

Ashford Borough Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Ashford Borough Council held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **16th October 2014**.

Present:

His Worshipful the Mayor, Cllr. J Link (Chairman);

Cllrs. Apps, Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Bell, Bennett, Mrs Blanford, Britcher, Buchanan, Burgess, Chilton, Clark, Cloughton, Clokie, Davey, Davidson, Davison, Mrs Dyer, Feacey, Galpin, Heyes, Hicks, Hodgkinson, Howard, Marriott, Miss Martin, Mrs Martin, Michael, Mortimer, Ovenden, Robey, Sims, Taylor, Wedgbury.

Also Present:

Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Head of Planning and Development, Member Services and Scrutiny Manager.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Aaby, Adley, Clarkson, Mrs Heyes, Shorter, Yeo.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting;

1. His Worshipful the Mayor asked Members to remain standing in silence in respect of the late Roger David Greenfield who was the representative for the Tenterden South East Ward between 1983 and 1987.
2. The Reverend Eileen Harrop said prayers.
3. His Worshipful the Mayor welcomed Lady Brabourne, Countess Mountbatten to the meeting.

195 Exempt or Confidential Information

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

196 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Bartlett	Made a "Voluntary Announcement" as he lived in Sevington.	199

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Howard	Made a "Voluntary Announcement" as some members of his family lived in Kingsford Street, Mersham and that he would shortly be living in the area as well	199

197 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 17th July 2014 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

198 Announcements

(a) Deputy Leader of the Council

The Deputy Leader said that he would like to take a few moments to draw to the attention of Members a number of matters of interest and information. He said he was very pleased to report that the Willesborough Dykes foot and cycle path had opened to the public on the 19th September. The path stretched just over a mile and connected the existing cycle path in Sheepfold Lane in Park Farm directly to Ashford's Asda Store providing a safe walking/cycling route between Park Farm, Ashford International Station and the town centre making it a cheaper and healthier alternative to car travel. The Deputy Leader said that not only would the path give Park Farm residents and those beyond, an easy, traffic free route, it would also serve as a picturesque leisure path for families who wanted to explore the countryside.

The Deputy Leader explained that the Council's green credentials had also been reinforced by the news that the Borough's recycling figures continued to rise as a massive 60% of materials had been sent for recycling in June. The Borough's recycling rates had shot up from 14% to an average of around 55% following the introduction of the new service in July 2013. Residents had continued to embrace the new scheme and figures continued to improve, placing Ashford amongst the best recycling Authorities in the country.

The Council would be introducing cheaper parking fees in certain Council owned car parks across the Borough. The free and discounted parking scheme would be rolled out from Sunday, 19th October in numerous Council run car parks across Ashford and Tenterden. The parking scheme had been developed following an extensive review of car parks, research on what other towns were doing and consultation with various stakeholders. It also took into account the changes to parking technology and Government guidance. The changes aimed to support the Borough's retailers by attracting more visitors into the town centres. It was hoped that the initiative would also increase the footfall in Ashford and Tenterden which would help boost trade for local businesses and make the high streets an attractive option for new

business ventures. He also welcomed a report which identified the town as the best business location in Kent. The study, commissioned by Locate in Kent proved what the Council already knew that the advantage of locating business in Ashford outweighed any other town in Kent. It was great news and would help in the Council's efforts to drive economic growth, boost employment and generate greater prosperity for all of the residents.

The Deputy Leader said that Members who may not have already seen it might be interested to know that Ashford had received some favourable press coverage in recent weeks, with particular focus on the Borough as a place in which to invest on a regional, national and even international scale. This had included the Guardian, Le Monde, the KM Business Supplement and Kent Profile Magazine. The Deputy Leader said it was pleasing to see such positive coverage that reinforced the fact that Ashford was the place for business location. It was also clear that Ashford was emerging as a truly international town with many French businesses prospering in the town and direct Eurostar services to Lyon, Avignon and Marseille being introduced from May 2015. The Deputy Leader said that from this news it could be seen that there was a real momentum to the work the Council was undertaking to attract inward investment and a real interest in Ashford. This excellent coverage was raising the profile in, and well beyond, the Borough of Ashford as a place to invest in. The Council would be doing all it could to continue this good work and use this positive coverage as a real impetus for the betterment of the Borough's residents and its future prosperity.

