

# Ashford Borough Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Ashford Borough Council held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **16<sup>th</sup> May 2013**.

## Present:

His Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor R K Davidson (Chairman);

Cllrs. Aaby, Apps, Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Bell, Bennett, Mrs Blanford, Britcher, Buchanan, Burgess, Chilton, Clark, Clarkson, Clokie, Davey, Davison, Mrs Dyer, Galpin, Heyes, Mrs Heyes, Hicks, Hodgkinson, Howard, Mrs Hutchinson, Link, Marriott, Miss Martin, Mrs Martin, Mortimer, Robey, Shorter, Sims, Smith, Wedgbury.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting: -

- (i) The Reverend Alan Dinnie said prayers.
- (ii) His Worshipful the Mayor said he would like to welcome Mr Richard Collins from Ashford Hospital Community Radio and advised that he had agreed that Mr Collins could record the meeting for broadcast at a future date.
- (iii) His Worshipful the Mayor also welcomed Councillor Jane Martin as the newest Member of Ashford Borough Council and former Mayors Mr Allen Wells and Mrs Palma Laughton who were also present this evening.

## Apologies:

Cllrs. Adley, Claughton, Feacey, French, Michael, Taylor, Yeo.

## Also Present:

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Member Services and Scrutiny Manager, Assistant Communications Officer, Senior Member Services and Scrutiny Support Officer.

## 1 Election of Mayor

Councillor Howard nominated Councillor David Smith for election as Mayor of Ashford Borough Council for the forthcoming municipal year.

This was seconded by Councillor Sims.

Councillor Howard said he would firstly like to congratulate Councillor Davidson for his outstanding Mayoral year. He said his actions around the Borough had been exemplary and he knew that there were numerous people, groups and charities that would always be grateful for the work he had done for them. Now there was a considerable challenge for this Council – to fill the position that he would vacate this evening, but Councillor Howard believed he knew a man who could meet this challenge.

Councillor Howard said that unknown to many people in the Borough or even the World, there was a day of significant importance. On that day in 1904 the Daily

C  
160513

Mirror began publishing and in 1924 the Daily Express published the first crossword. In 1936 on this day the first TV broadcast of the BBC took place and in 1959 the first section of the M1 was opened. Also, this day in 2000 saw the first crew of astronauts arriving on board the International Space Station. The 2<sup>nd</sup> November was that day that connected those events in our history. It was 1945 though that was the most significant of them all and not because it was the day Costa Rica officially joined the United Nations. The reason was that on that day a small baby boy was born and given the name David Smith. He joined the ranks of other great men who were born that year including Steve Martin, Eric Clapton, Tom Selleck, Bob Marley and "The Fonz" himself Henry Winkler. Perhaps in honour of this the Council should replace the Mayor's robe with a leather jacket, but if not at least we could be assured that with this Councillor's sense of humour 'Happy Days' were sure to remain in the Borough!

He said that after doing a lot of growing and learning, in 1961 Councillor David Smith finished his studies at Harvey Grammar School in Folkestone with 7 O Levels and was able to move in to his working life as a Trainee Accountant at Folkestone Council. After six years at Folkestone a well-qualified David was successful in becoming a Senior Accountant at Ashford Urban District Council. This first arrival in 1967 obviously proved an excellent fit because over the next 29 years David progressed through the ranks moving from a Senior Accountant, to a Principal Accountant, Principal Auditor, Principal Administrator and finally rising to the position of Principal Contract and Administration Manager. It was at this stage in 1996 that David decided to retire at the age of 50, something that those of Councillor Howard's age could only dream of, to have a long and relaxing time. However, obviously getting bored quickly, only a year later David went back in to the world of work at the London Scottish Finance Company, first as a Representative and then becoming a Branch Manager. In 2005 David decided at the age of 60 that this time retirement looked a bit more attractive, however it once again failed to launch and not even a year had gone by when David was found working as a self-employed Finance Manager and Consultant. Councillor Howard said he was pleased to report though that in 2007, at the third time of asking, David successfully retired.

