

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, HIGH STREET, MAIDSTONE ON 10 NOVEMBER 2014

Present: Councillor Thick (The Mayor) and
Councillors Ash, Black, Mrs Blackmore, Burton, Butler,
Chittenden, Cox, Cuming, Daley, Edwards-Daem, Ells,
Fissenden, Garland, Harper, Harwood, Mrs Hinder,
Hogg, Mrs Joy, Long, McKay, McLoughlin, Moriarty,
B Mortimer, D Mortimer, Naghi, Newton, Paine,
Parvin, Mrs Parvin, Paterson, Perry, Pickett, Powell,
Mrs Ring, Mrs Robertson, Ross, Sams, Sargeant,
Springett, Mrs Stockell, Vizzard, P Watson,
de Wiggondene, Willis, J.A. Wilson and Mrs Wilson

71. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Collins, English, Mrs Gooch, Greer, Mrs Grigg, Munford, Round and B Watson.

72. **DISPENSATIONS**

There were no applications for dispensations.

73. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

74. **DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING**

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

75. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

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

76. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2014**

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Borough Council held on 17 September 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed.

77. **MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor updated Members on recent/forthcoming engagements.

78. PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

79. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Questions to the Leader of the Council

Mr Elliot Dean asked the following question of the Leader of the Council:

The Borough of Maidstone is shut for business. The shocking and damaging statement sent out to the business community by Members of this Council who refused permission for the Waterside Park J8 site (planning ref: 14/501895) put forward by ADL and Scarab two local businesses, who both need to relocate in order to continue to grow. This will see the direct loss of 300 high quality jobs from the Borough. Currently I work for a successful multi million pound business started and still based in Maidstone; I know the pros and cons of operating in the Borough very well.

With the current approach to attracting more business and expanding current capacity in Maidstone, how will the Council ever be able to offer an adequate supply of high quality jobs and apprenticeships for residents?

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

Councillor Mrs Wilson, the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Newton, on behalf of the Leader of the Independent Group, Councillor Powell, the Leader of the UKIP Group, and Councillor McKay, the Leader of the Labour Group, then responded to the question.

Mr Dean asked the following supplementary question of the Leader of the Council:

I work for a business in Maidstone that has had £8m of investment put into it which is directly benefitting the Maidstone economy. Does the Leader of the Council agree that this is a positive thing and that we should be looking at ways to expand that?

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

Councillor Mrs Wilson, the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Newton, on behalf of the Leader of the Independent Group, Councillor Powell, the Leader of the UKIP Group, and Councillor McKay, the Leader of the Labour Group, then responded to the question.

Mr Patrick Golding asked the following question of the Leader of the Council:

As Operations Manager at Scarab Sweepers I attended the Planning Committee meeting on 16/10/14 and listened to the debate about Waterside Park, an application by Scarab, ADL and Gallagher. The

application was refused by the Committee against the Officer recommendation, and I was concerned with many aspects of the debate and Charing of the meeting; Members appeared more concerned with politics and playing to the gallery with little or no attention given to the economic needs of the Borough and of the people living here. Planning and development in Maidstone has quite clearly become a political battleground with certain politicians making decisions for self-indulgent local party reasons; I therefore ask the Leader:

How does Maidstone Borough Council intend to ensure the long term economic prosperity of the Borough, its business community and all its residents in the face of stiff competition from neighbouring authorities?

Councillor Burton, the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development, responded to the question on behalf of the Leader of the Council.

Councillor Mrs Wilson, the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Newton, on behalf of the Leader of the Independent Group, Councillor Powell, the Leader of the UKIP Group, and Councillor Harper, on behalf of the Leader of the Labour Group, then responded to the question.

Mr Golding asked the following supplementary question of the Leader of the Council:

Am I to understand that the Council would rather put an emphasis, in its Plans and its future prosperity, on lower skilled tourism and service industry jobs as opposed to higher skilled manufacturing jobs?

Councillor Burton, the Cabinet Member for Planning, Transport and Development, responded to the question on behalf of the Leader of the Council.

Councillor Mrs Wilson, the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Newton, on behalf of the Leader of the Independent Group, Councillor Powell, the Leader of the UKIP Group, and Councillor McKay, the Leader of the Labour Group, then responded to the question.

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

<http://live.webcasts.unique-media.tv/mbc292/interface>

80. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

There were no questions from Members on this occasion.

81. REPORT OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES GROUP HELD ON 24 OCTOBER 2014 - BROOMFIELD AND KINGSWOOD AND SUTTON VALENCE PARISH COUNCILS - INCREASE IN NUMBER OF COUNCILLORS

It was moved by Councillor Parvin, seconded by Councillor Black, that the recommendation of the General Purposes Group relating to the requests

by Broomfield and Kingswood and Sutton Valence Parish Councils for increases in the number of Parish Councillors be approved.

RESOLVED: That, in accordance with the adopted scale, the requests of Broomfield and Kingswood and Sutton Valence Parish Councils for increases in the number of Parish Councillors from nine Councillors to eleven Councillors be refused.

