

# Ashford Borough Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Ashford Borough Council held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **15<sup>th</sup> May 2014**.

## Present:

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

Cllrs. Aaby, Apps, Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Bennett, Mrs Blanford, Britcher, Buchanan, Chilton, Clark, Clarkson, Claughton, Clokie, Davidson, Davison, Mrs Dyer, Feacey, Galpin, Heyes, Mrs Heyes, Hodgkinson, Howard, Mrs Hutchinson, Link, Miss Martin, Mrs Martin, Michael, Mortimer, Ovenden, Robey, Shorter, Sims, Wedgbury, Yeo.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Reverend John Mackenzie said prayers.

## Apologies:

Cllrs. Adley, Bell, Burgess, Davey, Hicks, Marriott, Taylor

## Also Present:

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

## 1 Election of Mayor

Councillor Clokie nominated Councillor John Link for election as Mayor of Ashford Borough Council for the forthcoming municipal year.

This was seconded by Councillor Davidson.

Councillor Clokie said it was always an honour to be able to propose a new Mayor for their worthy and exciting Borough. There were few Councillors better qualified to be taking up the Office of Mayor than Councillor John Link along with his wife Jill as Mayoress, who had supported John over all his years of Civic duty. John was uniquely qualified for the tasks ahead as he had been the Borough Mayor for the Municipal Year 2008/09, and he was from Tenterden, which he hoped all colleagues knew was not only part of the Borough but also known as the Jewel of the Weald. Unlike many previous Mayors, John was well trained in the arts of 'Mayorship' when Town Mayor of Tenterden for four years from 1991-1994. He was also one of the Borough's longest serving Councillors when taking into account his 24 years' service as a Parish and Town Councillor.

Councillor Clokie said that no proposal speech in this Borough was complete without its traditional history moments and he was deeply indebted to his former late lamented colleague John Kemp for the following information. Councillor John Link was born with a bang on the 5<sup>th</sup> November in the year that: - Doctors had denounced drink driving tests as 'unfair'; Southern Rail opened a station to serve Gatwick; Auguste Escoffier, the chef who invented the peach melba died at the age of 88 in Switzerland; Lawrence of Arabia died; Major Atlee was elected as Leader of the

Socialist Party; Jack Hobbs wrote his letter of resignation; Joe Louis married and then later on the same day knocked out Max Baer in the fourth round! He wondered if he needed to get home for anything! In that year a football commentator declared that English players were not up to the required standard, so few things had changed over the years! Finally the Highway Code and Driving Test came in. The main tests were reversing, stopping and starting on a hill and a compulsory question such as 'when is it permitted to sound your horn when stationary?' The answer – 'when someone is about to back in to you!'

He said that there were, however some things colleagues may not know about John. He was a Grandad twice. He enjoyed walking, which was strange for a man who had spent his life with all forms of mechanical transport and for many days, underneath them. However this may have originated from his love for Westmorland and the Lake District. John had previously told him that if he could not be found, you should send out the helicopters and he would be found on The Fells. It had been said that the food and beer in those northern climes was quite exceptional including the cream teas! Maybe something to do with the constant rain there, which we were led to believe from the TV weather forecasts never stopped. John played cricket in his younger days but unlike many cricketers he had left that for golf. Unfortunately the duties of Mayor, as John may remember, were not conducive to shrinking your handicap! In addition to all the Tenterden affiliations and Cinque Ports Mayors' Committee (he had been the first Borough Mayor to have full accreditation to that noble body), there would now be a whole new sea of voluntary and leisure organisations in the Borough (it was amazing how many there were) that may now seek him out for a visit.

In concluding Councillor Clokie said he would like to mention John's "long suffering" wife, who had for many years put up with greasy overalls and smelly walking socks! Jill would be as charming and graceful a Mayoress as any before her. She brought with her an experience to the task like no other Consort before her. He said it gave him great pleasure to nominate Councillor John Stephen Link for the post of Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the following Municipal Year.

Councillor Davidson said it was his great pleasure to second the nomination of Councillor John Link as Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the forthcoming year.

