



## To the Members of the Borough Council

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby summoned to attend a Meeting of the Ashford Borough Council to be held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent TN23 1PL on Thursday the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2015 at 7.00 pm

Yours faithfully

T W Mortimer  
Head of Legal and Democratic Services

### Agenda

**Page  
Nos.**

1. Apologies
  2. To consider whether any items should be dealt with in private because of the likely disclosure of Exempt or Confidential Information.
  3. **Declarations of Interest:-** To declare any interests which fall under the following categories, as explained on the attached document: 1
    - a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI)
    - b) Other Significant Interests (OSI)
    - c) Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests
- See Agenda Item 3 for further details
4. To confirm the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on the 15<sup>th</sup> October 2015
  5. To receive any announcements from the Mayor, Leader or other Members of the Cabinet
  6. To receive any petitions
  7. To receive any questions from, and provide answers to, the public (being resident of the Borough), which in the opinion of the Mayor are relevant to the business of the Meeting
  8. To receive, consider and adopt the recommendations set out in the Minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet held on the 12<sup>th</sup> November and 3rd December 2015 (to follow) 2-6

9. To receive the Minutes of the Audit Committee held on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015 (to follow)
10. To receive, consider and adopt the recommendations set out in the Minutes of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on the 3rd December 2015 (to follow)
11. To consider Motions of which Notice has been given pursuant to Procedure Rule 11
12. Questions by Members of which Notice has been given pursuant to Procedure Rule 10

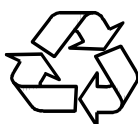
NOTE:- If debate on any item included within this Agenda gives rise to the need to exclude the press and public due to the likelihood of Exempt or Confidential information being disclosed the following resolution may be proposed and seconded and if carried, the press and public will be requested to leave the meeting for the duration of the debate.

That pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of this item as it is likely that in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure of exempt information hereinafter specified by reference to the appropriate paragraphs of Schedule 12A to the Act, where in the circumstances the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

KRF/VS  
2<sup>nd</sup> December 2015

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Queries concerning this agenda? Please contact Keith Fearon:  
Telephone: 01233 330564 Email: [keith.fearon@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:keith.fearon@ashford.gov.uk)  
Agendas, Reports and Minutes are available on: [www.ashford.gov.uk/committees](http://www.ashford.gov.uk/committees)



**Declarations of Interest (see also “Advice to Members” below)**

- (a) **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI)** under the Localism Act 2011, relating to items on this agenda. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared, and the agenda item(s) to which it relates must be stated.

A Member who declares a DPI in relation to any item will need to leave the meeting for that item (unless a relevant Dispensation has been granted).

- (b) **Other Significant Interests (OSI)** under the Kent Code of Conduct as adopted by the Council on 19 July 2012, relating to items on this agenda. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared, and the agenda item(s) to which it relates must be stated.

A Member who declares an OSI in relation to any item will need to leave the meeting before the debate and vote on that item (unless a relevant Dispensation has been granted). However, prior to leaving, the Member may address the Committee in the same way that a member of the public may do so.

- (c) **Voluntary Announcements of Other Interests** not required to be disclosed under (a) and (b), i.e. announcements made for transparency reasons alone, such as:

- a. Membership of outside bodies that have made representations on agenda items, or
- b. Where a Member knows a person involved, but does not have a close association with that person, or
- c. Where an item would affect the well-being of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc. but not his/her financial position.

[Note: an effect on the financial position of a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc; OR an application made by a Member, relative, close associate, employer, etc, would both probably constitute either an OSI or in some cases a DPI].

**Advice to Members on Declarations of Interest:**

- (a) Government Guidance on DPI is available in DCLG’s Guide for Councillors, at [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/240134/Openness\\_and\\_transparency\\_on\\_personal\\_interests.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/240134/Openness_and_transparency_on_personal_interests.pdf)
- (b) The Kent Code of Conduct was adopted by the Full Council on 19 July 2012, with revisions adopted on 17.10.13, and a copy can be found in the Constitution at <http://www.ashford.gov.uk/part-5---codes-and-protocols>
- (c) If any Councillor has any doubt about the existence or nature of any DPI or OSI which he/she may have in any item on this agenda, he/she should seek advice from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer or from other Solicitors in Legal and Democratic Services as early as possible, and in advance of the Meeting.

# 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> October 2015**.

## **Present:**

Her Worshipful the Mayor, Cllr. Mrs G A Dyer (Chairman);

Cllrs. Aaby, Apps, Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Bell, Bennett, Mrs Blanford, Bradford, Britcher, Buchanan, Burgess, Chilton, Clokie, Farrell, Feacey, Galpin, Heyes, Mrs Heyes, Howard, Knowles, Koowaree, Link, Miss Martin, Mrs Martin, Michael, Murphy, Ovenden, Pickering, Shorter, Sims, Smith, Waters, Mrs Webb, Wedgbury, White.

## **Also Present:**

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Head of Community and Housing, Head of Finance, Senior Member Services and Scrutiny Support Officer.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting: -

- (i) Her Worshipful the Mayor asked Members to remain standing in silence in respect of the late Reginald Richard Harrington who was the representative for the Ashford Kingsnorth (including Shadoxhurst) Ward between 1979 and 2003 and the Ashford Park Farm North Ward between 2003 and 2007 and was Mayor in 1991/92 and for the late Peter William Stutchbury who was Member for the Hamstreet Ward between 1983 and 1991.
- (ii) The Reverend Catherine Wilson said prayers.

## **Apologies:**

Cllrs. Barrett, Dehnel, Hicks, Krause, Powell.

## **171 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.

## **172 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 16<sup>th</sup> July 2015 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **173 Announcements**

### **(a) Twinning**

The Mayor advised that Ashford had recently hosted the twinning delegation including Mayors and other representatives from Fougères and Bad Münstereifel, Ashford's Twin Towns in France and Germany. She thought it was a very successful visit and she wanted to thank those Councillors who had supported it in any way and particularly Councillor Galpin who had managed the business seminar so well and this had been a most interesting experience and a great success.

### **(b) Rotary Ramble**

The Mayor also said that to support the Mayor's Charity there had recently been a Rotary Ramble and she again wanted to thank those Councillors who had taken part or had kindly supported that event. She would be able to write to Councillors in due course and advise exactly how much money had been raised but as both Tesco Stores (Crooksfoot and Park Farm) and Find a Voice themselves had taken part, the totals were still being added up.

