

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE CLIVE EMSON BUILDING, KENT EVENT CENTRE, KENT SHOWGROUND, DETLING ON 13 APRIL 2022

Present: Councillor Mortimer (Deputy Mayor in the Chair) and Councillors Mrs Blackmore, Brice, Brindle, Burton, Cannon, Coates, Cooke, Cooper, Cox, Cuming, Daley, English, Eves, Fort, Garten, Harper, Hastie, Hinder, Holmes, Mrs Joy, Khadka, Kimmance, McKenna, Naghi, Newton, Parfitt-Reid, Perry, Mrs Ring, D Rose, M Rose, Russell, J Sams, T Sams, Springett, Trzebinski, R Webb, S Webb and Young

178. CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING

In the absence of the Mayor (Councillor Mrs Gooch), the Deputy Mayor (Councillor Mortimer) chaired the meeting.

179. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from the Mayor (Councillor Mrs Gooch) and Councillors Bartlett, Bryant, Clark, Fissenden, Forecast, Mrs Grigg, Harwood, McKay, Munford, Mrs Robertson, Round, Spooner and Wilby.

180. APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATIONS

There were no applications for dispensations.

181. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

182. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillors J and T Sams indicated that they had been lobbied on agenda item 13 – Report of the Democracy and General Purposes Committee held on 9 March 2022 – Local Government Boundary Review – Ward Scheme Consultation Response.

It was noted that all Members had been lobbied on agenda item 8 – Presentation of Petition – Local Government Boundary Review – Ward Scheme Consultation Response (Keep Lenham Together We Are Not Headcorn).

183. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

184. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD ON 23 FEBRUARY 2022

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Borough Council held on 23 February 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed.

185. DEPUTY MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Deputy Mayor said that the Mayor (Councillor Mrs Gooch) was unwell and unable to attend the Council meetings this evening. On behalf of all Members present, he wished her well.

The Deputy Mayor then updated Members on recent engagements and events, including opening a shop, giving a reading at a church service, attending the Great American Songbook event at the Town Hall, and meeting representatives of charities doing fantastic work to help others.

Finally, on behalf of the Mayor and himself, the Deputy Mayor took the opportunity to thank those Members who would be standing down in the forthcoming Borough Council elections for their services over the years:

Councillor Mike Cuming, Bearsted Ward
Councillor Malcolm McKay, Shepway South Ward
Councillor Jonathan Purle, Bridge Ward
Councillor Daniel Rose, Park Wood Ward
Councillor Dan Daley, Allington Ward for the past 32 years, former Liberal Democrat Group Leader, former Leader of the Council and Mayor 2000/2001

186. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Deputy Mayor said that he intended to take the petition (Keep Lenham Together We Are Not Headcorn) later in the meeting together with agenda item 13 (Report of the Democracy and General Purposes Committee held on 9 March 2022 – Local Government Boundary Review – Ward Scheme Consultation Response).

187. PETITIONS

See Minute 192 below

188. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no questions from members of the public.

189. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL TO THE CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES

Question from Councillor J Sams to the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee

Of the Heathlands proposal and the actions of "we are fabric" the PR company hired by Maidstone Borough Council. At the last Policy and Resources Committee meeting a Councillor said at the meeting "I chair the Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee, so I've been fairly close to a lot of the detail here, I'm quite comfortable with where it is going, from the Council as a planning authority, and reading reports like this ..suggests to me, yes there is always going to be embarrassment when publicly when we engage in such controversial projects but actually things are going very well, and I'm happy to note the report and I'm very pleased with the progress that Mr Cornall and Homes England have made at this stage."

How do you think the public, in particular residents of Lenham Heath, might feel about his comments given that this Councillor in question, Cllr Cooper, is the Chairman of the Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee, how does this demonstrate a clear line of distance between the different Council functions?

The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee responded to the question.

Councillor J Sams asked the following supplementary question of the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee:

The Chief Executive on many occasions has reminded Members of the two distinct roles of the Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee and the Policy and Resources Committee. Can you please tell me and the Lenham Heath residents how you think her comments about the clear distinct functions are reflected in Councillor Cooper's intervention on this occasion at the Policy and Resources Committee when he clearly draws everyone's attention to his role as the Chairman of the Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee?

