

# Ashford Borough Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Ashford Borough Council held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **18<sup>th</sup> July 2013**

## Present:

His Worshipful the Mayor, Cllr. D O Smith (Chairman);

Cllrs. Adley, Apps, Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Bell, Bennett, Mrs Blanford, Britcher, Buchanan, Burgess, Chilton, Clarkson, Claughton, Clokie, Davey, Davidson, Davison, Feacey, Galpin, Heyes, Mrs Heyes, Hicks, Hodgkinson, Howard, Mrs Hutchinson, Link, Marriott, Mrs Martin, Michael, Mortimer, Robey, Sims, Taylor, Wedgbury, Yeo.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting:-

1. His Worshipful the Mayor asked Members to remain standing in silence for the late Thomas Albert Richards who was the representative for the Ashford Biddenden Ward between 1973 and 1987 and Ashford's Twelfth Mayor between 1985 and 1986 and who had recently passed away.
2. The Reverend MacKenzie said prayers.

## Apologies:

Cllrs. Adby, Clark, Mrs Dyer, French, Miss Martin, Shorter.

## Also Present:

Chief Executive, Head of Planning and Development, Head of Legal & Democratic Services, Head of Cultural and Project Services, Member Services and Scrutiny Manager.

## 95 Exempt or Confidential Information

The Mayor asked whether any item should be dealt with in private because of the likely disclosure of exempt or confidential information. There were none.

## 96 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Davison	Announced an "Other Interest" as he knew a number of people who lived in the area covered by the Chilmington Green Area Action Plan.	98(b)

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Interest</b>	<b>Minute No.</b>
Hicks	Announced an "Other Interest" as she was a resident of Magpie Hall Road, part of which was located in the Chilmington Green Area Action Plan.	98(b)
	Announced an "Other Interest" as she had been appointed the Council's representative on the Ashford Leisure Trust.	98(a) and (b)
Hodgkinson	Announced an "Other Interest" as she was a member of the Great Chart with Singleton Parish Council and that she also knew several people located in the Chilmington Green Area Action Plan area.	98(b)
Wedgbury	Announced an "Other Interest" as he knew a number of people who lived in the area covered by the Chilmington Green Area Action Plan.	98(b)

Councillor Hodgkinson said that she would like to add her wishes to those being expressed from around the world to Nelson Mandela on his 95<sup>th</sup> birthday and said she hoped that the meeting would be 67 minutes long to reflect his 67 years of public service.

## **97 Announcements**

### **(a) Mayor**

His Worshipful the Mayor explained that the Deputy Leader, Councillor Claughton had arranged a charity cricket match for him and said that he would not be playing himself! The match would be between a Mayor's 11 and Wye Cricket Club on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013. He explained that the match would be played over 40 overs and he thanked Councillor Claughton for all the hard work he had done in making the arrangements.

### **(b) The Leader**

The Leader explained that he would be happy to support the Mayor's cricket match, but he hastened to add that he too would not be playing, nor had he been selected!

The Leader then said he would like to take an opportunity to update colleagues on a number of recent developments. He said that in recent years whilst other areas had felt the impact of a national recession Ashford had, under the current Administration, bucked the trend and continued to grow at a steady rate. Ashford had recorded positive economic growth at 0.07%, whilst the south east of England was down about 3%. Ashford had seen around 450 new homes built on year on year, and through the recession key retailers and businesses had still chosen Ashford as a place to invest, expand and nurture their businesses. The latest position (2008-

2011) showed that Great Britain suffered a -2% decline, the south east showed no change whatsoever in that period, whereas Ashford had seen an increase in employment of 4%. This equated to an average of 700 jobs per year through the recession. He said the source was the Business Register and Employment Survey.

The Leader then explained that a new Debenhams, Waitrose and Bupa Care Home had been built in Ashford and there had been extensions to both Tesco and Sainsbury's Superstores and the Multiplex Cinema Complex. John Lewis had announced that week that they were in the process of recruiting 125 new jobs at their "At Home" Store which was on target to open before the end of the year. The Leader said that benefits of investment would be seen quickly in the local economy and this was further proof of that. He welcomed a retailer with such a strong reputation for quality and considered it was a real fillip for Ashford. Clearly Ashford was open for business. The new John Lewis "At Home" store would complement Ashford's existing retail offer, giving its residents more choice to spend within the Borough and attract visitors. The announcement of this significant number of new jobs emphasised not only where Ashford was going, but the opportunities that were on the doorsteps for local people. The Leader said that despite all this the Council was not complacent.