The Deputy Leader said that given what he had just said it would come as no surprise to know that the Leader and the Chief Executive were not at the meeting this evening because they were in London at a property exhibition MIPIM UK promoting Ashford as an important and advantageous economic hub. He explained that his colleague, Cllr. Galpin would say a few words about this shortly. However, in giving their apologies they had asked that a short video be shown to Members to indicate just how Ashford was being marketed at the highest level to the industrial and commercial world.

Members then viewed the video.

(b) Councillor Galpin - the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Budget and Resource Management

Councillor Galpin said that the Leader had asked him to speak this evening regarding the MIPIM exhibition. He said that he had been at the event with the Chief Executive and Leader and a number of other Officers to tell the Ashford story either by the video Members had just viewed or through meeting visitors. Damian Green MP had also been at the event assisting Ashford in delivering its message. During the event he said there was a continual stream of very interested people and he had confidence that it had enhanced Ashford's reputation and in the long term he said there would be a very positive result. He said that Borough Council representatives had been collected from St. Pancras International by a new livered taxi that showed that Ashford was only 38 minutes from London. In conclusion he said that he was very proud to be part of the deputation and he was sure that the Leader and Chief Executive would also confirm what he had said this evening when they returned.

(c) Councillor Hicks, Portfolio Holder for Social, Local Needs and Special Care Housing

Councillor Hicks said there had been a number of interesting developments she would like to report to Members. She said that there were three particularly important projects that she had recently been involved with, all of which required climbing ladders and wearing a safety hat. The first scheme was when Christchurch House had been purchased. This had been a derelict builder's office and was ideal for conversion. She said she had visited the site at the commencement of the work and then again just before it had opened. The building had become a secure haven for those families who had found themselves homeless. A roof had been removed from an old rear workshop to create a lovely open space for little ones to play in safety. Furthermore the community spirit itself had also shown positive ideas from the church located next door to the building. Councillor Hicks said in previously abandoned workshop areas secure storage cages had been provided for residents to place their possessions. In all the building was providing accommodation for up to eight families passing through on their way to securing permanent housing.

The second visit involved climbing three floors of scaffolding at Chamberlain Manor, near Drovers Roundabout where she had laid a tile on the roof in a topping out ceremony with Councillor Claughton, the Ward Member. They had been shown around the bare bones with particular emphasis on the communal areas on the ground floor. She said that this project was being delivered by Pentland Homes for Housing and Care 21 who would run this older person's accommodation. She said that on the visit they had had to imagine all of the walls and furnishings being in place, but when completed the project would provide 50 apartments with good services for older people who could no longer manage their own homes.

Councillor Hicks said the final scheme was one which had received national acclaim and one of which she had visited on a regular basis. This was the new Farrow Court in Stanhope. In her last visit she said it was astonishing how this had moved from a mere conception to becoming first class accommodation. The best thing she had seen was the huge shell which would be used as a day centre, as well as giving the opportunity for Age UK to expand their services to their clients and the community. Councillor Hicks said she believed that this was an extraordinary building which promised to deliver a new way of living for the elderly. In conclusion Councillor Hicks said there were many other building works the Housing Department were involved with but she hoped that Members would share the success, in particular of the three projects she had outlined, namely Christchurch House, Chamberlain Manor and Farrow Court.

(d) The Mayor

His Worshipful the Mayor said that a few weeks ago the Mayoress and himself had been invited to join the Twinning Association on a visit to Bad Münstereifel to celebrate 50 years of Ashford being twinned with Bad Münstereifel and Ashford's 30 years of twinning with Fougères. Also on the trip were students from Highworth School who represented Ashford Youth. The school representatives had to do a presentation about twinning and speak fluently in German and French. The Mayor

said he was extremely proud and he believed that the presentation that they had given was the best of the three schools that took part. He said he had invited them to the meeting this evening with a view to presenting them with a voucher each, but unfortunately they had to attend an event at their school. He said therefore he would be inviting them to the Parlour with their teacher at a later date.