### **(c) Leader of the Council**

The Leader said that since the last Full Council meeting there had been a number of positive developments which he would like to share with colleagues.

He said that at the end of last month the Council approved plans to expand the Ashford Designer Outlet Centre, with nearly 40 new stores and six restaurants and cafes planned as well as the creation of up to an additional 700 new jobs. This would transform it into one of the UK's premier outlet centres including the best names in designer fashion, enhancing the whole shopping experience and providing stronger links with the town centre and the station. In addition, plans for a new town centre cinema, hotel and restaurants at Elwick Place had been formally submitted and would be considered shortly. The Council welcomed the fact that another major investor was showing so much confidence in Ashford.

He advised that construction of Ashford College was now underway, and with the proposals for Elwick Place and the Council's purchase of Park Mall shopping centre and the Dover Place developments, these were all good indications of the progress the Council was making as part of the renaissance of the town centre, which would benefit the entire Borough. The Council had recently agreed to work with local developers, Quinn Estates Ltd and George Wilson Holdings Ltd, to bring forward the plans for CQ38 - the Ashford Commercial Quarter – 38 minutes to London. These were developers with a strong track record for delivering quality buildings on schedule and under budget. They had worked on a number of projects across Kent, delivering over 3 million sq ft of commercial space and creating thousands of jobs. The Council had purchased International House last year, and work on a new public realm around International House and Dover Place was progressing well with completion due soon. This would create a sense of place, forming an attractive first impression of the town and a delightful approach from Ashford International Station. Last month they had warmly welcomed Locate in Kent, to International House. Their move followed Handlesbanken's relocation in April. It would appear that Locate in Kent had acted on its own 2014 survey, which named Ashford as Kent's No 1 business location.

The Leader said that message from this Council to the business community was very clear – the Council was determined to work hard to make Ashford a success and now was the time to get involved. This was exactly the message they would be taking to MIPIM UK, the large-scale property trade show, which would be taking place during the following week in London. Last year's MIPIM UK had been an excellent platform for promoting the Borough to a wider audience. Ashford had really punched above its weight, holding its own among locations such as Manchester, Leeds, Cardiff and the City of London, with an impressive and engaging stand that attracted a constant stream of interest. This year the Ashford stand would be double the size and even more dynamic, with a meeting area and iPad docks loaded with development presentations so that potential investors and developers could see what opportunities were available to them here in Ashford. They were looking forward to showcasing Ashford and offering an insight into how the town's exciting future was unfolding.

He said that following last year's celebrations of 50 years of twinning with Bad Münstereifel and 30 years with Fougères, this year it had been Ashford's turn to host its friends from Germany and France. Each year the official twinning event had a core theme and this year the topic had been business. Ashford was keen to develop business, trade, and tourism relations. There had been a presentation by the Chamber of Commerce and then a meeting with Ashford's MP Damian Green and local industry leaders. The civic leaders were present from Germany and France and they had been keen to engage with Ashford to increase business potential.

The Leader said that colleagues will have seen and read about the humanitarian crisis in Syria which had shocked the world and he was proud to say that the Cabinet had last week voted unanimously to welcome up to 50 Syrian Refugees a year for a five year programme as part of the government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme. Tonight Council had an opportunity to endorse that Cabinet decision by confirming its support in welcoming those refugees into the Borough. As Angela Merkel and David Cameron had said "We are in the middle of a Refugee Emergency". Those refugees were from a war-torn area and supporting them was the right thing to do. Since the crisis was highlighted by the worldwide media, he had personally received a number of approaches from residents asking what Ashford was doing. These people were very vulnerable and Ashford should set an example by its action to assist. Ashford had been promoted as an international town and, through a proactive response to a humanitarian situation they had an opportunity to reinforce that commitment. Everybody wanted the refugees to be proud to be here and he felt that they should be proud to have them.

Finally, he advised that last week Cabinet had also approved a suite of documents related to the Council's five year planning. One of those was the summary of a new Five Year Corporate Plan, setting out the Council's direction and priorities, and the finalised version would be presented before the end of the year. Members and Senior Officers had worked hard together to produce this new plan which reflected a diverse but growing Borough and focused on exciting opportunities to encourage and invest in economic growth, providing business and leisure facilities and quality homes to live in across the Borough. A proactive commercial approach, shown by some of the Council's recent acquisitions, was the best way for Local Authorities to operate and secure additional revenue streams which would all be for the benefit of the people of Ashford. The Council's Five Year Corporate Plan, headed, "Aspiration, Action & Achievement", set out the positive direction they were taking to help the Borough to grow, thrive and prosper in the coming years

## **174 Cabinet – 10<sup>th</sup> September and 8<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

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

### **(a) Cabinet – 10<sup>th</sup> September 2015**

**Resolved:**

- That (i) **the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 10<sup>th</sup> September 2015 be received and noted with the exception of Minute Nos. 118, 119, 122, 123 and 127.**
- (ii) **Minute Nos. 118, 119, 122, 123 and 127 be approved and adopted.**

### **(b) Cabinet 8<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

Councillor Chilton said that with regard to Minute No. 159 “Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme”, he wanted to advise Council that the Labour Group fully supported the moves to bring these refugees to Ashford and considered it was absolutely vital that Ashford played its part. The image of the poor boy lying dead on the sands of Greece was an image that nobody would forget and he hoped all Groups would support this scheme and not seek to politicise this matter for political gain.

Councillor Ovenden said that he would like to re-iterate those comments and advise that the Ashford Independent Group also gave its full support to this scheme.

**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> October 2015 may be called in, i.e. 21<sup>st</sup> October 2015: -**

- (i) **the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2015 be received and noted with the exception of Minute Nos. 159, 161, 163, 164 and 165.**
- (ii) **Minute Nos. 159, 161, 163, 164 and 165 be approved and adopted.**

## **175 Audit Committee – 29<sup>th</sup> September 2015**

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee held on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2015 be received and noted.**

## **176 Selection & Constitutional Review Committee – 8<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

**Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Selection & Constitutional Review Committee held on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2015 be approved and adopted.**

## **177 Questions by Members**

### **(a) Question from Councillor Michael to Councillor Clarkson, Leader of the Council.**

Councillor Michael advised that the Leader had already responded to his question by e-mail, for which he thanked him, but he would still ask the question for the benefit of other Members.