There were ambitious plans to double the size of the Designer Outlet Centre to attract some 7.2 million visitors. The Leader considered it should be seen that Ashford was a place with vision and determination to provide an atmosphere where businesses were going to thrive, especially as the Borough moved out of these trying times.

The Leader then explained that by working behind the scenes with the Chief Executive, it was hoped to kick start developments to bring more life and energy into the town centre and he said he hoped to be in a position to say more about this very shortly. He explained that he had recently formed two new advisory committees, one of which was the Education and Vocational Skills Advisory Committee, under the chairmanship of Councillor Clokie. This had been established with the main purpose of securing an Ashford based college for further education. Government, Kent County Council and others had been left in no doubt of Ashford's sheer determination in this regard. The Leader said that the Administration was completely focused on the provision of a college on this iconic Elwick Road/Station Road site by the International Station. He said that the Administration fully understood that such a venture needed real understanding of the holistic nature of both academic and vocational activities and the need to be integrated in such a way that they were not just directed to enrich the individual student but also to impart knowledge and appropriate skill sets needed to move into adulthood well equipped to contribute to the economic social life.

The Leader then explained that some Members had recently had a tour of the Conningbrook Lakes area to see first-hand the wonderful opportunity the Council had to create a stunning, family orientated country park offering a variety of leisure and water based activities for residents and visitors alike. He explained that all had been left in no doubt that this project would be an absolute gem for the Borough and would attract visitors from far and wide to enjoy the beautiful wildlife and leisure activities on offer covering in the region of 200 acres.

Another flagship project for the Borough would be the remodelling of the Sheltered Housing Scheme at Farrow Court. The project would include an additional 60 accommodation units meaning Farrow Court would provide up to 100 high quality units, including learning disability units, recuperative care units in a newly designed day care centre, with communal facilities as well as hairdressers and a restaurant. He said that not only would this be the catalyst of where the Council were taking the provision for the Borough's older residents across its sheltered accommodation schemes, but it would also make other providers of sheltered schemes across the Country take note of what could be achieved. He said that the Council prided itself on the quality and standard of its new homes, but this would be the best of the best.

The Leader then referred to the new Waste Collection Service and advised that the Council's wish to improve recycling rates had taken a major step forward in the previous week as it had embarked on rolling out the new recycling service in the borough. He said that inevitably when making such fundamental changes, there would be some issues and this had been the case, but the Council, alongside its contractor, were working hard to resolve those issues.

Nearly 200,000 bins across 52,000 homes in the Borough had been rolled out, and he explained that this week Biffa had collected over 100 tonnes of materials which was more than double the amount normally expected to see in a typical week. The Council had also been endeavouring to give a bespoke service as far as possible from the outset. Although the volumes of recycling were far greater than had been anticipated, the Leader considered it was a good sign that its residents were so keen to recycle as much as they could. Biffa had put on an additional 7 vehicles above the 10 provided which had meant a 70% increase to get the scheme underway. Notwithstanding these facts he said that he wished to publically apologise to the residents for the inconvenience some of them had experienced and explained that if one resident was inconvenienced then it affected all those within the Borough. The vast majority had however had their bin collections, and that had gone well. He said that special measures were now in place to speedily rectify any further deficiencies. Garden waste recycling had been very popular within the region of 6,000-7,000 residents signed up already, and this figure was rising on a daily basis. When introducing such big changes he said it always took some time for everyone to get used to the arrangements and the Leader said that he was confident that after a short while things would settle down. The Leader said that one further and interesting point had emerged for which he considered credit could be taken. He explained that as officers and contractors were now visiting properties for the first time, it had been possible to identify people's needs better and he explained that the Council's assisted service, which the Council was proud of, was currently provided to 450 residents. However since the roll out elderly and infirm had been identified who needed more assistance and this figure had now risen to 1,150, a 155% rise and the Council was now able to help them in terms of collections and recycling.

The Leader then said that he read with interest that litter strewn across the Lower High Street on Sunday, 6<sup>th</sup> July had been caused by the bins being emptied by alcohol fuelled revellers and by litter louts. He explained that very soon the Council would have the new Town Centre Action Team in place and it would be considering how it would be possible to enforce more responsible behaviour.