However, before his loving and loyal wife Christine could start booking the holidays, much to the family's probable confusion at this point as to whether David was retiring or not, he started a whole new career as the Independent Borough Councillor for South Willesborough and it was a job he had carried out with the greatest integrity. Councillor David Smith had been a dedicated community leader who seemed to personally know every resident and was always on top of any issues that may be raised in his Ward. Councillor David Smith had also been an invaluable Member of this Council being able to provide many years of experience when he sat as an Officer in the Civic Centre. Colleagues had all enjoyed his stories and looked forward to him using those experiences to enhance the Mayoralty.

Councillor Howard said this was a man who was an inspirational figure and he stood before colleagues as proof as to how inspiring he could be. From the moment he had first seen this Councillor he said – "I must have that shirt and tie combination!" The bright colours that amazed and the patterns that were certainly ahead of their time. This Councillor had made his mark and had already established a tradition at Christmas where colleagues all waited to hear what festive tune would be played that year from his ensemble of ties. This Councillor's natural sense of humour was tremendous and was sure to raise smiles with anybody who came into contact with him.

He said that a connection both David and himself had was their passion for American sports and cars. David was an avid watcher of a sport where mostly men went round and round in circles all day long just for it all to change just before the finish - no, not the BBC Parliament channel or C-SPAN, but NASCAR and Indy Car! However, he must apologise as he had tried but they were not changing the Mayoral car to a Cadillac.

It was important to mention at this stage that the Mayor should always have a good support network around them and at David's side would be his most loyal and loving supporter Christine. She had always been there and could often be seen at Council events already. He was sure that all Members would agree that Christine would be an excellent Mayoress.

Councillor Howard said that the Borough was set for another exciting year ahead with Ashford acting as a beacon of excellence to the rest of the Country. With the arrival of John Lewis at Home, the development of the new Panorama building, the introduction of a new recycling service, and the opening of Conningbrook Park to name just a few, the Council needed a Mayor whose heart was dedicated to Ashford and believed in its future success and in Councillor David Smith he believed they had a man who would declare Ashford was 'Open for Business'. He said that David had been in this building serving the residents of the Borough for over 30 years, longer than nearly anyone, and was a great leader of his community. For this alone they owed him thanks. He had probably been in every part of the building and sat on every seat except one and he hoped the Council would resolve that today. He said it gave him great pleasure to nominate Councillor David Smith for the post of Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the year 2013/14.

Councillor Sims began by congratulating Councillor Davidson and Daphne on their wonderful year in Office and being entertained each Thursday trying to work out which page of the Kentish Express their photograph was going to be on!

He said it was difficult to add to what Councillor Howard had said about David but being a relatively new Councillor he felt distinctly honoured to have been asked to second the nomination. He had wondered what to say as he did not know David's history and had only known him for two and a half years. He thought back to the first time he had met him and his good wife Christine and it was in a pub which was often a good start! They had all got on well and things were great but it was only afterwards thinking back on the experience that he realised he had met a person who could really affect you, because he had bought all of the drinks and that was most unusual as any of Councillor Sims' colleagues could tell you! In thinking up something to say to second the motion this evening, Councillor Sims said he had asked around for anecdotes and humorous tales about David from those who had known him longer. We all made faux pas in life but he had been unable to unearth any such stories about David. Being a cynical person, Councillor Sims said he may suggest that this was because he had been at the Council so long and come through Audit, he knew all of the skeletons in the closet and 'where all of the bodies were buried!' However he preferred to believe it was because people just didn't have a bad word to say about David, not only because he was a large, imposing and threatening person, but in all seriousness because they had the greatest affection and appreciation for him as a Ward Member, Council Officer, friend, neighbour and Trade Unionist. Councillor Sims said he believed Ashford would be very well served in the 12 months to come by its new Mayor Councillor David Smith. He therefore seconded the motion.

C  
160513

There were no other nominations.