The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee responded to the question.

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7onSFaWrCzo&t=2276s>

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

Councillor Burton, the Leader of the Council, submitted his report on current issues.

After Councillor Burton had submitted his report, Councillor English, the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor Cox, the Leader of the Maidstone Group, Councillor J Sams on behalf of the Leader of the Independent Group, and Councillor Harper, the Leader of the Labour Group, responded to the issues raised.

The Leader of the Council responded to questions on issues raised in his speech, with input from the Chief Executive.

191. REPORT OF THE DEMOCRACY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 9 MARCH 2022 - NEW CONSTITUTION

It was moved by Councillor Mrs Blackmore, seconded by Councillor English, that the draft Constitution for Maidstone Borough Council, attached as Appendix A to the report of the Democracy and General Purposes Committee, as amended by the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance as set out in the document circulated at the meeting, be adopted to come into effect from the Annual Meeting of the Council on 21 May 2022.

In moving the recommendation, Councillor Mrs Blackmore wished to thank the Governance Arrangements Working Group and Mr Simon Goacher of Weightmans LLP for their work on drafting the new Constitution.

RESOLVED: That the draft Constitution for Maidstone Borough Council, attached as Appendix A to the report of the Democracy and General Purposes Committee, as amended by the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance as set out in the document circulated at the meeting, be adopted to come into effect from the Annual Meeting of the Council on 21 May 2022.

192. REPORT OF THE DEMOCRACY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 9 MARCH 2022 - LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY REVIEW - WARD SCHEME CONSULTATION RESPONSE & PETITION - KEEP LENHAM TOGETHER WE ARE NOT HEADCORN

Councillor John Britt, the Chairman of Lenham Parish Council, presented a petition in the following terms on behalf of the Parish Council and the residents of Lenham Parish:

We the undersigned residents of Harrietsham & Lenham ward of Maidstone Borough, call upon this Council to stop its proposal to divide the Lenham parish area for future Borough elections. We strongly believe that Lenham Heath, Platts Heath, Sandway, Liverton Hill and all the isolated homes in the Lenham South area (South of the railway line), are strongly attached to Lenham, and reflect community interests and identity so should remain part of Harrietsham and Lenham Borough ward. We do not wish those areas to be forced by Maidstone Borough Council in its Boundary Commission response to be joined to Headcorn ward. We call upon Maidstone Borough Council to offer an impartial view to the Boundary Commission for electoral integrity and not one that cuts a community directly in half.

In presenting the petition, Councillor Britt said that Lenham was a proper community with purpose and cohesion. The Borough Council's proposal to divide it arbitrarily along the railway line was seen for what it was - a bad idea, poorly researched and totally impractical. That was why in such a short time so many people had signed the petition.

Following the ensuing discussion on the petition, Councillor Britt advised the Council that Lenham Parish Council had submitted its own proposal to the Local Government Boundary Commission. It had been developed with Harrietsham Parish Council and was supported by Headcorn Parish Council and the local County Councillor. Councillor Britt asked that the petition be added to the Council's response to the Local Government Boundary Commission.

The petition and points raised in the discussion were then considered by the Council in conjunction with agenda item 13 – Local Government Boundary Review – Ward Scheme Consultation Response.

Ms Kate Hammond addressed the Council on the proposed boundary changes insofar as they affected Lenham.

It was moved by Councillor Mrs Blackmore, seconded by Councillor Cooke, that the recommendation of the Democracy and General Purposes Committee relating to the Local Government Boundary Review - Ward Scheme Consultation Response be approved.

Amendment moved by Councillor Garten, seconded by Councillor Burton, that the following be added to the recommendation:

That the Council requests that the Local Government Boundary Commission pays due regard to individual submissions.

The amendment was subsequently withdrawn by the mover and the seconder.

RESOLVED: That the ward scheme and supporting explanation, set out at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 to the report of the Democracy and General Purposes Committee, be approved as the Council's formal submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as part of the Council's Local Government Boundary Review.