He said his thunder had been stolen a bit, but to add a little bit of detail, John had been born on Guy Fawkes Day and attended Homewood School, ending up as Head Boy which gave him a good start in life. He then began a five year apprenticeship at a local garage before assuming responsibility for it later on. He then began two years National Service, stationed with the REME at Durham. He married Jill in 1956 and now had two Grandchildren. When living in High Halden he was elected to the Parish Council and served 12 years at the start of his political career. He was Chairman of the local Village Hall Committee when they won the best kept village competition for the area. John and Jill then moved to Tenterden and John became a Tenterden Town Councillor and served as the Mayor of Tenterden for four consecutive years. He had been Chairman of Tenterden Day Centre and in that role he fought and won the battle to keep West View Hospital open, against the wishes of Kent County Council. He was also President of the Lions Club and had played football and cricket. Later in life he had taken up golf, although he thought he now struggled to get round an 18 hole course. He was however led to believe that John was going to set up a golfing challenge as part of his Mayoral year. John also liked sea fishing, but like any older person he had now moved on to his latest sporting pursuit – bowls! John also enjoyed gardening and walking, particularly walking the dog.

In conclusion, Councillor Davidson said he could think of no-one better than Councillor John Link to be Mayor. He was a good communicator, he was good at working with people, he had a lot of respect from the residents of the Tenterden area and he and Jill would be welcomed into the role. He wished them all the best for their year and said that he seconded the nomination.

There were no other nominations.

**Resolved:**

**That Councillor John Link be elected Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the Municipal Year 2014/2015.**

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

Councillor Link 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 John Link 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 Eileen Harrop, Curate of St Michaels. The Reverend Harrop then said prayers.

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

His Worshipful the Mayor began by thanking everybody present this evening - family, friends, Councillors and Officers who had all come to support him. He especially wanted to thank the Council Members for allowing him to serve another term as Mayor of the Ashford Borough. Most importantly of all he wanted to give special thanks to his wife Jill for her support and help. She had always supported him in Tenterden and in the Ashford Borough and he knew that they would work together as a team to promote the Borough wherever they went.

He said it was important not to forget the importance of the Mayor. As the Mayor people did look up to you and you were in the public eye when out and about in the Borough and elsewhere. You therefore had to try and do the right things by everyone – the young, the old, rich or poor and people of all backgrounds. Ashford was now a diverse Borough and as Mayor he would try to engage with and visit all sections of society when asked. It was important to make all feel welcome and part of the Borough – part of us now and in the future. It had been said before that Ashford was 'Best Placed' and he said he certainly believed this. He also believed what a previous Mayor had said in that Ashford was 'best placed for people'.

His Worshipful the Mayor said that as all knew Ashford was continuing to grow and there were some exciting times and developments ahead such as Conningbrook Country Park, the extension to the Outlet Centre and a proposed Railway Museum to name just a few. He hoped that as Ashford's Mayor and Mayoress they could give them their support as well as other developments that would arise during the year. Throughout their year they would endeavour to promote any new business that

wanted to come to the Borough. There were already many national stores in the Borough, but everybody knew that the market was not an easy one and they were in difficult times. They would therefore promote Ashford Borough with its good rail connections to London and Europe.

His Worshipful the Mayor said he wanted to give his thanks to Councillor David Smith and his wife Christine for all their hard work during the past year. As he well knew it certainly was hard work at times! Perhaps not manually but it was tiring and he knew David would relate. David had not always been in the best of health this past year but he had done a very good job, doing everything asked of them, except judging Ashford's babies which had been passed to him! The Ashford Borough had had excellent representatives for the last year and he was sure they enjoyed the experience and that they both left Office with many good memories. He wished them good luck and good health. In conclusion he once again thanked everyone for the honour and privilege of being Mayor of the Ashford Borough for 2014/15.

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

Councillor Chilton began his speech by congratulating Councillor Link on his appointment as Mayor of Ashford and wished him and the Mayoress all the best for their year in Office.