82. REPORT OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES GROUP HELD ON 24 OCTOBER 2014
- REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING
STATIONS

Councillor Parvin, the Chairman of the General Purposes Group, advised the Council that following the meeting of the Group one comment had been received regarding electors in Headcorn Road and Old Ham Lane, south east of Lenham. Electors in these streets would have to travel one mile to the proposed polling station in Platts Heath whereas they currently travelled approximately half a mile to the present station at Lenham Community Centre. While it was recognised that for 50 electors this created a short additional distance to travel, for the majority of the 740 electors in this polling area the distance was reduced. If the Council was minded to consider allowing the 50 affected electors to continue to vote at Lenham Community Centre a boundary review would be required.

It was then moved by Councillor Parvin, seconded by Councillor Black, that the recommendations of the General Purposes Group arising from the review undertaken of polling districts, polling places and polling stations be approved.

RESOLVED:

That the following changes to polling places be approved:

1. Bridge Ward - That the use of St Simon Stock R C Comprehensive School be discontinued. Electors in polling district FA who currently vote at this polling station will vote at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. This polling place to become a double station.
2. Heath Ward - That St Andrews Church Hall be re-instated as a polling station to accommodate electors outside of the former Oakwood hospital site. Electors in polling district N will be split between Beechwood Community Hall and St Andrews Church Hall. All electors to the east of Queens Road and to the south of St Andrews Road will vote at St Andrews Church Hall.
3. Marden and Yalding Ward, Collier Street Parish - That the polling place be moved from St Margaret's Church to St Margaret's School for electors in polling district RR.
4. Harrietsham and Lenham Ward, Lenham South Parish - That St Edmunds Centre, Platts Heath becomes a polling station for use by electors in polling district LC.

5. Headcorn Ward, Headcorn Parish - That the position of the station within the polling place be changed from the games room to the small restaurant at the Hawkenbury Public House for electors in polling district MB.
6. Sutton Valence and Langley Ward, Sutton Valence Parish - That the position of the station within the polling place be changed from the games room to the small restaurant at the Hawkenbury Public House for electors in polling district ZB.

83. NOTICE OF MOTION - WATERSIDE PARK - 14/501895 (J8) DECISION

The following motion was moved by Councillor Harper, seconded by Councillor McKay:

The local economy has been underperforming since 2008 compared to large parts of Kent and the South East. More and more residents have to look for work outside of the Borough. Now it looks like the Borough of Maidstone is shut for business. The shocking and damaging statement sent out to the business community by Members of this Council who refused permission for the Waterside Park J8 site (planning ref: 14/501895) put forward by ADL and Scarab two major local businesses.

These firms have out grown their current sites and need to relocate, either within the Borough or to authorities only too happy to take jobs from Maidstone.

The fact is that Maidstone is in deep need of a range of sites for business and employment, including non-centre locations with good access to the rail, motorway and main road network for business zones. The entire town is ringed with green land, but it needs to go somewhere and this application was ascetically pleasing. To ensure our town and Borough have a future the Council must take responsibility for proactively identifying non-centre locations for business zones.

This Council resolves to:

1. Urgently identify alternative sites within the Borough of Maidstone.
2. Work closely with companies who wish to relocate within Maidstone or improve infrastructure to their current sites if that is an alternative.
3. Ensure that the Local Plan is pro jobs and that there are sufficient and appropriate sites identified for employment.
4. Adopt in the Local Plan policies to oppose the loss of employment land unless compensating space is locally available.
5. Support the principle of the development of an Enterprise Hub.
6. Report back to the next full Council meeting on all points above.

Note: The wording of the motion differs slightly from that included on the agenda for the Council meeting.

RESOLVED: That the motion, having been moved and seconded, be referred to the Cabinet, as the decision making body, for consideration.

84. NOTICE OF MOTION - MANSFIELD WALK, MAIDSTONE

The following motion was moved by Councillor Harper, seconded by Councillor Paine:

Mansfield Walk is situated off Lower Fant Road, Maidstone (Fant Ward). It consists of a row of houses off Lower Fant Road and a separate row accessed by a footpath lower down the hill towards Roseholme.

The path is very steep and does not have steps and therefore in bad weather it is a potential hazard for less mobile people. Also the land to the east of Mansfield Walk is an abandoned and very overgrown plot.

Over the years efforts have been made with both Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council to have the path improved to improve access to the houses. Also efforts have been made with both Maidstone Borough Council and Kent County Council to identify the ownership of the vacant land.

The Council resolves to:

1. Undertake a full review of the access to the houses in Mansfield Walk and to report back to the Council on potential options to improve access to the lower block of houses off the current footpath.
2. Establish the ownership of the vacant land to the east of Mansfield Walk and to consider schemes to lay out the area as an amenity or community space.
3. Report back to the next Council meeting.

RESOLVED: That the motion, having been moved and seconded, be referred to the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services, as the Cabinet Member responsible, for consideration.

85. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.15 p.m.