

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, HIGH STREET, MAIDSTONE ON 19 SEPTEMBER 2012

Present: Councillor Nelson-Gracie (The Mayor) and Councillors Ash, Beerling, Black, Mrs Blackmore, Brindle, Burton, Butler, Chittenden, Collins, Cox, Cuming, Daley, English, Garland, Mrs Gibson, Mrs Gooch, Greer, Ms Griffin, Mrs Grigg, Harwood, Hogg, Hotson, Mrs Joy, Lusty, McKay, McLoughlin, Moriarty, B Mortimer, D Mortimer, Moss, Munford, Naghi, Newton, Paine, Parvin, Mrs Parvin, Pickett, Mrs Ring, Mrs Robertson, Sams, Springett, Mrs Stockell, Thick, Warner, de Wiggondene, Mrs Wilson and Yates

46. **PRAYERS**

Prayers were said by the Reverend Canon Andrew Sewell of St Paul's Church, Boxley Road.

47. **COUNCILLOR MALCOLM ROBERTSON**

The Council stood in silence for one minute in memory of Councillor Malcolm Robertson who died on 10 August 2012.

48. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Barned, Mrs Hinder, Paterson, Vizzard and J A Wilson.

49. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

50. **DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING**

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

51. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

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

52. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD ON 20 JUNE 2012**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Borough Council held on 20 June 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed.

53. MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD ON 5 JULY 2012

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Borough Council held on 5 July 2012 be approved as a correct record and signed.

54. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor announced that:-

- The Council and 36 Engineer Regiment (Search) had signed the Armed Forces Community Covenant which aimed to encourage the civilian community to offer support to the local armed forces community and to make it easier for service personnel, families and veterans to access help and support available from the Ministry of Defence, statutory providers and the voluntary sector. The Covenant was signed last week just before Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Ed Robinson and a number of the 36 Engineer Regiment (Search) deployed to Afghanistan for a six month tour of duty. On behalf of the Council, he wished them well.
- He had attended the annual wreath laying and service of remembrance for The Queen's Own Buffs Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment on Sunday 16 September 2012 and had been disappointed that the Council's usual turnout of 10-15 Members could not be achieved on this occasion.
- He wished to remind Members of forthcoming events including the MacMillan Coffee Morning to be held at the Town Hall on Friday 28 September 2012 and the Ladies Lunch to be hosted by the Mayoress at a restaurant in Headcorn on 12 October 2012 in aid of the Mayor's Charities.
- This was the last meeting of the Council that Civic Officer Tim Goodwin would be in attendance as he was leaving the employment of the Council on Friday 21 September 2012. On behalf of the Council, he wished him well.

The Mayor and representatives of the three political groups then paid tribute to Councillor Malcolm Robertson who passed away in August.

55. PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

56. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Question to the Leader of the Council

Mr Stuart Jeffery asked the following question of the Leader of the Council:-

Noting the 10% reduction in central government grant for Council Tax Benefit, to what extent could the shortfall in funding be reduced if Council Tax was raised in 13/14?

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

Councillor Mrs Wilson, the Leader of the Opposition, and Councillor Mrs Gooch, the Leader of the Independent Group, then responded to the question.

Mr Jeffery asked the following supplementary question of the Leader of the Council:-

As two Conservative Councils in Kent went out on a limb last year by raising Council Tax, do you feel that you have done or are planning to do all that you can possibly do to mitigate the benefit cut so that those who can afford to pay Council Tax can help those who cannot especially since 13% of the children in this Borough are in families that claim benefits?

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

Councillor Mrs Wilson, the Leader of the Opposition, and Councillor Mrs Gooch, the Leader of the Independent Group, then responded to the question.

To listen to the responses to these questions, please follow this link:-

http://clients.westminster-digital.co.uk/maidstone/mg_proxy.aspx?mg_m_id=1610

57. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Question to the Leader of the Council

Councillor Newton asked the following question of the Leader of the Council:-

Can the Leader confirm how many slips, trips and falls have been reported to Maidstone Borough Council since the opening of the regenerated High Street and how many claims for injuries sustained are being made to date?