Councillor Chilton addressed the Mayor, Members, Officers, members of the public and comrades and said he would like to propose on behalf of the workers and the people of Ashford a motion of thanks to the outgoing Comrade First Citizen of the Borough Comrade David Smith! He said it was hard to believe how quickly the year had passed. It felt like only yesterday that David had assumed Office. Time had flown by and it had been quite a year. With countless engagements, functions, luncheons, charity events, concerts, school visits, sealing ceremonies and a parade, it had been a jam packed year - a year which David had carried off with dignity, style and good humour.

Many momentous events had taken place during David's year as Mayor. The world had lost Nelson Mandela and the Mayor had led tributes in this Council Chamber in his memory. Britain's only female Prime Minister Baroness Thatcher had passed away as had the great Tony Benn who famously "left Parliament to give more time to politics"! The world had lost many greats during David's time as Mayor, political giants, the like of whom will probably not be seen again, at least until Councillor William Howard and himself made it there!

Returning to Ashford, Councillor Chilton said he was sure David would have many stories and memories that he would keep with him for years to come. One that stuck in his mind was the role he played in rescuing the horses trapped due to rising flood waters during the bad weather a few months ago. Every day he had driven down the road next to the field where the horses were and every day the water level rose and the available land for the horses reduced. David's intervention and highlighting of their plight ensured that attention was focussed on the need to save the horses and successfully led to their rescue.

He said animals were of course David's great passion. Frogs in particular were one of his favourite animals. Councillor Chilton said he was not going to make any remarks about David being hopping mad or him 'ribbiting' on too much! However, he did think he could say that he had never seen such a variety of frog related items of

jewellery on one man. Actually he did not think he had ever seen any frog jewellery on anyone before!

Also during his time as Mayor David had attended many Concerts of the Ashford Choral Society. As Honorary President of the Society he had been a key supporter at many of their events and he knew this was something for which they were very grateful.

Councillor Chilton said David's charities for the year had focused on his passions and interests. David's charities for 2013/14 had been 'Folly Wildlife Rescue' a charity that cared for injured animals and Citizens Rights for Older People who campaigned for elderly people. Many Members of this Council would be very pleased that this particular campaign had received Mayoral support! Despite living in times where people did not necessarily have much to give, David had managed to raise a significant amount of funds. This year, at the time of this speech, £3340.50 had been raised for his respective charities, but it was important to note that cheques were still coming in and the grand total would be announced at a later date.

He said he thought it was important to also note the Council's thanks to all those who had supported David over the past year. Thanks in particular to Sandra and Andrea for ensuring David's year as Mayor passed off without a hitch and particular thanks of course to the outgoing Mayoress Christine. Christine had been a pillar of support for David and had held the office of Mayoress with similar dignity, style and good humour. Congratulations should be given to her and thanks for all the work she had done over the past year.

Councillor Chilton said he knew David had thoroughly enjoyed his year as Mayor, but he also knew he could not wait to get back onto the benches and to get stuck into the work of the Committees. They looked forward to welcoming him back as an ordinary Member and looked forward to working with him in the final year of this Council. It gave him great pleasure to propose that this Council passed a motion of thanks to Comrade Smith, The Red Mayor of Ashford!

Councillor Galpin said he would like to add his congratulations to those of Comrade Chilton on Councillor Link's appointment as Mayor!

He said he was pleased to second the motion for a vote of thanks to Councillor Smith and the 'sparkling' Christine as retiring Mayor and Mayoress. It had been a pleasure to work with them this past year and to see them in the town and out and about on various occasions. He was also heartened to hear that he didn't judge Ashford's babies as he understood that three of them were found guilty!

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

Councillor Smith said it was difficult to know how to follow Councillor Chilton's comments, but in the first instance he wanted to congratulate Councillor Link on his election as Mayor for the coming year and he knew he would continue to do a good job as all before him had tried to do. He said the old saying about 'not working with animals and children' had been relevant in him passing on the baby judging to Councillor Link as his Deputy. He had made sure he had a hospital appointment that day, but he had to confess it had been cancelled. He had only had one previous judging experience of that nature and it had been a bit of a failure so he thanked him for taking that on!