“I do not disagree with the humanitarian response by ABC but I have a concern that when Government funding expires we do not let these people down and ask the question – What provision will be made in the budget to continue with ongoing support?”

### **Reply by Councillor Clarkson**

“Madam Mayor, it is a fact that the Government had only agreed to fully fund the first year from the Overseas Aid budget, but on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2015 I received a letter from Richard Harrington MP, the Minister responsible for Syrian refugees, in which he clearly indicated, and I quote “The first twelve months of a refugees resettlement costs are fully funded by Central Government using the Overseas Aid budget. To ensure that Local Authorities can plan ahead and continue to respond to the overwhelmingly generous response of the British people, we will also provide additional funding to assist with the costs incurred in future years. These arrangements will be applied to all cases since the 20,000 expansion was announced. We understand that Councils need certainty about financing of the scheme in order to enter in to contracts or commitments and we will be working closely with Local Government to develop the process for drawing down the funds in order that this certainty can be given, including those Councils offering help under the existing scheme”. Given that the scheme we are embarking upon will run for five years until 2020 and will be fully funded by Government as previously stated, I can see little real significant impact on our budget during the life of this Administration which concludes in 2019. I would like to think that many of the adult family members will soon be in work and contributing to our economy. This Administration has also agreed to review our participation in the scheme annually and adjust if necessary. At the end of the five year programme all refugees will be reassessed by the Home Office to see if they wish to stay and seek to secure UK Citizenship or return to Syria if it is safe to do so. I hope that helps in answering the question. Thank you Madam Mayor.”

### **Supplementary Question by Councillor Michael**

“I thank the Leader very much for that and I support all that he says. My follow up question is to ask the Leader to inform Members how the integration and



management of the refugees will be serviced given that current Council resource is set to be stretched. For example does it require a separate dedicated team and if so how is this to be funded?"

**Reply by Councillor Clarkson**

"It does not require a new dedicated team. To put it into perspective we are probably dealing with about eight to ten extra families here. Given that we have an excellent Housing team at the moment that deals with the Housing Revenue Account with our Council Tenants, we have 5000 homes with 5000 families that we already look after, and that is more than just maintaining our property on their behalf. We actually advise them on all sorts of things because we believe in keeping the cohesive nature of our community together. So in settling at this figure I consulted with the Officers to see how much we could handle without adding a burden to our resources. The other thing is this - we are not alone in this scheme. We have offers of help from all kinds of people including the Churches, Jasmin Vardimon, the Scouts and the second hand furniture store who have said they can help with furnishing the accommodation, so there is a real willingness out there to make this work and I think to that extent it will really be a walk in the park. That does not mean it will not need careful handling because there are issues here. We are going to get a lot of information from Government from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees about the people – their medical state, whether they can speak English or not, the sizes and ages of the families and all of that, so there will be a job to be smart and intelligent and fit them in to our community. They will represent 0.04% of our population which is infinitesimal really. KCC are gearing up too and Tracey Kerly has been appointed as our liaison with KCC to ensure there are school placements for the young children. We do have many schools that are full, but we also have many others that are not, Charing Primary School for example has got spare places and the Surgery at Charing has space for another 1200 people on their books, so there are plenty of opportunities. I think this is easily absorbed in what we do now and we certainly have a mass of the requisite skills to handle this well and show that we are an example to everybody else and I think that is what Ashford is all about."

**(b) Question from Councillor Michael to Councillor Clarkson, Leader of the Council.**

"I would like to thank the Leader for his explanation on the last question which was very helpful. My second question is can the Leader inform Members on plans to address the needs for our young citizens by way of leisure and recreation facilities?"

**Reply by Councillor Clarkson**

"Madam Mayor, we work hard to provide a range of leisure facilities for young people in the Borough and are currently supporting, managing and developing a number of sports and recreational offers, including: - Ashford Skate Park - a popular leisure destination for young people of all ages. In addition Sk8side work with these young people to deliver out of school activity schemes and events; Spearpoint Pavilion - A new sports pavilion in Kennington which will enable local football clubs to grow and develop their youth sides for both sexes, including the Ashford Angels girls' FC team; Conningbrook Lakes - Working with the Sea Cadets, Kent Scouts and sailing and canoe clubs to develop a leisure offer targeted at young people; Pitchside and Courtside - Venues which provide multi sports facilities to the community and are used by over 1000 people per week, many of whom are young people; Waterside

Youth Space - Working in partnership with the Salvation Army to provide a range of educational and recreational facilities from the youth space to young people through a regular youth club and holiday activity schemes; Cuckoo Park Play Space - In partnership with Kingsnorth Parish Council, we are working to develop an open play space which will include a range of play equipment for both formal and informal play for all ages. Construction is expected to begin in April 2016; House and Hang 10 - Commissioning and working with a voluntary sector youth provider to develop and deliver activities for young people from a dedicated space in the Stour Centre and within local communities; Revelation St Mary's - The arts programme has offered opportunities for young people to both participate and learn about the arts and music. I was there recently as they have a lovely mini youth orchestra which performed during the twinning visit and they were absolutely fantastic. Jasmin Vardimon Company - Regularly works with nine Ashford based schools and they are doing certificates for them and so forth. I have always been impressed since I came on to the Council in 2005 just how much sport and leisure was being developed. We also support a number of projects delivered by local organisations through the community grants fund. These grants often act as the catalyst by which groups can bring in the match funding they need to deliver the project. Projects regularly funded include the refurbishment of play areas, Scout and Guide groups, youth sports teams, and youth theatre groups and youth clubs. Guidance and support is provided to community youth organisations to grow and develop their youth offer, for example we have recently worked with Tenterden Town Council to develop a youth policy and have supported the Tenterden Youth Club with advice and funding to refurbish a village hall from which to operate. As you see we are working on developing both indoor and outdoor leisure and recreation facilities where young people can engage in various different activities. We do most of this in partnership with others. For example, our local Leisure Trust is amongst those key in supporting activities for young people. We are currently working with them to support how the Stour Centre and Tenterden Leisure Centre can upgrade their facilities to attract more users. These are clearly large indoor facilities and as previously stated we are working to support new community facilities that will underpin young people's leisure activities. I am pleased to announce that the Repton Community Centre planning application has just been received by the Council and will deliver an outdoor multi use games area and indoor spaces for young people to meet and enjoy. I have actually had a leaflet given to me this evening on that facility and we received the planning application last Wednesday. So I think we can be quite proud. I am not complacent, there is always a lot to do, we have got a lot of young people, but I am also looking, with an aging population, what we are going to do to keep all of us older people fit and well as well so I think we can be proud of it."