(e) Councillor Davidson

Councillor Davidson said he would like to put on record the attendance at the Julie Rose 10K on the 12th October which he explained had been widely supported and he believed that over 950 runners from all over Kent had taken part in the 10K race and in addition there were many others for the children's races. He said it was a huge and positive turn out and he wished to thank the Julie Rose staff and Members who had participated in organising the event.

(f) Deputy Leader

The Deputy Leader advised that he had one further announcement which he had neglected to mention to Members earlier. He said that on the 22nd October at 12 noon the next Ashford Health and Wellbeing Board Meeting would take place. He said the meeting would focus on obesity and healthy living, but would also feature a report on the recent report on the William Harvey Hospital, which he was sure Members would find particularly interesting. He explained that the meeting was open to the public and all Members.

199 Petitions

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Mrs Arthur, a member of the public wished to present a petition regarding the Ashford Local Plan 2015-2030 and objecting to Site WE15. Mrs Arthur said that the petition objected to any development east of Highfield Lane, Mersham. She said there was overwhelming objection to the horrendous proposal to cover this green field site with warehouses, not only from Mersham and Sevington, but from concerned residents who lived in the Ashford Borough. She said that no-one wanted to see rural villages destroyed.

Mrs Arthur explained that the owners AXA/DMI would like to extend the proposed U19 warehouse development to Mersham and were misleadingly calling it Sevington Park. She said that they had heard DMI and some Council Members talk about a green buffer but this should not mean a green strip at the edge of a field. A strategic gap or green buffer should adequately protect the village from urban development and in the case of Mersham there should be no development east of Highfield Lane and Cheeseman's Green Lane. Development on this site went against the 2006 Parish Plan for Mersham. Mrs Arthur said it was important to protect and retain the integrity of the Borough's lovely villages as they were one of the reasons why people wanted to come and live in the Borough. She quoted from Damian Green's website:- "although known as an expanding urban area, much of Ashford was made up of beautiful villages and protected countryside. We need to manage the growth of Ashford so that we do not lose the green fields we value so much.....". Mrs Arthur also said that on the website it stated "long term, it seemed to me essential that Mersham is preserved as a village rather than a suburb". She then quoted from the

Council's "Ashford 2030 – A Framework" which had been adopted by the Cabinet on the 8th December 2011: "We are adamant that "growth"...should create outstanding legacies and support strong viable local communities – we aspire to communities in Ashford Borough that we are all proud of". Mrs Arthur considered that Mersham was a vibrant, rural community and that Site WE15 went against Policy CS1 – Guiding Principles of Core Strategy "Protection for the countryside, landscape and villages from adverse impacts of growth and the promotion of strong rural communities".

Mrs Arthur explained that Highfield Lane was a natural barrier protecting the village of Mersham. In 2008 Ashford Borough Council had guaranteed support for the "Mersham Wall" and she questioned whether the Council would continue to do so now. The land to the east of Highfield Lane had been farmed for generations and AXA/DMI wanted to cover 30 acres of this farmland with more warehouses right up to Mersham. She believed their intentions were made clear in the Utility Network Assessment document dated 23rd November 2011 attached as supporting documents to the recent planning application for Kent Woolgrowers.

Mrs Arthur said that the Village Alliance, which represented over 300 members, the Parish Council and over 450 petitioners were totally opposed to WE15 being adopted under the 2030 Plan. She said that they had already seen what inappropriate development was proposed by AXA/DMI on U19 "The Gateway to Ashford and Europe". She considered there should be no extension of Site U19 and that Ashford Borough Council should stand up to AXA/DMI and not allow a developer to destroy the ancient community of Mersham. In conclusion she said that she trusted that "Localism" was alive and the Council's Planning Policy Department and elected Members of the Council would listen to the voices of the Borough's residents.