Councillor Smith said it had been an absolute honour to be Mayor of Ashford. He had been in Ashford since 1967, working for the Urban and Borough Councils from 1967 to 1996 and then worked here for a finance company before coming back to the Council as a Member in 2007. It was however tinged with a touch of poignancy because he had come in to the role following the loss of his dear friend Peter Goddard and he had been particularly sought out by the Council's late Leader Peter Wood. He still remembered the phone call and Peter's voice coming down the phone saying that they would like to put him forward as Deputy Mayor and eventually Mayor and it had left him speechless and he had had to pass the phone to Christine! He had spent some time thinking about those two when he was deciding what to say this evening.

He said it had been a great year. They had met so many different people – diverse people from diverse organisations – some of which he had never come across or knew existed. Some of these had really impressed him and he hoped he had been able to raise their profile in some way. He had been disappointed today reading one of the local papers who had splashed comments about Ashford being no good again, made by some anonymous person on the internet. This annoyed him as there was a Council here which was working hard to make Ashford go. He knew they still had to agree on some of the finer details but this was all happening and someone out there was always trying to bring the place down. He had been to places in the Borough this year like Premier Foods, who had taken over Batchelors and saved them from closure, investing huge amounts of money to keep them open, provide employment and support Ashford and this was great. He had also been to the refurbishment of the Kwik Fit and Currys/PC World stores, both companies that had pumped money into Ashford because they could see it growing and going places. John Lewis had opened this year and there were plenty of other developments coming on stream in the near future that were mentioned earlier. It just annoyed him that people continued to decry this town. Although he had been born in Folkestone he had been here 47 years now and viewed it as 'his town!'

Councillor Smith said that he had also been amazed by some of the hidden talents that the Borough had. The Choral Society he knew well known, but there were other musical groups for children, youngsters, disabled people and everyone that were doing amazing work out of village halls, sheds and garages, but they were producing great music and entertainment and he had been so impressed with what he had seen this year. Another thing that had impressed him was the pupils from the John Wallis and Ashford Schools at the Kent Young Enterprise Awards in Goudhurst. They had done really well and represented the Borough fantastically. That same week they had attended the Rock Challenge at Hastings, which was an anti-drugs, anti-bullying, anti-crime event, and some 13 and 14 year old pupils from John Wallis gave a presentation alongside 18 and 19 year olds from other areas, but they really punched above their weight and picked up a number of awards for their efforts. It had been a privileged and a pleasure to witness that and see that Ashford had schools working so hard to look after our youngsters and promoting them to the outside world.

He said on the ceremonial side, it had been a pleasure to attend events of the Lord Lieutenant of Kent and the High Sheriff. It was pleasing to note that the new High Sheriff was a resident of this Borough, Hugh Fenwick, and he had been able to go and lead his parade in Egerton which was a lovely afternoon. He had tried his best to promote Ashford and present it in a good light. Every place had things it needed to improve upon, but the Council was doing its best to improve Ashford – spending money in the right way and he hoped that would continue.

Councillor Smith said that having been the Mayor, he was expecting the usual letters of complaint, but they had been few and far between. He had however been surprised at the tenor of one of the letters which had referred to him as a “smug careerist who would never challenge the establishment”. It had been anonymous so he was not sure where that comment had come from, and he had not had an opportunity to redress it, but he considered it seriously misjudged the role of a Councillor and Mayor! Apart from that one, comments from the public had been totally supportive so he was thankful for that.

He said that his final weekend as Mayor last week had been brilliant. There had been the REME Freedom Parade which had gone off extremely well despite the wet weather, the signing of the Community Covenant in the Mayor’s Parlour, then the 40 Cheers for 40 Years Concert at St Mary’s Church in town and finally another concert in the evening so it had been a long day. The St Mary’s concert would be repeated this coming Saturday between 2.30pm - 4.30pm and as it was a free event Councillors had no excuse for not attending!

He thanked Councillor Chilton for his comments on the horses, but said it was due to the support from the Leader and the Chief Executive to find the funding that had got that situation sorted out so quickly. It was something that the people of Ashford wanted and as a Council they had responded, which was the important thing.