In conclusion the Leader said that he had agreed with the editor of the Kentish Express that he would have a regular Leaders' column. He said that it would be a great opportunity for him to speak to residents, businesses and visitors to Ashford. It also gave an opportunity to more directly share with them the positive developments taking place in the borough and to confirm and recognise the difficulties the borough faced in these trying times. The column would be fortnightly on an alternate basis with the fortnightly column by the MP, Damien Green.

The Mayor said that in terms of refuse and recycling he had received an email from one of his residents which said "our Dusties need the biggest pat on the back!" The resident had explained that he and his neighbour's collection had been missed by a day, however he had said that all residents had been recycling for the past month so it was effectively a double load.

## **98 Cabinet - 13<sup>th</sup> June and 11<sup>th</sup> July 2013**

The report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, which had been tabled, clarified the procedure for the consideration of the Cabinet Minutes.

### **(a) Cabinet 13<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

In moving the Minutes the Leader drew attention to Minute No. 33 – Trading Companies, which had been amended by Minute No. 76 of the 11<sup>th</sup> July Cabinet Meeting and said that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had called-in the original decision and in light of their very helpful debate a number of recommendations had been put forward and had been readily accepted by the Cabinet.

#### **Resolved:**

- That (i) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 2013 be received and noted with the exception of Minute Nos. 32 and 33.**
- (ii) Minute No. 32 be approved and adopted.**
- (iii) Minute No. 33 be approved and adopted subject to the recommendations set out in Minute No. 76 of the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2013 Cabinet Meeting.**

### **(b) Cabinet 11<sup>th</sup> July 2013**

Councillor Davison referred to Minute No. 77 – Chilmington Green Area Action Plan (AAP) – Inspector's Report and Proposed Adoption of the AAP and said that residents within his Ward affected by the Chilmington development were strongly against it. In particular they were angry at the loss of productive farm land when there were many brownfield sites not yet built on. Councillor Davison said that for those reasons he would vote against the acceptance of the recommendations in Minute No. 77 and he requested that his vote be recorded.

**Resolved:**

**That subject to the expiry of the period by which decisions arising from the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2013 may be called, i.e. 24<sup>th</sup> July 2013:-**

- (i) The Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2013 be received and noted with the exception of Minute Nos. 76, 77, 79, 80, 81 and 86.**
- (ii) Minute Nos. 76, 77, 79, 80, 81 and 86 be approved and adopted.**

In accordance with Procedure Rule 15.5 Councillor Davison asked for it to be recorded that he had voted against the Recommendations in Minute No. 77.

## **99 Audit Committee - 27<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee held on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2013 be approved and adopted.**

## **100 Selection and Constitutional Review Committee – 13<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 2013 be approved and adopted.**

## **101 Audit Committee – Annual Report 2012/13**

**Resolved:**

**That the Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2012/13 be received and noted.**

## **102 Overview and Scrutiny – Annual Report**

**Resolved:**

**That the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report be received and noted.**

## **103 Nelson Mandela – 95<sup>th</sup> Birthday**

His Worshipful the Mayor referred to the comments made earlier in the meeting by Councillor Hodgkinson and he invited her to speak further on this issue.

Councillor Hodgkinson explained that a friend of hers had spent many days outside South Africa House in the late 1980's and therefore she had written to her mother the day Nelson Mandela had walked free saying that whilst her mother had had her "Kennedy moment" she had now her "Mandela moment" which was one of the greatest days of her life. Councillor Hodgkinson considered that the work Nelson Mandela had done was fantastic and she believed that one of the greatest photographs was of Mr Mandela handing the Rugby World Cup to the Springboks Captain whilst he was wearing a Springboks jersey. Councillor Hodgkinson considered that perhaps through the United Nations or South Africa House, it would be wonderful if the Council could send a message of support to him.

Councillor Claughton said he just wished to add briefly to the comments made by Councillor Hodgkinson. He explained that after witnessing the famous walk Mr Mandela had made with his then wife, Winnie Mandela upon his release from prison, and in particular the reactions of people with whom he had watched this occasion on the television, he understood what he meant to a great many people. He said he considered Mr Mandela to be an extraordinary human being and that he would certainly support the Council sending a message of support to Mr Mandela.

Members signified their support for a letter being sent by the Mayor on behalf of the Borough Council to Mr Mandela.

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