

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL **HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, HIGH STREET, MAIDSTONE ON** **24 JULY 2013**

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

20. **PRAYERS**

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

21. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Beerling, Brindle, Mrs Robertson and Warner.

22. **DISPENSATIONS**

There were no applications for dispensations.

23. **DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS**

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers. However, Councillor Mrs Wilson stated that although she had taken advice regarding the report of the Head of Policy and Communications concerning Members' broadband allowance, and understood that Members were not required to disclose interests in this matter, she had decided not participate in the discussion and voting since she had been claiming broadband allowance at the maximum rate.

24. **DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING**

There were no disclosures of lobbying.

25. **EXEMPT ITEMS**

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

26. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD ON 15 MAY 2013

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Borough Council held on 15 May 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed.

27. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor announced that:-

- He was sure that Members would agree to a letter being sent on behalf of the Council to Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge congratulating them on the birth of their son.
- It was with regret that he had to inform the Council of the death of Mrs Vera Wood, a former Mayoress of the Borough of Maidstone. Mrs Wood was the widow of John Wood who had served as Mayor during 1978/79.
- He would like to thank the Deputy Mayor and Deputy Mayoress and the Mayoral Team for their help and support over an extremely busy few months.
- He had attended the launch at Maidstone Museum of "Treasures from Hirado", an exhibition celebrating the 400th anniversary of the opening of trade and cultural ties between Britain and Japan. He would like to thank all those involved in bringing this important international exhibition to the Museum.

28. PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

29. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Question to the Leader of the Council

Councillor Rob Bird, KCC Member for Maidstone Central, asked the following question of the Leader of the Council:-

"The Borough Council Core Strategy proposals for close to 1,000 new houses to be built either side of the B2246 Hermitage Lane will place considerable strain on the local road network, especially the Fountain Lane junction with A26 Tonbridge Road which is already operating at well over capacity.

At its meeting in October 2012 the Maidstone Joint Transportation Board unanimously agreed with the Chairman's proposal that the draft Integrated Transportation Strategy be rejected as 'not fit for purpose' and the proposed St Andrew's Gyratory was strongly criticised by all parties. In the intervening 8 months no new proposals have been put forward by Kent Highways and local residents' properties continue to be blighted.

Does Councillor Garland agree that the proposed St Andrew's Road

gyratory system is not acceptable to Maidstone Borough Council and will he please confirm that development of this gyratory will not be accepted by MBC planning officers as highways remedial works to alleviate congestion in any future planning application?"

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.

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

"In the light of Councillor Garland's response, would he agree that the statement sent to local residents on Maidstone Borough Council headed paper saying that Kent County Council as the Highway Authority has been told that the gyratory system is not acceptable to Maidstone Borough Council is misleading?"

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://webcasts.umcdn.com/mbc077/interface>

30. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Questions to the Leader of the Council

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

*"As a long serving member of staff has recently left the Council's employ, will a letter of thanks be sent from all Members of this Council for the service he has given to us?
Neil Harris has served the Council in many posts over the last 30 years taking on many new areas of responsibility and adjusting to whatever they entailed".*

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

The Mayor said that he wished to place on record his appreciation of Mr Harris's advice and support over the years.

Councillor De Wiggondene asked the following question of the Leader of the Council:-

"Can the Leader provide an update on the current situation following the call for sites? A number of these are on valued greenfield land and are causing concern to local residents. What percentage of the total now being considered are greenfield sites?"

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

Councillor De Wiggondene asked the following supplementary question of the Leader of the Council:-

"Considering the concern expressed on both sides of this Chamber at the threat to greenfield land, could the Leader comment on the fact that whilst having written a letter to the Parishes about protecting green spaces, and asking them to put forward brownfield sites, the Maidstone Liberal Democrats put forward during the recent call for sites a significant tract of greenfield land at Lenham which is capable of delivering several thousand homes at normal densities, potentially tripling the size of the village on a site at the foot of the AONB? Does not this demonstrate the general hypocrisy of their current approach to the Local Plan process?"

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

Questions to Cabinet Members

Councillor Mrs Wilson asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Economic and Commercial Development:-

"As I am sure the Cabinet Member is aware there has been recent press coverage regarding the Federation of Small Business's statement that if Local Authorities spent an additional 5% of their budget locally and committed just three percent of that to small local firms, an additional £788million could have been generated for local economies across the country.

For every £1 spent with a small or medium sized business 63p was re-spent in the local area compared to 40p per £1 with a larger business. Would Councillor Greer confirm the Borough Council's percentage spend on services and purchases that went to small business in 2012/13 and tell me whether there are any positive steps he could take to increase that percentage of total spend in the current and future years?"