Mrs Arthur then presented the petition to His Worshipful the Mayor who then advised that it would be referred to the Head of Planning and Development for a response.

His Worshipful the Mayor said that there should be no debate on the petition at the meeting but said that he would allow Councillor Bartlett to make a short statement.

Councillor Bartlett said that the petition demonstrated the strength and depth of views held by residents on the risk that the Core Strategy Review proposed to the Borough's rural communities. He said that he knew that the Planning Policy Task Group would take the petition very seriously and would seek to understand the concerns by a careful review of all responses. Councillor Bartlett considered it should cast a shadow over some of the points raised earlier in the evening and those raised by the Strategic Delivery Board, of which Damian Green MP was a member, and its enthusiasm to act as a "honeypot" for the South East's development plans. He said that sometimes one could regret getting what you asked for and it was often better to protect what was valued in the heritage of the villages encircling Ashford, rather than to seek out development. In conclusion he said he was sure he was not alone in noting the irony of the Deputy Leader's video and the Leader's sojourn in London at MIPIM and what was being said by the residents of Mersham this evening.

200 Cabinet 4th September and 9th October 2014

(a) 4th September 2014

Resolved:

That (i) the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 4th September 2014 be received and noted with the exception of Minute Nos. 117, 123 and 129.

(ii) Minute Nos. 117, 123 and 129 be approved and adopted.

(b) 9th October 2014

Resolved:

That subject to the expiry of the period by which decisions arising from the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 9th October 2014 may be called in, i.e. 22nd October 2014:-

(i) the Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on the 9th October 2014 be received and noted with the exception of Minute Nos. 180, 181, 182, 186 and 187.

(ii) Minute Nos. 180, 181, 182, 186 and 187 be approved and adopted.

201 Selection and Constitutional Review Committee – 4th September and 9th October 2014

(a) 4th September 2014

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on the 4th September 2014 be received and noted.

(b) 9th October 2014

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on the 9th October 2014 be approved and adopted.

202 Audit Committee – 25th September 2014

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee held on the 25th September 2014 be received and noted.

203 Standards Committee – 30th September 2014

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Standards Committee held on the 30th September 2014 be received and noted.

204 Annual Report of the Council's Monitoring Officer 2013/14

The Meeting considered the report of the Monitoring Officer which was the annual report to both the Standards Committee and the Council on activity in terms of probity matters including complaints about alleged breaches of approved protocols and Codes of Conduct by Borough and Parish Councillors.

Resolved:

That the Monitoring Officer's Annual Report be received and noted.

205 Questions by Members of which notice had been given

(a) Question from Councillor Michael to Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

"Mr Mayor, following the last Council Meeting the Portfolio Holder for Planning was unable to answer my questions off-line on strategic development areas. I still seek an answer and now address my questions to the Leader of the Council or the Deputy Leader as he is standing in. Since the questions relate to a single topic I trust Mr Mayor you permit me to ask them together.

Once an area is given strategic development status does it make refusal of ensuing planning applications more difficult, if not impossible. In respect to strategic development designation and land found suitable by the present Sites Submissions process, then dropped to surplus to requirement under this scenario is a subsequent planning application for the site more likely to succeed than if the area had no such designation, and finally what is the process to remove strategic development status once it has been given? Thank you Mr Mayor."