### **Supplementary Question by Councillor Michael**

"I thank the Leader for that. I am involved with a lot of youth activities and I do know that we do a lot but I just wanted to draw his attention to Goat Lees Primary School's Project Team which recently undertook a survey of town facilities, and it identified its top six priorities which included: - an Ice Rink; a Children's Driving School; a Bounce House; an arcade; and a maze. I therefore ask will the Leader consider a 'Big 8' for the Borough's young citizens and could I propose that these are identified through the participation of all schools in Ashford which I believe would bode well for this Council?"

### **Reply by Councillor Clarkson**

"I'd like to thank Councillor Michael for his question as he always gives me an opportunity to air and ventilate all of the things we are doing. A Big 8 for youth is a very interesting concept but it does rather cut across what we're doing at the moment, although that isn't to say we wouldn't consider it. The issue is that I would have preferred Councillor Michael to come and see me or Cabinet colleagues to come and discuss such a proposal rather than ventilating it at a Full Council meeting when we've not had an opportunity to discuss it with him. That's a matter for him but fortunately we live in a democracy and I am very pleased we do. As far as an ice rink is concerned it is rather like a theatre. We know that they would be very well received by people in the Borough but there is a huge cost to running them. I know Ashford Borough Council do most things but believe it or not we are not Ice Rink or Theatre operators, but if somebody wanted to come along and put an Ice Rink or a Theatre here then, as we've done with other things like the model railway, we would gladly participate, help with site acquisition, grants for capital funding etc, but thereafter I am afraid they would have to run that themselves, because we simply don't have the experience or the funding. Cabinet colleagues and I are always open to discuss any of these matters with you. I can assure you that any good, viable and bright ideas will be embraced with both arms. You are pushing at an open door."

### **Supplementary Question by Councillor Wedgbury**

"I thank Councillor Michael for allowing me to ask this question. Is the Leader also aware of all the Voluntary Groups we have as well as the Scouts, Park Farm Rangers, Ashford United Football Club and the Air, Sea and Army Cadets? For example the Air Cadets take their Cadets shooting, flying and to the Nijmegen Marches – a fantastic event in its 100<sup>th</sup> year next year and they also take them on fantastic holidays at very low prices so is the Leader aware of all those and what a brilliant Borough we are in for young people?"

### **Reply by Councillor Clarkson**

"I thought that was addressed to Councillor Michael but as it was addressed to me, yes you are quite right Councillor Wedgbury. I myself have got involved with the Scouts and all sorts of voluntary groups in Charing and I know Member colleagues do the same in every Ward throughout the Borough and I think it's great. I recently had communication from the Scouts Group whose Leader is actually one of our Elected Members so we are actually very fortunate in this Borough to have an awful lot of activity going on and I think that's great. It doesn't mean we shouldn't have any more, we certainly need to look after the youth, but I thank Councillor Wedgbury for his enlightening comments."

### **(c) Question from Councillor Murphy to Councillor Clarkson, Leader of the Council.**

"UKIP welcomes the fact that Ashford will be playing its part in welcoming Syrian refugees to safety and notes that if we are able to control our own borders we will be able to arrange to take even more. The Prime Minister has said that the UK will take 20,000 refugees over five years – that equates to just under 31 people over five years per UK Constituency. Could the Leader explain why he is taking 250, which is over 800% of our 'fair share'?"

**Reply by Councillor Clarkson**

"Thank you for your question Councillor Murphy. As you know the Prime Minister has agreed, as you have said, to take 20,000 Syrian refugees over the life of this Parliament. Although the Home Office has indicated that it will seek to ensure an equitable distribution of refugees across the country so that no individual Local Authority bears a disproportionate share of the burden, I am sure that Councillor Murphy will recognise that some parts of our country are remote and placing refugees in areas that have poor access to services, particularly the various health services that may be required for some of the very traumatised or vulnerable people, is not the best way to provide help to support them. We know the Home Office and Department for Community and Local Government are working with Local Authorities and the devolved Administrations in Scotland and Wales to agree details of the arrangements to house and support refugees, but some of the more remote parts of Scotland and Wales are unlikely to be suitable or ideal areas. It is not therefore the simple numbers issue that Councillor Murphy assumes. As well as access to health and education, families need to be given the chance to integrate with local communities and Ashford is well placed to offer such opportunities. 50 people per year is 0.04% of our population in Ashford and even the 250 over the five year period amounts to 0.2% of our population. I am sure Councillor Murphy has also read of the call for the UK to take 50,000 refugees over the next five years as a fairer proportion. Campaigners including Citizens UK have said that a pledge to take 20,000 refugees is not enough and 50,000 over five years is more appropriate. On Monday of this week 343 signatories including retired judges, Queens Council barristers, law professionals and a range of others made a statement calling for a humanitarian and effective Government response to the refugee crisis. Whilst you mention our borders, I think everyone in this room is clearly concerned about un-fettered migrants coming to seek a better life in this country, but that is not what we are talking about here. We are limiting our intake to the camps around Syria where you can see the devastation and I think there is something like 3 million people in those camps alone and I think a third of the Syrian population has been decamped from the country so this is a vast issue and I think for us to take 50 individuals, or six to eight families, a year is fine and I have no worries about our ability to handle it. We can and we will be seen to be doing our part and I haven't got a lot of time to worry about what other Districts are doing as I want to focus my time and energy with Tracey Kerly and other colleagues on what we are doing. I hope Councillor Murphy is re-assured and in her role as an Ashford Borough Councillor will welcome and support the integration of up to 50 Syrian refugees, in their family units, as and when they arrive."

**Supplementary Question by Councillor Murphy**

"The Leader may feel that it is his moral duty to take these refugees, who I agree need our support, and I also applaud his ability to find the necessary housing acknowledging that the Government is paying for this, and not using Council stock, but shouldn't the properties that may be bought by the Council Housing Company or taken from private supply, be used for those on our housing waiting list first rather than for housing refugees over and above our fair share?"