The Cabinet Member for Economic and Commercial Development responded to the question.

Councillor Mrs Wilson asked the following supplementary question of the Cabinet Member for Economic and Commercial Development:-

"Does this Council use contract terms to ensure that its payment terms are passed on by tier one suppliers through their own supply chains, and, if not, will the Council commit to doing so as a matter of urgency?"

The Cabinet Member for Economic and Commercial Development responded to the question.

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

"As an undertaking was given at the last Council meeting that an element of the Visitor Information Centre would be returned to the Town Hall, including staffing, can the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services give a date when this arrangement will take place?"

The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services responded to the question.

Councillor Mrs Parvin asked the following question of the Cabinet Member for Economic and Commercial Development:-

"Has further thought been given to utilising the void space on the ground floor entrance to the Gateway? Suggested use of this empty space could be a Visitor Information Centre, literature and the sale of advertising space, perhaps with electronic display/interactive signing for local businesses, i.e. Hotels, Places of Entertainment, Museums and Leeds Castle?"

The Cabinet Member for Economic and Commercial Development responded to the question.

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

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

32. REPORT OF THE CABINET HELD ON 15 MAY 2013 - REFRESHING THE MAIDSTONE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY 2009-20:MAIDSTONE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

It was moved by Councillor J A Wilson, seconded by Councillor Paine, that the recommendation of the Cabinet relating to the refreshed Maidstone Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2020 be approved.

RESOLVED: That the refreshed Maidstone Sustainable Community Strategy for 2009-2020, attached as Appendix A to the report of the Cabinet, be adopted.

33. REPORT OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD ON 15 JULY 2013 - AUDIT COMMITTEE - ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL 2012/13

It was moved by Councillor Nelson-Gracie, seconded by Councillor Black, that the recommendation of the Audit Committee relating to its Annual Report to Council be approved.

RESOLVED: That the Audit Committee's Annual Report 2012/13 (attached as Appendix A to the report of the Committee), which demonstrates how the Committee has discharged its duties during 2012/13, 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.

34. ORAL REPORT OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES GROUP HELD ON 19 JULY 2013 - APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSON

It was moved by Councillor Mrs Hinder, seconded by Councillor Chittenden, that the following recommendation of the General Purposes Group be approved:-

That Mrs Barbara Varney be appointed as the Independent Person until 31 July 2017.

RESOLVED: That Mrs Barbara Varney be appointed as the Independent Person until 31 July 2017.

FURTHER RESOLVED: That Mrs Dorothy Phillips, the previous Independent Person, be thanked for her services to the Council.

35. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS - MEMBERS' BROADBAND ALLOWANCE

It was moved by Councillor Moss, seconded by Councillor Barned, that the recommendation contained in the report of the Head of Policy and Communications relating to Members' broadband allowance be approved.

Amendment moved by Councillor Lusty, seconded by Thick:-

1. That no change be made to the basic allowance for Members, but Members may claim an allowance of £11.17 per month for broadband with effect from 1 August 2013 if they so wish without the requirement to supply copy invoices.
2. That the Members' Allowance Scheme be updated accordingly.

AMENDMENT CARRIED

The substantive motion was then put to the vote.

SUBSTANTIVE MOTION CARRIED

RESOLVED:

1. That no change be made to the basic allowance for Members, but Members may claim an allowance of £11.17 per month for broadband with effect from 1 August 2013 if they so wish without the requirement to supply copy invoices.
2. That the Members' Allowance Scheme be updated accordingly.

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

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

RESOLVED:

1. That the following changes be approved to reflect the wishes of the Leader of the Conservative Group:-

Community, Leisure Services and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Members

Delete Councillor Ash. Insert Councillor Mrs Parvin.

Substitute Members

Delete Councillor Mrs Parvin. Insert Councillor Ash.

Economic and Commercial Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Members

Delete Councillor Mrs Parvin. Insert Councillor Ash.

Planning Committee

Substitute Members

Insert Councillor McLoughlin.

2. That the following changes be approved to reflect the wishes of the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group:-

Community, Leisure Services and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Members

Delete Councillor Beerling. Insert Councillor Vizzard.

Substitute Members

Delete Councillor Mrs Grigg. Insert Councillor Beerling.

Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Members

Delete Councillor Harwood. Insert Councillor Chittenden.

Substitute Members

Delete Councillor Chittenden. Insert Councillor Harwood.

37. MRS ANGELA WOODHOUSE - HEAD OF POLICY AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Council congratulated Mrs Woodhouse on her appointment as Head of Policy and Communications.

38. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.15 p.m.