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

Councillor Newton asked the following supplementary question of the Leader of the Council:-

In early July, there was a report called "Safer Streets" that was produced by M V A Consultancy who identified, following inspection, a trip hazard within the bus, taxi and loading bays due to the lack of contrast between kerb and carriageway materials. I raised this at an Overview and Scrutiny

Committee meeting, but did not get an answer. Are you aware of the report?

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

Question to the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development

Councillor Daley asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development:-

Observation of the use of the Mill Street Car Park on Sundays gives the impression that it is very sparsely used. Would the Cabinet Member please advise:-

- *The total amount collected in parking fees on Sundays for the period 1 June to 31 August 2012?*
- *The total number of Parking Charge Notices issued on Sundays and the amount collected in the same period?*
- *The cost of the policing of this car park on Sundays for the same period.*

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development responded to the question.

Councillor Daley asked the following supplementary question of the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development:-

In view of the relatively small amounts of money involved, will the Cabinet Member consider ways in which there can be some method of relieving churchgoers of the burden of car parking charges on Sundays to cover the hours 10.00 a.m. to midday?

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development responded to the question.

To listen to the responses to these questions, please follow this link:-

http://clients.westminster-digital.co.uk/maidstone/mg_proxy.aspx?mg_m_id=1610

58. CURRENT ISSUES - REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, RESPONSE OF THE GROUP LEADERS AND QUESTIONS FROM COUNCIL MEMBERS

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

After the Leader of the Council had submitted his report, Councillor Mrs Wilson, the Leader of the Opposition, and Councillor Mrs Gooch, the Leader of the Independent Group, responded to the issues raised.

A number of Members then asked questions of the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition on the issues raised in their speeches.

59. REPORT OF THE CABINET HELD ON 8 AUGUST 2012 - ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2012-15

It was moved by Councillor Hotson, seconded by Councillor Garland, that subject to the amendment of the document to reflect the recent decision of the Cabinet to proceed with the demolition of the King Street Multi-Storey Car Park and the submission of a planning application for the construction of a surface level car park whilst continuing to seek development opportunities for the longer term use of the site, the recommendation of the Cabinet relating to the adoption of the revised Asset Management Plan 2012-15 be approved.

RESOLVED: That subject to the amendment of the document to reflect the recent decision of the Cabinet to proceed with the demolition of the King Street Multi-Storey Car Park and the submission of a planning application for the construction of a surface level car park whilst continuing to seek development opportunities for the longer term use of the site, the revised Asset Management Plan 2012-15, attached as Appendix A to the report of the Cabinet, be adopted.

60. REPORT OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES GROUP HELD ON 3 SEPTEMBER 2012 - APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSON AND RESERVE

It was moved by Councillor Chittenden, seconded by Councillor Black, that the recommendation of the General Purposes Group relating to the appointment of the Independent Person be approved.

RESOLVED: That Mrs Dorothy Phillips be appointed as the Independent Person until 30 June 2013.

61. ORAL REPORT OF THE CABINET HELD ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2012

It was noted that there were no further reports from the Cabinet on this occasion.

62. ORAL REPORT OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2012

It was moved by Councillor Butler, seconded by Councillor Mrs Wilson, that the following recommendation of the Audit Committee be approved:-

That the Audit Committee's Annual Report 2011/12 (circulated separately), which demonstrates how the Committee has discharged its duties during 2011/12, provides assurance to the Council that important governance issues are being monitored and addressed by the Committee and provides evidence to support the Annual Governance Statement, be noted.

RESOLVED: That the Audit Committee's Annual Report 2011/12 (circulated separately), which demonstrates how the Committee has discharged its duties during 2011/12, provides assurance to the Council that important governance issues are being monitored and addressed by

the Committee and provides evidence to support the Annual Governance Statement, be noted.

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

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

RESOLVED: That the following change be approved to reflect the wishes of the Leader of the Conservative Group:-

Planning Committee - Members

Delete Councillor Thick. Insert Councillor Paine.

64. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.50 p.m.