**Reply by Councillor Clarkson**

"In response to that supplementary question may I just say that it isn't my moral duty as you've pointed out, but I think it's our collective moral duty to take these refugees into our Borough. These are 50 people – men, women and small children and as I

have said we already cater for 5000 families on our housing stock which we are very proud of. We do have a housing waiting list with over 1000 people on it and we are very concerned about that, but any of them, if they want to go in to private rented accommodation as the Syrians coming over are going to go into, we would certainly help them and they could probably do that in the next few months. However they won't have the right to buy and they won't be able to pay 60% of the normal rent so it is a totally different thing. The Syrians are coming in with Visas, the right to stay here for five years, and immediate right to work and the Government have said they will be eligible for benefits because they are refugees in fear of their lives, and that is why we are able to have them in private rented accommodation. So it is not a problem if others want to come off the waiting and list and go in to that but they won't have all the benefits and they won't be able to get the Government's financial support to do so. We are not talking about the same thing here. I am concerned about our housing waiting list as we all are and we will move heaven and earth to try and reduce it, but when you look at other Authorities I think we have a significant number of people on our stock and we are also always thinking of ways to increase the number of people coming off our housing waiting list. We are doing a lot more right to buy, shared ownership, stairway to ownership, 20-30% affordable housing on new developments, and working with Government on deposit schemes and things of that nature. I have even suggested to Tracey Kerly and others about looking at doing some sort of mortgage scheme ourselves for people so I am keen to resolve that but it is a very different thing to what we are talking about here."

#### **Supplementary Question by Councillor Chilton**

"The original question suggested that we could take more if we controlled our own borders but then went on to complain that we are taking more than our fair share. I know UKIP Councillors tend not to attend meetings but had they turned up perhaps they would have found out the required information instead of coming to Full Council ill informed, so would the Leader agree with me that all Members should turn up to meetings so they are better informed?"

#### **Reply by Councillor Clarkson**

"I thank Councillor Chilton, the Leader of the Labour Group, for his comments. I am well aware that all Members of this Authority have a life outside this Authority and have families and their own domestic issues and often employment to attend to, so it would be ill-advised of me to comment on individual Members or individual Groups. I obviously agree that when Members sign up to be Councillors they should attend to their duties and the Committees they are put on to and if they can't do so they should perhaps ask to come off of those Committees. So I agree with the general thrust of what he says but I don't want to be critical of any Group or any individual because I respect their individual positions."

#### **(d) Question from Councillor Murphy to Councillor Clarkson, Leader of the Council.**

"Would the Leader please clarify when he says that Ashford is taking 250 Syrian refugees if he means 250 individuals or 250 families because the immigration authority only counts the head of the household therefore if he is using the immigration authority's rationale Ashford could in fact be taking 1750 individuals, as each family allowed to settle will be between four and seven people, and not 250 as they have been led to believe?"

**Reply by Councillor Clarkson**

“Madam Mayor please forgive me but I am really beginning to lose the will to live. I understand the question but I do not understand the motive behind it. I think our Cabinet report which I’m sure all Members will have read, and the statements I have made earlier this evening make this abundantly clear. I’m not really concerned what the Home Office does and the way their stats work, but we are taking up to 50 people a year – ‘people’ meaning men, women and children – and I don’t think I’ve missed anyone out there, so up to 250 people over a five year period. Now I didn’t do advanced maths, but it seems pretty clear to me. I am sorry to seem a bit short but I suppose it wears a bit thin after a while when you keep getting the same question in different forms. That is the situation and I don’t think I can make it any more crystal clear than that – up to 50 people per year for a five year period, so up to 250 men, women and children.”

**Supplementary Question by Councillor Galpin**

“It was an interesting question and I think the Leader answered it with alacrity but I would just like to ask the Leader whether he feels that the Borough could continue to economically grow without any new people coming to live here, whether they be from Syria or Scunthorpe? We have 5000 new jobs coming in the very near future and less than 1000 people unemployed so somebody would have to do those jobs and there are houses waiting for them, so I see no disparity and no reason for guilt, so would the Leader like to comment on that?”

**Reply by Councillor Clarkson**

“Clearly we are a growing community. Over the last 10 years we have created a net increase year on year of approximately 700 jobs per year and we are set to continue to do so. So we will need more labour in our workforce and skilled labour at that. That is why this Authority has spent a great deal of time, effort and money in trying to ensure that we have a Further Education and Higher Education college campus here that can take on the skilling of young people so that they can get a higher salary than our current fairly low ones which I want to lift and grow. We have probably the lowest unemployment rate going. The National Employment Growth rate is at 1.8%, Kent’s is 1.5%, but Ashford’s is twice the national average at 3.6%, so we certainly will need more labour and whether they are coming from Scunthorpe, Syria or anywhere else I know not and I will contemplate that later when I get home this evening. However, the main thing for me is that we need to understand that the last statistical information on ethnicity and population in the Borough that we have is the 2011 Census which shows that 20 of the 35 Wards had 90% plus White British and Irish and the other 15 all had between 82% and 90% White British and Irish populations. These figures do not include the gypsy and traveller communities and other white categories. There are 14 other categories of ethnicity making up the remainder of the population so I hope that puts this matter in some perspective. I understand this can be an emotional issue but it shouldn’t be as these are desperate people with desperate young families in these camps and how wonderful would it be to have two or three of those families here in time for Christmas?

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(DS)

MINS:



## **Cabinet**

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **12<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

### **Present:**

Cllr. Bell (Vice-Chairman in the Chair);

Cllrs. Bennett, Mrs Blanford, Clokie, Galpin, Heyes, Miss Martin, Shorter.

### **Apologies:**

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Britcher, Clarkson, Hicks, Mrs Martin, Chief Executive.

### **Also Present:**

Cllrs. Bradford, Buchanan, Burgess, Link, Michael, Ovenden, Sims, Smith, Mrs Webb, Wedgbury.

Head of Communities and Housing; Housing Resources Manager; Head of Personnel and Development; Head of Finance; Principal Solicitor – Strategic Development; Health, Parking and Community Safety Manager; Facilities Development Manager; Principal Accountant; Cultural Projects Manager; Communications and Marketing Manager; Member Services and Scrutiny Manager.