193. REPORT OF THE COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE ACTING AS THE CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE HELD ON 30 MARCH 2022 - MAIDSTONE COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2022-25

It was moved by Councillor S Webb, seconded by Councillor Mrs Joy, and

RESOLVED: That the draft Community Safety Partnership Plan 2022-25 presented to the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee acting as the Crime and Disorder Committee, as amended by the Head of

Housing and Community Services in consultation with the Vice-Chairman of the Committee under delegated authority, be approved.

194. ORAL REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE HELD ON 12 APRIL 2022

There was no report from the Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee on this occasion.

195. NOTICE OF MOTION - PROVISION OF ZEBRA CROSSING ON TONBRIDGE ROAD, MAIDSTONE CLOSE TO THE JUNCTION WITH BEVERLEY ROAD

The following motion was moved by Councillor Harper, seconded by Councillor M Rose:

Tonbridge Road is not an easy road to cross except at zebra and traffic light-controlled crossings. There is a request by residents for a new zebra crossing by the junction of Beverley Road and Tonbridge Road.

Their request is due to there being bus stops on either side of the road and also it is a place to cross the road to access the Beverley Road shops and Barming Primary School. The current situation is not satisfactory; the Fountain/Hermitage Lane junction does not have a pedestrian phase long enough for old and disabled people and also parents with small children to cross safely. In the opposite direction the next crossing point is at North Street, Barming.

Residents believe that the solution is to create an additional zebra crossing with a pedestrian refuge on Tonbridge Road, close to where Beverley Road comes out, as a low-cost solution to the issue.

A petition has been signed by a significant number of residents in the local neighbourhood.

This Council therefore resolves to support the residents' backed proposal for a zebra crossing with a central pedestrian refuge to be provided on Tonbridge Road, Maidstone close to the junction with Beverley Road.

Amendment moved by Councillor Holmes, seconded by Councillor Kimmance, that the final paragraph of the motion be deleted and the following inserted:

Maidstone Borough Council requests a full review by Kent County Council of additional crossing options on the A26 Tonbridge Road with the overall benefit for school access to Barming Primary School at peak times and that the crossing is encompassed within the Tonbridge Road and Fountain Lane junction upgrade works.

Councillor Harper, the mover of the original motion, said that he and his seconder were willing to accept the amendment to the motion.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 18.5, the motion, as amended, was referred to the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board.

196. NOTICE OF MOTION - FANT 20MPH ZONE

The following motion was moved by Councillor Harper, seconded by Councillor M Rose:

At the Council Meeting on Wednesday 23 February 2022, it was resolved:

"That Maidstone Borough Council supports the speed limit of 20mph on residential neighbourhoods and streets, in areas where there is evidence of community support and a community led approach."

In Fant there is strong community led support for a 20mph zone covering all the roads between Tonbridge Road and the River Medway from Westree Road in the east to Glebe Lane in the west. This has most recently been demonstrated in 2019 by a petition (provided to officers) signed by 881 residents with the wording:

"We support the implementation of a 20mph speed limit across Fant in the roads bounded by Tonbridge Road and the River Medway. We believe that this will make our environment safer for all residents and people who travel through our communities."

This petition was referred to the JTB in 2019 and promptly forgotten. Attempts to have the petition looked into as it deserves have failed previously. However, following the Council decision in February 2022 that Maidstone Borough Council will support 20mph on residential streets where there is evidence of community support and a community led approach, it provides the opportunity to reassess this proposal.

This Council therefore resolves to support the residents of Fant for 20mph speed limits in their residential streets/roads between Tonbridge Road and the River Medway from Westree Road in the east to Glebe Lane in the west, as there is strong evidence of community support for this proposal.

Noting that Kent County Council has a process in place for assessing requests for 20mph zones and implementing them, the motion was withdrawn by the mover and the seconder.

Note: Councillor Hastie left the meeting during consideration of this item (9.07 p.m.).

197. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2022/23

It was moved by Councillor Burton, seconded by Councillor S Webb, and

RESOLVED: That the Calendar of Meetings for 2022/23, attached as Appendix A to the report of the Head of Policy, Communications and Governance, be approved.

198. DURATION OF MEETING

7.07 p.m. to 9.15 p.m.