

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, HIGH STREET, MAIDSTONE ON 11 DECEMBER 2013

Present: Councillor English (The Mayor) and Councillors Ash, Barned, Black, Mrs Blackmore, Brindle, Burton, Butler, Collins, Cox, Cuming, Daley, Garland, Mrs Gibson, Mrs Gooch, Greer, Mrs Grigg, Harwood, Mrs Hinder, Hogg, Hotson, Mrs Joy, Lusty, McKay, McLoughlin, Moriarty, D Mortimer, Moss, Munford, Naghi, Nelson-Gracie, Newton, Paine, Parvin, Mrs Parvin, Paterson, Pickett, Mrs Ring, Mrs Robertson, Sams, Mrs Stockell, Thick, Vizzard, de Wiggondene, J A Wilson and Mrs Wilson

83. **MINUTE'S SILENCE**

The Council stood in silence for one minute in memory of Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa, and Robin Leigh-Pemberton (Lord Kingsdown), a former Lord Lieutenant of Kent.

84. **PRAYERS**

Prayers were said by the Reverend Canon Chris Morgan-Jones.

85. **REVEREND CANON CHRIS MORGAN-JONES - MAYOR'S CHAPLAIN**

On behalf of the Council, the Mayor presented a gift to the Reverend Canon Chris Morgan-Jones to mark his retirement as the Vicar of All Saints, Maidstone and Mayor's Chaplain.

86. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Beerling, Chittenden, Mrs Mannering, B Mortimer, Ross, Springett, Warner, Watson and Yates.

87. **DISPENSATIONS**

There were no applications for dispensations.

88. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

89. **DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING**

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

90. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That the item on Part II of the agenda be taken in public but the information contained therein should remain private.

91. MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD ON 14 OCTOBER 2013

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Borough Council held on 14 October 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed.

92. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

On behalf of the Head of Revenues and Benefits, the Mayor asked Members to sign up to receive their Council Tax bill by email.

The Mayor then updated Members on recent engagements including an event held at All Saints, Maidstone, to mark a new partnership between the Diocese of Canterbury and the Kent Savers' Credit Union to enable more people to access local, ethical and affordable financial services.

The Mayor added that he would like to thank Members for their continued support and to encourage them to attend forthcoming charity events including Quiz Night and a Gurkha Curry Night.

93. PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

94. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from Members of the public.

95. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Questions to the Leader of the Council

Councillor Moss asked the following question of the Leader of the Council:

In producing an acceptable core strategy the housing need of the Borough must be determined and supported by robust evidence. Boroughs that have not used robust evidence have had their plans rejected by Planning Inspectors. Does the Leader share my concern that Liberal circulations produced by their prospective parliamentary candidate, mislead the public by rejecting any notion of an evidence base and suggesting there is a choice in choosing some arbitrary housing figure? The naivety of this assertion risks delaying the plan and therefore allowing developers a free for all in submitting planning applications for greenfield sites, which is resisted by the leadership of this Council.

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

A supplementary question asked by Councillor Moss of the Leader of the Council was rejected by the Mayor on the grounds that it did not relate to the subject of the original question.

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

Does the Leader agree that peak time traffic congestion in Maidstone is the worst in Kent?

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

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

Does the Leader accept that the already congested roads at peak times in Maidstone are totally inadequate to cope with the increased vehicle movements that will occur within the Borough if the proposal to construct between 17,100 and 19,600 new homes goes ahead?

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

Questions to Cabinet Members

Councillor Mrs Parvin asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services:

At the meeting of the Council held on 18 September last, in reply to my question regarding the possibility of the VIC returning to the Town Hall, you replied that an element of the VIC would be returned, also staff of VAM were to be trained to assist them with answering questions from the public on where to go and what to see etc. Can the Cabinet Member assist by informing Council of what progress has been made to date?

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services responded to the question.