**Resolved:**

**That Councillor David Smith be elected Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the Municipal Year 2013/2014.**

## **2 Declaration of Acceptance of Office by the Mayor**

Councillor Smith made his Declaration of Acceptance of Office. The retiring Mayor, the Chief Executive, the newly elected Mayor and his Chaplain then left the meeting. Upon their return, having been invested with his chains of office His Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor David Smith assumed the Chair.

## **3 Appointment of Mayor's Chaplain**

His Worshipful the Mayor said that his Chaplain for the coming year would be the Reverend John MacKenzie. The Reverend MacKenzie then said prayers.

## **4 Vote of Thanks by the Mayor for his Election**

His Worshipful the Mayor began by thanking fellow Councillors for electing him to the position of the Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the year 2013/14, and for the kind words of the mover and seconder. One thing that had only dawned on him that morning was that today was the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Dambusters raid and it was something special that his Election as Mayor coincided with the date of that remarkable event. This was something that he had been fascinated by as a child, so it had been a pleasure to discover that this morning.

He said he wanted to give his thanks to the Members of this Council and the previous one for all their support, friendship and camaraderie. It had been a great experience coming in to this Council Chamber. He also thanked friends and colleagues in the public gallery for coming this evening and their support in his roles as a work colleague, Trade Unionist and as a Councillor representing them meant a lot to him and it was a pleasure to see them tonight.

His Worshipful the Mayor said he had chosen two charities to support this year. The first of these was Citizens Rights for Older People (CROP) and he had invited Mr Frank Doyle, one of the Trustees, to say a few words to explain what CROP was all about. Mr Doyle congratulated the Mayor and Mayoress on their appointment and said that CROP was a free and independent advocacy service for older people in Kent. They were based in Lenham and Canterbury and covered the administrative area of Kent County Council. They helped older people in their own homes to maximise benefits, complete paperwork for them, help with pension credits and financial matters, housing matters and interface with Local Councils. They could also offer help in dealing with complaints, family conflicts and negotiating care or moving to sheltered accommodation. It was a free and independent service and whilst they did receive some funding from KCC they also relied on charitable donations. They were lucky enough last year to achieve the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service which was something they were proud of and they were thankful that the Mayor had selected them as one of his charities this year. The Mayor said his second charity was Folly. Councillor Bennett had always said that when he became Mayor Councillor Smith would support something involving "fur" or "feathers", but he was

wrong as Folly was about “fur and feathers”. They were different from most rescue centres as they looked after injured wildlife such as foxes who had been hit by cars, hedgehogs, pigeons etc. The Mayor said he had first come across them when he and Christine had nursed an injured pigeon back to health but it had become too humanised to be released in to the wild and Folly had helped him find a place where it could live out the rest of its life. He had found out that the pigeon now lived in someone’s private home - in an aviary during the day and the living room at night! Folly set up about 25 years ago when the founder took a hedgehog home and it all started from there, overtaking their house, garden and everything and they now had a purpose built animal hospital on an old nursery site. He and Christine had always supported them and he was pleased to say they would be his other charity this year.

His Worshipful the Mayor also wanted to remind everyone that his Civic Service, at St Mary’s Church Willesborough, would be on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> June at 10am and he hoped to see as many friends and colleagues there as possible. Finally, he thanked colleagues again for his election and said he would do his best to do what colleagues had suggested he could do.

## **5 Vote of Thanks to the Retiring Mayor and Mayoress**

Councillor Chilton began his speech by congratulating Councillor Smith on his appointment as Mayor of the Borough.

