45. REPORT OF THE CABINET HELD ON 13 JULY 2011 - DRAFT HOUSING STRATEGY 2011/12 - 2014/15

It was moved by Councillor Garland, seconded by Councillor J A Wilson, that the recommendations of the Cabinet relating to the draft Housing Strategy 2011/12 – 2014/15 be approved.

RESOLVED:

1. That the draft Housing Strategy 2011/12 – 2014/15, attached as an Appendix to the report of the Cabinet, be approved for public consultation.
2. That the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services and the Head of Housing and Community Safety be given delegated authority to amend the Strategy as required following the consultation exercise.

46. REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 AUGUST 2011 - SELF REGULATION FOLLOWING ABOLITION OF THE STANDARDS REGIME

Mrs Dorothy Phillips, the Chairman of the Standards Committee, presented the Committee's report relating to self regulation following the abolition of the Standards regime.

It was moved by Councillor Parvin, seconded by Councillor English, that the recommendations of the Standards Committee relating to self regulation following the abolition of the Standards regime be approved.

RESOLVED:

1. That following the abolition of Standards for England, the Model Code of Conduct and statutory Standards Committees:-
 - a) There should continue to be a Code of Conduct adopted by the Council to guide Members as to the standard of behaviour expected of them.

- b) There should continue to be a Standards Committee comprising Borough, Parish and Independent Members to meet on an ad hoc basis as and when complaints are received or guidance sought from the Council on ethical issues.
 - c) The chairmanship of the new Standards Committee should be open to Borough, Parish and Independent Members, and not restricted to the Independent Members as at present.
 - d) Parish Councils should be offered a service in relation to any future standards regime, but the issue of payment be deferred for consideration at a later date.
2. That the Chairman of the Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer be requested to report back to the Committee on 30 November 2011 (and subsequently to Council) with detailed proposals based on the above.

47. REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 AUGUST 2011 - REQUEST FOR CABINET QUORUM TO BE REDUCED FROM FOUR TO THREE

It was moved by Councillor Parvin, seconded by Councillor Mrs Stockell, that the recommendation of the Standards Committee relating to the proposed reduction in the quorum for meetings of the Cabinet be approved.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the quorum for meetings of the Cabinet be reduced from four to three and that the Constitution be amended accordingly.
- 2. That it be noted that the Standards Committee has, in accordance with Article 15.02(a) of the Constitution, evaluated the change to the Constitution and believes that its implementation will help to ensure that the aims and principles of the Constitution are given full effect by putting in place arrangements to enable business to be transacted in the event of two Cabinet Members being unable to attend a Cabinet meeting, thus enabling decisions to be taken efficiently and effectively.

48. REPORT OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES GROUP HELD ON 8 SEPTEMBER 2011 - APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER TO THE JOINT INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

It was moved by Councillor Chittenden, seconded by Councillor Thick, that the recommendation of the General Purposes Group relating to the term of office of Independent Members of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel be approved.

RESOLVED: That Independent Members of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel be restricted to two consecutive 3 year terms of office

in order to maintain their independence and to comply with the Council's corporate governance guidelines.

49. ORAL REPORT OF THE CABINET HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2011

It was noted that there was no report from the Cabinet on this occasion.

50. ORAL REPORT OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD ON 19 SEPTEMBER 2011

It was noted that there was no report from the Audit Committee on this occasion.

51. NOTICE OF MOTION - ASTOR OF HEVER SCHOOL

It was moved by Councillor Paine, seconded by Councillor Vizzard, and:-

RESOLVED:

That Maidstone Borough Council thanks the staff, students, parents and governors of Astor of Hever School for their hard work in recent years, culminating in a superb Ofsted result, making Astor of Hever one of the most improved schools in the country. Special thanks are given to Executive Head Vanessa Everett and Headteachers Julia Campbell and Richard Meredith for their outstanding leadership throughout this period.

That Maidstone Borough Council congratulates Woodard Schools for their successful reopening of Astor of Hever as the new St Augustine Academy and wishes them well.

That Maidstone Borough Council invites a delegation from St Augustine Academy for a tour of the Town Hall for civic purposes, and to receive its vote of thanks at the next full Council meeting.

52. REPORT OF THE CORPORATE PROJECTS AND OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGER - OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2010 - 11

It was moved by Councillor Mrs Gooch, seconded by Councillor Mrs Stockell, that the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2010/11 be noted.

RESOLVED: That the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2010/11 be noted.

53. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES - COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

It was moved by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Garland, that the recommendations contained in the report of the Head of Democratic Services relating to the membership of Committees be approved.

RESOLVED: That the wishes of the Leaders of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups with regard to the membership of Committees, as set out in the report of the Head of Democratic Services, be approved.

54. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES - URGENT DECISIONS
TAKEN BY THE EXECUTIVE

The Mayor announced that this report was for information only.

55. FOR THE GOOD OF THIS TOWN:THE JURATS OF MAIDSTONE 1549-1660
BY JUDY BUCKLEY

The Mayor announced that Lady Buckley wished to present complimentary copies of her book about the Maidstone Jurats (Aldermen) 1549-1660 to all Councillors.

RESOLVED: That the Mayor should write to Lady Buckley thanking her for the books.

56. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.05 p.m.