## **198 Declarations of Interest**

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Interest</b>	<b>Minute No.</b>
Smith	Made a "Voluntary Announcement" in respect of Agenda Item No. 6 as he was a retired Unison member.	200

## **199 Minutes**

### **Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2015 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **200 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2015 - 2045**

The report provided Members with the annual update of the HRA Business Plan financial projections and the affordability of agreed plans and priorities. Due to the four year rent reduction announced in the July 2015 Budget, Ashford was currently



anticipating an income loss of £10 m over the next four years and a loss of £160 m over the 30 year Business Plan cycle. A cost recovery programme had been actioned to recover the financial position of the HRA to ensure it remained affordable.

The Portfolio Holder referred to paragraph 20 of the report and said that in his view it was very unlikely that if a new Government was elected it would return the rent increases to their previous levels. He also explained that the recommendations within the report would allow the process of consultation with staff to commence which stemmed from the reduction in the work of the Building Maintenance team.

A Member referred to the issue regarding potential redundancies and said it appeared that the Council was not following its adopted policies and correct procedures and he therefore asked the Cabinet to consider deferring those elements of the report regarding the proposed redundancies to allow time to consider the potential for voluntary redundancies across the board.

The Chairman indicated that he did not support the request made by the Member and confirmed that following adoption of this report, the Council's normal processes would be followed. The Head of Personnel and Development confirmed that no decisions had been taken or were proposed regarding redundancies in the report and that a further report would be submitted to the Joint Consultative Committee in due course and appropriate due procedures.

**Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) the updated HRA Business Plan and Financial Projections be agreed.**
  - (ii) the savings programme to recover the financial position be approved.**
  - (iii) the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be invited to review the HRA Business Plan Financial Projections as part of the budget scrutiny process.**

## **201 Spearpoint Community Sports Pavilion: Request for Additional Capital Funding**

The report advised that the lowest acceptable tender received exceeded the anticipated estimate by £49,000 and by allowing a prudent 10% contingency the revised estimated cost was £918,000 which represented a revised total project cost of £130,000 above the anticipated level. The report sought Cabinet's approval for a capital budget allocation of £130,000 to address these costs.

The Portfolio Holder said that the tenders had come in higher than expected which was largely attributable to the upturn in the economy and the fact that building skills were now more in demand. Subject to the Cabinet and Council approving the recommendations, it was hoped to start on site in February/March 2016.

In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder confirmed that the tenders had been submitted on a fixed contract basis.

A Member said he wished to place on record the work undertaken by the Ward Member for Little Burton Farm in bringing the project to fruition.

**Recommended:**

- That**
- (i) entering into a contract for the demolition and construction of a new building be approved within the revised project budget of £918,000 subject to approval by the Council.**
  - (ii) an additional capital contribution of £130,000 be agreed for the renewal of the Spearpoint Pavilion to be funded from strategic 106 contributions and/or New Homes Bonus as detailed within the report.**
  - (iii) the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be given authority in consultation with the Head of Culture and the Environment to:**
    - (a) execute and complete all necessary documentation, and**
    - (b) in consultation with the Chief Executive take any further action required to give effect to the above recommendations.**

## **202 Gambling Act 2005 – Policy Revision**

The report presented a revision to Ashford Borough Council's Gambling Policy for public consultation which had been prepared in accordance with the Gambling Act 2005.

The Portfolio Holder advised that there were no significant implications associated with the latest revision of the policy.

A Member referred to paragraph 6 of the report and said that he believed that it should be clarified that the majority of the establishments listed were in the urban areas of Ashford.

**Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) the revised Gambling Policy Statement be approved for the purposes of issuing for consultation.**
  - (ii) the Cabinet notes that the majority of gambling related businesses were located in the Ashford urban area (with one betting shop in Tenterden).**

## **203 Budget Monitoring Report – Second Quarter 2015/16**

The report presented the Second Quarter Budget Monitoring Report for the current year for the General Fund, the Housing Revenue Account, and the Collection Fund. The report indicated that this quarter the General Fund was projected to be £30,000 over its original budget, a £16,000 movement from the last quarter where a slight overspend of £14,000 had been projected.

**Resolved:**

That (i) the Budget Monitoring position as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015 be noted.

(ii) the New Homes Bonus Schedule in Appendix A be noted.

## **204 Ashford Borough Council's Performance – Quarter 2 2015/16**

The report advised Members and the public of the performance of the Council during the Second Quarter. This included information on what the Cabinet had achieved through its decision-making, key performance data on front line services and consideration of the wider borough picture which impacted upon the Council's work.

The Portfolio Holder drew attention to the fact that the average number of families requiring temporary Bed and Breakfast accommodation during the quarter had risen slightly to just under 15 a month. He acknowledged the significant contribution made by the Christchurch Road accommodation but believed that the overall situation needed to be closely monitored.

**Resolved:**

That the performance for Quarter 2, 2015/16 be noted.

## **205 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group – 28<sup>th</sup> September 2015**

**Resolved:**

That the notes of the meeting of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on the 28<sup>th</sup> September 2015 be received and noted.

## **206 Town Centre Regeneration Board – 20<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

**Resolved:**

That the notes of the meeting of the Town Centre Regeneration Board held on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 2015 be received and noted.

## **207 Ashford Strategic Delivery Board – 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2015**

**Resolved:**

**That the notes of the meeting of the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2015 be received and noted.**

## **208 Schedule of Key Decisions to be Taken**

**Resolved:**

**That the latest Schedule of Key Decisions as set out within the report be received and noted.**

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(KRF/AEH)

MINS:CAXX1546

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## Cabinet

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **3<sup>rd</sup> December 2015**

### Present:

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);

Cllr. Bell (Vice-Chairman);

Cllrs. Bennett, Mrs Blanford, Clokie, Galpin, Heyes, Miss Martin, Shorter.

### Apologies:

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Michael,

### Also Present:

Cllrs. Britcher, Buchanan, Burgess, Chilton, Hicks, Link, Sims, Wedgbury.

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Legal & Democratic Services, Corporate Director – Operations, Principal Solicitor for Property and Projects, Head of Cultural and Project Services, Tourism, Heritage and Nature Conservation Manager, Principal Accountant, Head of Finance, Policy and Performance Manager, Housing Operations Manager, Communications Officer, Member Services and Scrutiny Manager.