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

"Thank you Mr Mayor. Can I thank Councillor Michael for his opening gambit this evening. Mr Mayor quite often there is a difference between the answer you want and the answer you actually receive and while I have some regret

that Councillor Michael considers he has been short changed, I am aware that his question was answered by my colleague at the last Council meeting and that a full written response was given in respect of his last question on this point. However, having said that I will do my best to explain the situation. The diagram which forms a part of the Core Strategy shows the broad strategy for development and strategically important developments by virtue of and in relation to their scale, and wider importance to Ashford as a whole. i.e. in line with the approach the Government expects Local Plans to take. Subsequent parts of the Local Plan have included detailed site specific policies for these areas. Councils can of course change their strategy when they produce updated Local Plans and seek to justify this to an independent inspector with robust evidence and a clear rationale when the plan is formally examined. Something Councillor Michael may indeed be aware of. If the Inspector subsequently supports the changes then it is reasonable to expect support for this position if unsuccessful applicants for planning permission appeal against the Council's decisions. The recent Site Submissions process is a step towards drawing up the next Local Plan. Only as many sites as needed to meet the Government's guidance on meeting the objectively assessed needs for Ashford will be identified in the new Local Plan. Thank you Mr Mayor".

Supplementary Question by Councillor Michael

"Thank you Mr Mayor. I thank the Deputy Leader for that explanation although I still don't think it answers the question although the question is misunderstood. I asked the question in relation to a particular area where Ashford Borough Council were considering extending the area of strategic development. There were no planning sites I was particularly involved with that. I am talking about an area that is expressed as that. Mr Mayor it is extremely important for Members to understand the planning implications for areas marked as strategic development. With land submissions for the revised Local Plan amounting to circa 22,000+ homes I am sure Members will want to know what areas in their Ward are classed as strategic development proposals on the table to give such designation to areas and the land submissions falling within these areas. Please may I ask the Leader to circulate such a list to Members during the course of the next few days? Thank you Mr Mayor".

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

"Mr Mayor, I will certainly talk to the Leader, hopefully tomorrow, and address Councillor Michael's request and again express regret of the fact that he considers he has not had his point sufficiently answered. Thank you Mr Mayor".

(b) Question from Councillor Michael to Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

"Thank you Mr Mayor. Regarding the Leader's recent articles it is reassuring to Members to know that Ashford is seeing the green shoots of economic

recovery. We all hope it continues, and certainly the video tonight was a great step in that direction. The articles reported the Leader to state that Ashford had 3.2 million visitors I seem to recall, over the past year which equates to 8,767 visitors for every one of the 365 days in the year. At first glance this appears extraordinarily high so please will the Leader inform Members who is deemed to be a visitor, how this number is captured and how the number is substantiated? Thank you Mr Mayor”.

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

“Thank you Mr Mayor, and thank you again to Councillor Michael for his question. First of all can I say I am delighted to note that Councillor Michael is supportive of the economic drive being led by this administration and indeed engendered by this Council as a whole, and while there is absolutely no cause for complacency there, the shoots are most definitely verdant with some promising signs of major investment in the town. With regard to the quote from the Leader, I understand this related to the number of visitors to the Designer Outlet Centre, where counts have been carried out by the operators of the Centre for some years. Now if Councillor Michael would like more information how McArthur Glen carried out these counts I am sure it can be provided in a full written response. Thank you Mr Mayor”.

Reply by Councillor Michael

“Yes thank you Mr Mayor. Thank you to the Deputy Leader for that I would like that written response. The reason why I raised the question was to do also with the footfall counters in the town centre and I would ask the Deputy Leader if he could also give us a view on how those counts are taken. Thank you.”

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

“Happy to oblige Mr Mayor.”

Supplementary Question by Councillor Galpin

“I would ask the Deputy Leader whether he was aware that those counts are clearly and well defined and are included now in the quarterly report?”

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

“Yes I am grateful to Councillor Galpin for pointing out that invaluable piece of information”. Thank you Mr Mayor.

(c) Question from Councillor Michael to Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

“Thank you again Mr Mayor. Can the Leader inform Members as to why the direction of the revised Local Plan is towards more land and housing, since it is at odds with the Government Ministers, sorry what Government Ministers

are openly saying? Members are led to believe a zero increase to overall housing numbers in the present Local Plan is not an option when the converse seems true for ministerial comment. I quote Nick Clegg, Eric Pickles and Brandon Lewis. It is the house build rate that needs increasing, not the overall housing number in Local Plans. Protecting the countryside and green spaces is as important. Local people don't want to lose their countryside to urban sprawl or see the vital green lungs around their towns unnecessarily developed. Local Plans should use the safeguards in the National Planning Policy Framework to protect against over development. Thank you Mr Mayor".