Councillor Chilton said it gave him great pleasure to propose the vote of thanks to the outgoing Mayor, Councillor Bob Davidson and his wife and outgoing Mayoress Daphne. He said if he may be permitted he would like to start by expressing a note of personal frustration at Bob’s departure and he thought that frustration was shared by many others in the Council Chamber and beyond. The frustration arrived from a rather unique experience. Over the past year they had all endured a complex and varied linguistic and paralinguistic journey, one unique to Local Government. This journey had thoroughly challenged and sometimes confused the ‘Nancy Southerners’. Now, just as some had just started to make sense of those great scot tones he so brilliantly espoused, Bob’s term as Mayor was coming to an end *‘Ach ne what a great injustice!’*

Bob and Daphne had attended in excess of 400 events over the past year despite the moratorium on the Mayoralty, 24 of which were in the Jubilee Week alone. They had both had an action packed year as Mayor and Mayoress of Ashford and Her Majesty the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee and the Olympic and Paralympic Games had been some of the highlights of their Mayoral year. He thought it was fair to say that it had been a unique Mayoral year and a year that was unlikely to be repeated with all its variety, pomp and ceremony and the many momentous events. To have been Mayor and Mayoress over the past year must have been a truly remarkable and memorable experience. As well as the great national events, Bob and Daphne had participated in many events here in Ashford. For example, members of the public might have been alarmed to see the Mayor of Ashford wandering about the town in his pyjamas one evening. Fear not, he had not completely lost the plot at that stage he was joining the Pyjama Walk along with Daphne raising funds for charity. Bob and Daphne had entertained dozens of Scouts and Girl Guide groups with hot dogs and ice cream in the Mayors Parlour – an excellent way of introducing democracy and local government to children in the Borough.

Councillor Chilton said that Bob, being “good looking and so refined”, was partial to a big spender, because when a Shirley Bassey impersonator asked for a twirl around

the dance floor at an event recently, Bob was very obliging. So obliging in fact, that he would not be surprised to see him strutting his stuff on Strictly Come Dancing before too long! It was also not a well-known fact that Bob and Daphne were in fact regulars down at Liquid & Hustle nightclub on a Friday and Saturday night. It had become known to him late one evening, or rather early one morning, as he emerged from one of those clubs to his utter horror, shock and amazement that there stood the Mayor and Mayoress of Ashford. As he slipped past, doing his best not to be noticed and at the same time remaining balanced in a relatively decent and sober state, he observed that all of the girls were with the Mayor. "Damn cheek" he thought, "what did he have that I didn't?" Then it hit him, a big bit of bling round his neck and a nice big silver mace! Joking aside, the work of the street pastors was something Bob and Daphne, and indeed all Members, supported and admired.

He said that as Members, if they valued the Mayoralty it was vitally important that they continued to support it by attending functions and events. He had personally enjoyed attending some of those events this year and the highlight was certainly the Burns Night where they had the unique experience of the Chairman of Kent County Council dancing the Ceilidh. He said Bob must also be commended for one thing in particular this year - facing a mighty foe, a staunch individual who sometimes tormented the Cabinet, much to his delight. Mr Relf had been a prominent figure of their proceedings and he thought certainly the relationship that had developed between Mr Relf and Bob was something that would certainly be remembered! Again though in all seriousness, in presiding over their proceedings he had always been courteous, inclusive and fair and they certainly thanked him for that.

Councillor Chilton said that this year Bob and Daphne, with the support of their fundraiser Mary Ashley, had raised in excess of £15,000 for their charities. A special mention and thanks was due to Mary for all her efforts and support. He thought it was the regular appearance of the Mayor's tombola at community events that ensured this staggering amount was raised. The Mayor's charities would benefit greatly from those funds. Homestart Ashford would be able to train some volunteers it needed to continue its work. Ashford Arthritis Care would be able to continue to support elderly people in need in the villages and Headway Ashford would receive support for its sensory garden. In these times of austerity, charities were having to do more work than ever and thus the funds raised would go some way to assisting those charities here in Ashford.

He said that Bob had achieved a tremendous amount this year and all the way through he had had the support of the outgoing Mayoress Daphne. He was confident that staff would certainly miss Daphne, as the once a month sausage and bacon butty round had become a popular treat that all enjoyed. He thought the Cabinet was going to have to find funds somewhere to ensure this great tradition continued and that butties stayed on the menu! Special mention must also be made for Daphne completing the 10K run – a great achievement that supported the fundraising objectives.