## 233 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Clarkson	Announced an “Other Significant Interest” in respect of Agenda Item No.11 as he was the Chairman and Director of the Ashford Borough Council Better Choice for Property Company.	242
Shorter	Made a “Voluntary Announcement” as Director of Ashford Borough Council Building Company	242

## 234 Minutes

### Resolved:

**That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on the 12<sup>th</sup> November 2015 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## **235 Urgency Provision**

The Chairman advised that in accordance with Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 he had accepted the late inclusion of an item entitled “Expansion of Short-Stay Accommodation Provision” as a matter of urgency and by reason of special circumstances, namely that the property concerned was currently on the market and the Council needed to act quickly to secure its purchase.

## **236 Leader’s Announcements**

The Leader advised that as this was the last meeting of the Cabinet before Christmas he wished to wish all Members and Officers a safe and enjoyable festive season.

## **237 Preliminary Draft Budget 2016/17**

The report set the scene for the Cabinet to consider its preliminary draft budget for 2016/17 and explained the important background and contextual information to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and next year’s budget. The budget was preliminary as at the time of publication there was no final statement from the Government about the Council’s levels of grant support for next year.

The Portfolio Holder referred to two Tabled Papers, one of which was a briefing note on the Comprehensive Spending Review and the second requested the Cabinet to approve the earmarking of the £77,000 saved from the Management Re-Structure to fund the costs related to the Devolution Agenda as covered in detail in the Comprehensive Spending Review Paper. The Portfolio Holder advised that following agreement by the Cabinet the Budget would be published for consultation with the Business Community, Parish Councils and staff prior to the final Budget being considered in February 2016.

### **Recommended:**

- That**
- (i) the Budget Context be noted.**
  - (ii) the preliminary draft budget for 2016/17 be approved, (noting that it was submitted before the Government’s announcement of the provisional grant settlement).**
  - (iii) the preliminary draft Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2016/17 be approved.**
  - (iv) the report be used as the basis for Budget consultation with the public, the business community, the Parish Councils and staff.**
  - (v) the preliminary draft budget as set out in the report should be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee’s Budget Task Group for formal scrutiny.**

- (vi) £77,000 saved from the management re-structure be earmarked to fund the costs related to the Devolution Agenda.

## **238 The Next Five Years: The Corporate Plan 2015-2020 (final version)**

The report sought approval of the final version of the Corporate Plan 2015-2020: The Next Five Years and to its publication.

The Chairman said that the Corporate Plan reflected the four key areas of the Administration's election manifesto and was based on the principles of Aspiration, Action and Achievement.

A Member referred to the section of the report on employment and said that she was pleased to advise that two Ashford Borough Council Apprentices had received awards as star pupils over the whole of Kent.

The Chairman also advised that information from the Office of National Statistics showed that the wage levels in Ashford were improving.

### **Recommended:**

**That the final version of the Corporate Plan 2015-2020 (and the accompanying appendix) be agreed and that it be published and made available in both printed and digital media.**

## **239 Council Tax Base 2016/17**

The report advised that the Council was required to approve the Tax Base which would be used to calculate the level of Council Tax for 2016/17. It was calculated with regard to the number of domestic properties (including a forecast for new properties) which were then converted into Band D equivalents. The Tax Base had been calculated at 43,750 Band D properties and was an increase of 1,385 (or 3.1%) of the current year's figures.

### **Recommended:**

- That**
- (i) the 2016/17 "Net" Tax Base of 43,750 Band D properties as set out in the Table below be agreed.**
  - (ii) the distribution across parished areas of the proposed grants to Parish Councils to help compensate them for the negative impact caused by the Council Tax Support Scheme on Parish Councils' tax bases (Appendix D to the report refers) totalling £40,900 be agreed.**
  - (iii) the possibility of further Cabinet and Council decisions being required before the end of January should any material change in**

**the tax base be required as a consequence of any further relevant funding announcements from Government be noted.**

**DELIBERATELY LEFT BLANK**



**TAX BASE 2016/2017**  
**LOCAL TAX BASE (WHOLE/PART AREAS)**

LOCAL TAX BASE 2015/2016	WHOLE AREA	BAND D EQUIVALENT	NEW OCCUPATIONS	1.0% PROVISION	Less discounts Council Tax Support	LOCAL TAX BASE 2016/2017
		47,310.00	502.00	(426.60)	(5,020.40)	42,365.00
	<u>PARISH</u>					
550.90	Aldington & Bonnington	609.40	23.60	(5.80)	(47.40)	579.80
326.00	Appledore	378.70	0.00	(3.30)	(53.60)	321.80
676.80	Bethersden	755.20	15.00	(7.00)	(61.70)	701.50
1,078.40	Biddenden	1,173.70	7.60	(10.90)	(83.50)	1,086.90
143.10	Bilsington	161.20	0.00	(1.50)	(11.80)	147.90
1,038.10	Boughton Aluph and Eastwell	1,124.50	0.00	(10.50)	(70.10)	1,043.90
586.10	Brabourne	625.40	0.00	(5.90)	(29.40)	590.10
150.30	Brook	156.90	0.00	(1.50)	(3.20)	152.20
414.30	Challock	425.30	0.00	(4.10)	(15.80)	405.40
1,204.00	Charing	1,346.90	42.40	(12.80)	(118.20)	1,258.30
716.70	Chilham	785.10	28.30	(7.50)	(65.40)	740.50
92.70	Crundale (PM)	94.50	0.00	(0.90)	(1.10)	92.50
499.80	Egerton	534.00	0.00	(5.10)	(26.20)	502.70
173.80	Godmersham	182.90	0.00	(1.80)	(4.70)	176.40
2,307.00	Great Chart with Singleton	2,628.90	16.00	(24.50)	(200.20)	2,420.20
113.20	Hastingleigh	120.10	0.00	(1.20)	(4.20)	114.70
715.20	High Halden	775.00	0.00	(7.30)	(52.20)	715.50
276.00	Hothfield	348.90	0.00	(2.90)	(58.90)	287.10
102.00	Kenardington	117.20	0.00	(1.00)	(10.10)	106.10
4,076.50	Kingsnorth	4,456.80	181.30	(43.70)	(259.90)	4,334.50
124.10	Little Chart	129.00	0.00	(1.30)	(4.00)	123.70
627.9	Mersham and Sevington	675.00	0.00	(6.40)	(31.50)	637.10
107.2	Molash	116.30	0.00	(1.10)	(11.40)	103.80
104.2	Newenden	108.60	0.00	(0.90)	(4.50)	103.20
554.9	Orlestone	590.40	28.30	(5.70)	(53.10)	559.90
473.6	Pluckley	509.40	0.00	(4.60)	(36.00)	468.80
654.6	Rolvenden	728.70	14.10	(6.90)	(56.80)	679.10
326.3	Ruckinge	343.80	0.00	(3.20)	(22.90)	317.70
489.6	Shadoxhurst	528.80	12.20	(5.10)	(38.40)	497.50
603	Smarden	666.70	0.00	(6.10)	(40.10)	620.50
349.1	Smeeth	392.10	0.00	(3.70)	(31.40)	357.00
711.7	Stanhope	1,024.30	0.00	(7.90)	(233.90)	782.50
209.6	Stone	224.10	0.00	(2.00)	(21.50)	200.60
3433.1	Tenterden (TC)	3,766.30	0.00	(34.60)	(293.20)	3,438.50
171.4	Warehorne	186.50	0.00	(1.70)	(8.10)	176.70
321.6	Westwell	340.10	0.00	(3.20)	(17.40)	319.50
524.1	Wittersham	586.40	0.00	(5.40)	(55.70)	525.30
818	Woodchurch	897.30	0.00	(8.40)	(59.20)	829.70
984.5	Wye with Hinxhill	1,127.90	12.20	(10.40)	(84.40)	1,045.30
15,535.60	Unparished Area	18,149.30	299.00	(162.60)	(2,100.10)	16,185.60
42,365.00		47,891.60	680.00	(440.40)	(4,381.20)	43,750.00