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

"Thank you Mr Mayor. Thank you to Councillor Michael again. As I would expect he chooses his ministerial comments with due diligence. However, perhaps I could direct him to the Government's National Planning Policy Framework which provides guidance to local Councils on how they must plan for their areas. This framework clearly sets out that Councils must meet what is called their "objectively assessed housing need" and further Government guidance explains how this is to be calculated. Failure to produce a plan that responds by making sufficient land available for new homes and jobs will, in all probability be found unsound by an Inspector when the plan is examined. A failure to have a sound plan is as I am sure we can envisage an open door to developers to promote development where they want it with the possibility of Local Councils and the community losing crucial control over key planning decisions. Mr Mayor it was Mark Twain who said about the countryside "that they don't make it any more". That is indeed the case but we are where we are and the situation we find ourselves in is that all the major brownfield land in the town has already been allocated for development and counted against our future housing needs. Something Councillor Michael is aware of from previous debates and his membership of the Planning Task Group. Sadly Mr Mayor this does not amount to sufficient capacity for the new homes needed to 2030 to avoid the need for some green field development which must be handled in a sensitive, responsible and a considerate fashion. Thank you Mr Mayor".

Supplementary Question by Councillor Michael

"Yes thank you Mr Mayor. I would just like to say that those quotes were the exact quotes, they're recent quotes and in fact that because of what is happening around the country there is some new policy guidelines that have been issued by the Government and I suggest people should read that. Mr Mayor the Leader last night stated that at times hard choices had to be made, and I agree. I therefore submit the hard choice here is to say no to a never ending increase in housing numbers. In the light of what residents said last night I ask the Leader to call a halt to moving forward with the GL Hearn recommendation to seek land for a further 4,000 homes but instead support the Cambridge Economic Matrix proposal that requires no more land and yet offers a substantial increase to current build rate. In addition I ask the Leader to include a green belt all the way around the town and its urban areas to

provide a safeguard to our countryside from further development. Something residents wish since this removes the continual uncertainty brought about by five year plan revisions. Mr Mayor to clarify why I seek such a commitment, could you please permit me to briefly give the Leader a few facts for his deliberation?"

At this point in the meeting and in response to a point of order raised by Councillor Galpin, His Worshipful the Mayor asked Councillor Michael whether he had a question to ask. Councillor Michael confirmed there were three questions at the beginning of his question and he was just providing more information to enable an answer to be given. His Worshipful the Mayor permitted Councillor Michael to continue asking his question.

Councillor Michael

Thank you very much Mr Mayor, I will do my best to be as quick as possible. Ashford build rate declined to 137 new homes last year from the 284 the year before with circa 10,000 unbuilt homes. In the present Local Plan a 20 year supply exists taking the Cambridge Economic Matrix 518 homes for Ashford. G L Hearn, using the less up to date data looks at 730 homes per annum and a study of that revealed that a huge provision of 427 homes per annum for inward migration, with just 307 for resident organic population. The arguments about inward migration have no substance and this is not wanted by residents. The argument that housing numbers in the present Local Plan have to be increased is flawed because, this is why I am asking the question, the John Prescott target was abolished by the present Government and with it ABC released to make its own determination. We should not be fearful to go down the path to not increase present Local Plan Housing Numbers and Land Requirements but instead underpin a higher build out rate from what we have already got. Thank you Mr Mayor".

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

"Yes I think the question was at the beginning rather than at the end. Mr Mayor as Councillor Michael's points were specifically addressed to the Leader I will do precisely as I said in answer to question 1 and am more than happy to take the points that he raises to the Leader and discuss this with the Leader and makes sure the Leader responds to Councillor Michael."