Councillor Chilton said that as Bob and Daphne's Mayoral Year now closed they could look back with some pride at what had been achieved. They had ensured Ashford remained on the map and had promoted the town and its people at every opportunity. Their hard work had paid off and their charities would benefit enormously from the funds they had raised. He knew they were now off for a well deserved break to the United States and when they returned he looked forward to welcoming Bob back to the opposition benches. He knew Councillor Adby would be particularly pleased to see his group double in size in a moment, bucking the

national trend of Lib Dem decline! Their support for all causes and community events had been tremendous. The fact that virtually no invitations had been declined was a credit to their commitment to the Office of Mayor and to the Borough and people of Ashford. He thanked them once again for all they had done.

Councillor Davison said he wanted to first congratulate His Worshipful the Mayor on his elevation to the Mayoralty. He said it was a privilege to second the vote of thanks to this most 'patrician' of Mayors and his Mayoress. They had promoted the name and interests of Ashford in so many areas and it had been a popular and successful Mayoralty. He was happy to second the vote of thanks.

## **6 Response by the Retiring Mayor**

Councillor Davidson began his response by congratulating the Mayor on his appointment as the Mayor of Ashford. He said he also wanted to apologise as at the start of the meeting he had not mentioned former Mayor John Holland who was also present this evening and who he had not spotted.

What a year it had been but like all good things it had to come to an end. He said it had been a great privilege to be the Mayor of the Borough during such a wonderful and exciting year. He had had the pleasure of witnessing events such as the Olympic Games and the Diamond Jubilee, which had spawned so many occasions such the Olympic torch visiting Ashford, the International Youth Games at the Julie Rose Stadium and their various Fun Days, the lighting of the beacon and the school children's torch parade. In addition he had been part of the Stour Valley Arts projects, a Royal visit, meeting the new Archbishop of Canterbury, attending graduation ceremonies, setting up the commemorations for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of Ashford in partnership with Highworth School and so many other events in and around the Borough. Who could have asked for any more?

Councillor Davidson said it was also an honour to be part of the Civic Awards ceremony, with awards given to unsung heroes, all of whom deserved to be recognised for their input in to the community on a voluntary basis. The awards scheme also rewarded members of staff who had given the Council 25 years of service and these individuals also deserved to be recognised for their commitment and input to the organisation. There were also awards recognising the best designed buildings in Ashford and it was pleasing to see that recognition of such a high standard.

He said that having been a Councillor for 22 years one of his highlights had been being given the honour by the Housing Department of opening three new social housing developments and having two plaques and a tree put in place to indicate that he had opened these wonderful developments. Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal did say in conversations with the Mayor that she was well aware that Ashford had taken a lead in relation to social housing developments and congratulated the Council for moving forward. Many developers had also indicated to him that Ashford as a Council were good partners in such new developments. He had also been given the honour of opening the new orchard garden at the Watercress Fields Community Project as well as planting a tree to commemorate the opening. Plum, cherry, pear and apple trees were all planted and ready to blossom and may bear some fruit this year. He hoped this project would be taken on further in the future and there were many more areas that could benefit from such a scheme.

C  
160513

Councillor Davidson said he felt he had achieved his goal of meeting business people, volunteers, community organisations and young people from across the Borough. He had visited schools, youth clubs and entertained young people in the Mayor's Parlour, demonstrating to them the role of the Borough Council. Over 300 young people had come to the Parlour and the visits had all been finished up with hot dogs and ice cream. He wondered why he had received so many requests!

As he had said at the beginning of this response it had been an amazing year. He had to say thank you to Daphne who had been with him all the way and enjoyed her role as the Mayoress. She had always ensured he was ready on time, dressed for the occasion and supported him throughout. He also had to thank Mary Ashley who had taken on the role of his charity fundraiser throughout the year. Thanks also had to go to Andrea Collard, his PA, who had ensured that everything was in order, given him direction in all that he had done and of course to Sandra, his Chauffer, who had ensured he always got to events on time and provided help and assistance when needed. He also wanted to thank Colin Leek who was not only the Mace Bearer but also gave up his time to play an important role when young people visited the Chamber, as well as the Monitoring Centre colleagues who had supported him throughout the year as well as everyone else in the Chamber tonight and the many others in the Borough who had been involved and supported him as well in his year as Mayor in one form or another.