Finally, he said he would like to thank all of the Members and Officers of the Council for their support over the last year. He had been reminded that when he had become Mayor a year ago it was on the Anniversary of the Dambusters raid, and this year the date of Mayor Making had fallen on the anniversary of the day he had met Christine. He said he was thankful to the Council as they had given her a piece of jewellery tonight so he did not have to! In all seriousness, he did have a gift for Christine and he wished to thank her for all her help this year. Councillor Smith then asked to Christine to make a presentation on behalf of them both to his hard working Chaplain, Reverend John Mackenzie, to commemorate his year of working with them and looking after him during the past year. In conclusion he said he wished the Council another year of good fortune, hoped he could be part of working on the Groups that developed Ashford which he was passionate about and said he would support the new Mayor in whatever way he could.

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

Councillor Clarkson proposed that “Councillor Geraldine Dyer be elected Deputy Mayor for the Borough of Ashford for the ensuing year”.

This was seconded by Councillor Galpin.

There were no other nominations.

### **Resolved:**

**That Councillor Geraldine Dyer be elected Deputy Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the Municipal Year 2014/2015.**

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

Councillor Mrs Dyer made her Declaration of Acceptance of Office. The Deputy Mayor was then invested with her chains of office.

## **9 Minutes**

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 24<sup>th</sup> April 2014 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **10 Announcements**

His Worshipful the Mayor announced that his chosen charities for the year would be the Pilgrims Hospice (Ashford) and Hi-Kent, a charity for the deaf and hard of hearing.

## **11 Confirmation of Cabinet Arrangements for 2014/15**

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Clarkson, said he wished to draw Members' attention to the tabled paper which set out details of the changes he had made to the roles and responsibilities of Portfolio Holders within the Cabinet. The tabled paper also set out the names of the Lead Members he wished to appoint to assist each of the Cabinet Members so indicated. He proposed that the Council noted the Portfolio changes and agreed his appointment of Lead Members as set out below: -

Deputy Leader, Health & Wellbeing, Education & Skills and Community Safety      **Cllr Claughton**

Lead Member – Cllr Clokie

Tourism & Rural Focus, Customer Services and Waste and Recycling      **Cllr Mrs Bell**

Lead Member – Cllr Mrs Dyer

Arts & Culture, Sports & Leisure and Environment & Open Spaces      **Cllr Mrs Blanford**

Lead Member – Cllr Mrs Martin

Finance & Budget, Resource Management and Procurement      **Cllr Galpin**

Lead Member – Cllr Buchanan

Transportation, Highways & Engineering and Parking Management      **Cllr Heyes**

Lead Member – Cllr Burgess

Social Housing, Local Needs and Special Care Housing      **Cllr Hicks**

Lead Member – Cllr Bell



Information Technology, Communications and  
Social Media

**Cllr Howard**

Lead Member – Cllr Miss Martin

Planning & Development, Building Control and  
Design & Quality

**Cllr Robey**

Lead Member – Cllr Apps

Town Centre Focus, Commercial Property and  
Joint Working

**Cllr Shorter**

Lead Member – Cllr Wedgbury

**Resolved:**

**That the Council note the Portfolio changes and agree the Leader of the Council's appointment of Lead Members.**

## **12 Selection and Constitutional Review Committee - 6<sup>th</sup> May 2014**

The tabled papers set out a change to Committee Membership further to the Minutes of this Meeting.

Councillor Clarkson proposed that "the Minutes of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on the 6<sup>th</sup> May 2014 be approved and adopted".

This was seconded.

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on the 6<sup>th</sup> May 2014 be approved and adopted subject to the following:-**

- (i) Joint Transportation Board – Councillor Feacey replacing Councillor Mrs Bell as a Member of the Board.**

## **13 Cabinet – 8<sup>th</sup> May 2014**

Councillor Clarkson proposed that "the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2014 be approved and adopted or noted as appropriate".

This was seconded.

**Resolved:**

**That subject to the expiry of the period by which decisions arising from the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2014 may be called in i.e. 21<sup>st</sup> May 2014:**

- (i) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2014 be received and noted with the exception of Minute Nos. 433 and 436.**

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**(ii) Minute Nos. 433 and 436 be approved and adopted.**

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Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Danny Sheppard  
Telephone: 01233 330349 Email: [danny.sheppard@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:danny.sheppard@ashford.gov.uk)  
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