Councillor Mrs Parvin asked the following supplementary question of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services:

Would the Cabinet Member agree that the presence of the VIC at the Town Hall would complement the ambience of Jubilee Square and the newly refurbished High Street for visitors to Maidstone?

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services responded to the question.

Councillor Mrs Grigg asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Environment:

The Wheatsheaf Junction in Loose Road and a number of other residential areas in the Borough have been identified as 'choke spots' where air quality is below the European Union minimum standards. Can I therefore

ask what rate of illness and deaths in Maidstone Borough are attributed to or exacerbated by traffic induced air pollution?

The Cabinet Member for Environment responded to the question.

Councillor Mrs Grigg asked the following supplementary question of the Cabinet Member for Environment:

Do you believe that the actions in Maidstone Borough Council's Air Quality Management Plan are anywhere near sufficient to address the magnitude of the problem?

The Cabinet Member for Environment responded to the question.

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

<http://webcasts.umcdn.com/mbc079/interface>

96. 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 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 asked questions of the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition on the issues raised in their speeches.

97. REPORT OF THE CABINET HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2013 - LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

It was moved by Councillor Moss, seconded by Councillor Garland, that the recommendations of the Cabinet relating to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme to be implemented from 1 April 2014 be approved.

Amendment moved by Councillor D Mortimer, seconded by Councillor Mrs Grigg, that recommendation b) be deleted and the following inserted:

Any future changes, including those that are deemed necessary to maintain the effective operation of the scheme, to come to the Strategic Leadership and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration prior to implementation by the Director of Environment and Shared Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services.

With the agreement of the mover and the seconder and the remainder of the Council, the amendment was amended as follows:

That the Director of Environment and Shared Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, be given delegated

authority to make such future changes as are necessary to maintain the effective operation of the scheme with the proviso that any changes that would lead to a change in the level of discount given to eligible residents should come to the Strategic Leadership and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration prior to implementation by the Director of Environment and Shared Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services.

AMENDMENT (AS AMENDED) CARRIED

The substantive motion was then put to the vote.

SUBSTANTIVE MOTION CARRIED

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Local Council Tax Support Scheme, as set out in Appendix A to the report of the Cabinet, be adopted with effect from 1 April 2014; and
- (b) That the Director of Environment and Shared Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, be given delegated authority to make such future changes as are necessary to maintain the effective operation of the scheme with the proviso that any changes that would lead to a change in the level of discount given to eligible residents should come to the Strategic Leadership and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration prior to implementation by the Director of Environment and Shared Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services.

98. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2013 - VISITING MEMBERS AT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY - AMENDMENT TO PROCEDURE RULES

It was moved by Councillor Barned, seconded by Councillor Mrs Gooch, that the recommendation of the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Committee regarding the amendment of the current Visiting Member Procedure Rules for Overview and Scrutiny as set out in Part 4 of the Constitution be approved.

RESOLVED: That the Constitution be amended as follows:-

Second bullet point, paragraph 3, of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules be deleted and replaced with the following:

- *"that Visiting Members may be involved in the general discussion of the Committee at the discretion of the Chairman but are not allowed to vote and it should be clearly indicated prior to any decision that they are not taking part in the vote".*

99. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS - CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

It was moved by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Hotson, that the recommendations contained in the report of the Head of Policy and Communications relating to the calendar of meetings be approved.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the amended calendar of meetings for 2013/14, attached as Appendix A to the report of the Head of Policy and Communications, be approved.
- (b) That the calendar of meetings for 2014/15, attached as Appendix B to the report of the Head of Policy and Communications, be approved.

100. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS - COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

It was moved by the Mayor, seconded by Councillor Paine, that the recommendation contained in the report of the Head of Policy and Communications relating to the membership of Committees be approved.

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

Planning Committee

Members

Delete Councillor Lusty. Insert Councillor Black.

Strategic Leadership and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Members

Delete Councillor Yates. Insert Councillor Mrs Parvin.

101. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS - URGENT DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE EXECUTIVE

The Mayor announced that this report was for information only.

102. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.05 p.m.