Finally, he said that with regard to his three nominated charities, he could confirm that the figure now raised had risen to over £16,000 with still more to come in. So many people had helped him to achieve this. His only negative comment as outgoing Mayor was that it was important to try a bit harder to promote the Office of Mayor as being Mayor of the whole Borough of Ashford and not being seen by others outside the Borough as the Mayor of Ashford town. It was important to recognise that Ashford was the largest Borough in Kent and covered a wide area. Once again he wanted to thank everybody for supporting him and wished the new Mayor the best for the future.

## **7 Election and Appointment of Deputy Mayor**

Councillor Galpin proposed that "Councillor John Link be elected Deputy Mayor for the Borough of Ashford for the ensuing year".

This was seconded by Councillor Davidson.

There were no other nominations.

**Resolved:**

**That Councillor John Link be elected Deputy Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the Municipal Year 2013/2014.**

## **8 Declaration of Acceptance of Office by the Deputy Mayor**

Councillor Link made his Declaration of Acceptance of Office. The Deputy Mayor was then invested with his chains of office.



## 9 Minutes

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 18<sup>th</sup> April 2013 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## 10 Selection and Constitutional Review Committee - 7<sup>th</sup> May 2013

Councillor Clarkson proposed that “the Minutes of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on the 7<sup>th</sup> May 2013 be approved and adopted”.

This was seconded.

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on the 7<sup>th</sup> May 2013 be approved and adopted subject to the following:-**

- (i) Member Training Panel – Councillor Mortimer be appointed as Vice-Chairman.**

## 11 Cabinet – 9<sup>th</sup> May 2013

Councillor Clarkson proposed that “the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2013 be approved and adopted or noted as appropriate”.

This was seconded.

Councillor Marriott referred to Minute No. 430 – Energy Saving Budget and Proposal for the Civic Centre. He said that the Minutes stated that the initial cost would be £60,000 but he considered that the project could be delivered for £40,000 so he believed it would be helpful to amend the sum to that figure to provide improved transparency for the informed community for this excellent project work.

Councillor Clarkson said he was grateful to his colleague for his intervention on this matter and he had been in communication with him beforehand, but the Cabinet Minutes showed that this was an indicative figure, allowing the Council to have enough money in reserves to complete this programme. They had not yet tendered for this work, nor had they yet specified the work needed. He had said in his communications with the Councillor that he was minded to refer this matter to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee because this Council had a great reputation for prudence in its financial management. They had not invested in Icelandic Banks, they had one of the lowest Council Taxes in the country, they had sound balances, and they were renowned for financial prudence as evidenced by the District Auditor’s annual report. This particular proposal had been supported by all parties in the Chamber and he had already spoken to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and he could assure his colleague that the matter would be reviewed by them and not a penny more would be paid from reserves than was absolutely necessary. Equally, the Council had to be prudent and allow sufficient reserves to be able to carry out this important ‘spend to save’ work which

C  
160513

would save them a lot of money, energy costs and reduce the Council's carbon footprint in the long run. There was no value in amending the Minute as if there were insufficient funds in reserves to carry out the work they would have to go through the process again which would cost a great deal more money.

Councillor Marriott said he was happy that the point had been made that the job could be done for £40,000 and that the diligence of the Officers would provide that so he was not proposing any amendment to the Minutes.

**Resolved:**

**That subject to the expiry of the period for which decisions arising from the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2013 may be called in, i.e. 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013, the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2013 be approved and adopted or noted as appropriate.**

---

(DS)  
MINS:CXXX1220.doc

---

Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Danny Sheppard  
Telephone: 01233 330349 Email: [danny.sheppard@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:danny.sheppard@ashford.gov.uk)  
Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: [www.ashford.gov.uk/committees](http://www.ashford.gov.uk/committees)