Supplementary Question by Councillor Wedgbury

Can the Deputy Leader allow us or give us the answer to all the District Councils across the country who's Local Plans are being found unsound because they have insufficient housing numbers in them I think it is quite a considerable number?"

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

"The answer simply is no Mr Mayor. I do not have that information to hand. However as I have responded to Councillor Michael I am more than happy to respond to Councillor Wedgbury and obtain that information asap".

(d) Question from Councillor Michael to Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

"Thank you Mr Mayor. Subsequent to projecting and planning capacity demand for M20 Junction 10A Kent County Council has cited the lorry park for expansion to accommodate operation stack. This has material consequences for the new junction and will seriously erode the spare capacity set aside as a safety margin for M20 Junction 10A. Put together with the rumoured Distribution Operation it looks as though M20 Junction 10A will fail before it gets off the ground. Will the Leader inform Members as to what action has been taken to examine the impact of KCC proposal, when Members will see details of capacities should the full scenarios play out for M20 Junction 10A and whether ABC will openly oppose KCC should available capacity and safety margins be compromised? Thank you Mr Mayor."

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

"Thank you Mr Mayor. Thank you again to Councillor Michael for his question. Mr Mayor Councillor Michael refers to the "rumoured distribution operation". I have to tell him that I do not deal in rumours. While there may be speculation, dipping your toe in the water on something based primarily on rumours is a precarious methodology to follow. Rumours can be dangerous and invariably lead to counter rumours which can lead to mis-information and uncertainty so where possible I try only to deal with the facts. Now as regards to the remainder of his question I am slightly unclear as to the basis of Councillor Michael's expertise in traffic modelling of motorway junctions. But the national body that is responsible for evaluating all such proposals, the Highways Agency, will be designing and fully testing the full Junction 10A scheme. I repeat Mr Mayor the full Junction 10A scheme over the coming months. This is a project promoted by the Highways Agency on behalf of the Government, not Kent County Council. Of course it will need to be proved beyond any reasonable doubt that the junction will provide the capacity needed for future development proposed in the new Local Plan. I am pleased to report that a community consultation group bringing together local people, Parish, Borough and County Councillors has already been set up and held its first meeting with the Highways Agency. This group will provide a sounding board for the Highways Agency as they design the scheme, so that we can achieve the best possible outcome for local people. This is absolutely essential. The Highways Agency are required to produce a statement of community consultation which explains how they will carry out wider consultation and this is expected Mr Mayor later this year. The Council will be formally consulted under the NSIP, the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project procedure that is being used by the Highways Agency to bring forward the scheme. Members will receive further reports on this process in the coming months. In addition Mr Mayor, Kent County Council has identified land at Waterbrook, next to the existing truck stop, as a potential overnight

lorry park to help deal with the problem of overnight parking that afflicts a significant number of areas. As a result the Council will decide whether to include such a proposal in the new Local Plan. Thank you Mr Mayor”.

Supplementary Question by Councillor Michael

“Thank you Mr Mayor and I thank the Deputy Leader for a full explanation there and I am pleased to hear that in fact it will be put on the agenda for Highways to look at that site but I asked the question because one particular Council has already rejected the site that KCC nominated for the same reason, and that’s why I asked the question what is Ashford Borough Council doing at the moment? Thank you Mr Mayor”.

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

“Nothing to add to that but I am grateful for Councillor Michael’s point that he just made”.

Supplementary Question by Councillor Bartlett

“I think I may just ask the question that if the Deputy Leader cares to check regularly the planning applications that are submitted from time to time he might already have noticed that a planning application has been submitted for the distribution operation. I do feel that it behoves the Deputy Leader to be somewhat more up to date in matters in the Council rather than dismissing good and valid questions from colleague Councillors?”

Reply by Councillor Claughton, Deputy Leader of the Council

“Mr Mayor I try my best like every Member to keep up to date. I will not bring my personal circumstances of late, which have been extremely difficult, into this meeting tonight.”

(KRF/VS)

MINS:CXXX1442

Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Keith Fearon:
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