## **240 Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/17**

The report advised that the Council had a statutory duty to consider annually whether to revise its Council Tax Support Local Scheme or to replace it with another scheme and consult with interested parties if it wished to revise or replace it.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the scheme had been in operation for the previous two financial years and this report reflected what would be the third year of its operation.

### **Recommended:**

- That**
- (i) the proposed Local Scheme for 2016/17 as set out in the conclusions of the report, i.e. there are no major changes to the existing scheme but some minor changes are proposed, be approved.**
  - (ii) public consultation on the proposals should run until 11<sup>th</sup> January 2016.**
  - (iii) delegated authority be granted to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and the Leader to make any adjustments to the final scheme by 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016 in relation to the level of grant notified by Central Government in December 2015 and following consideration of the consultation responses.**

## **241 Ashford Dark Sky and International Observatory**

The report addressed the proposals by the Ashford Astronomical Society to consider the provision of an astronomical observatory and the closely and inter-related matter of Ashford's Dark Sky and approved Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The report also summarised the detailed findings from the "Fourth Street" Consultancy, copies of which had been placed in the Members Room.

The Chairman advised that the area to the south of Ashford had the darkest night skies in the whole of south-east England and that steps were being taken to ensure that this remained by using controls via the Planning system to ensure that lighting for future developments were of the type to reduce the level of light pollution. He believed that the mobile exhibition facility was an excellent idea and said that he understood that the local media was keen to follow up this initiative.

### **Resolved:**

- That**
- (i) the approach by the Ashford Astronomical Society (AAS) be welcomed and supported.**
  - (ii) the proposal to commission the Ashford Astronomical Society to work closely with the Council to undertake public consultation to enable an "International Dark Sky Community Designation" to be**

submitted to the International Dark Sky Association on behalf of the Council and the AAS be approved.

- (iii) a capital budget of £25,000 to meet the costs of the proposal be approved.
- (iv) the Head of Culture and the Environment, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to take any further action required to give effect to the above recommendations.

## **242 Trading and Enterprise Board – 9<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

**Resolved:**

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Trading and Enterprise Board be received, noted and approved with the exception of Minute No. 195.

**Recommended:**

That Minute No. 195 be approved.

## **243 Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group – 28<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

**Resolved:**

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group held on the 28<sup>th</sup> October 2015 be received and noted.

## **244 Town Centre Regeneration Board – 18<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

**Resolved:**

That the Notes of the Meeting of the Town Centre Regeneration Board held on the 18<sup>th</sup> November 2015 be received and noted.

## **245 Schedule of Key Decisions to be taken**

**Resolved:**

That the latest Schedule of Key Decisions as set out within the report be received and noted.

## **246 Exclusion of the Public**

### **Resolved:**

**That pursuant to Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item, namely Expansion of Short Stay Accommodation Provision, as it is likely in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure of exempt information hereinafter specified by reference to paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act, wherein the circumstances the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.**

## **247 Expansion of Short Stay Accommodation Provision**

The report had been accepted onto the Agenda by the Chairman as a matter of urgency. The report explained that following the success of Christchurch House which provided short stay accommodation for homeless families, approval was now sought for the purchase of another property suitable for a similar use.

The Portfolio Holder said he believed that the facility would provide quality accommodation for homeless people and said that the proposed acquisition was conveniently located for access by local transport to the town centre.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Budget and Resource Management said that during meetings of the Council Tax and Welfare Reform Task Group Members had indicated that should a further opportunity arise to increase the availability of the Council to support families or individuals made homeless, then the issue should be pursued.

### **Recommended:**

- That**
- (i) a budget of £1.2m be approved for the purchase of the property as set out within the report to be funded by borrowing or Section 106 Funding whichever is appropriate, subject to due diligence, in consultation with the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, the Chief Executive, the relevant Portfolio Holder and the Leader.**
  - (ii) following the completion of the purchase it be used for short stay temporary accommodation and be known by the name as set out within the report.**
  - (iii) Officers set up appropriate management arrangements, including additional staffing as set out in the budget included within Appendix 2 to the report.**
-

(KRF/VS)

MINS:CAXX1549

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## Audit Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Audit Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **1<sup>st</sup> December 2015**.

### Present:

Cllr. Link (Chairman);  
Cllr. Waters (Vice-Chairman);  
Cllrs. Powell, Shorter, Smith, Mrs Webb.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2(iii) Councillor Mrs Webb attended as Substitute Member for Councillor Buchanan.

### Apologies:

Cllrs. Buchanan, Chilton.

### Also Present:

Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Audit Partnership, Corporate Director (Operations), Head of Community & Housing Head of Finance, Head of Cultural & Project Services, Cultural Projects Manager, Policy & Performance Officer, Senior Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer.

Emily Hill, Lisa Robertson - Grant Thornton UK.

## 217 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Shorter	Made Voluntary Announcements as a Director of Kent Play Clubs and as a Director of the ABC Building Consultancy Company.	221, 226
Corporate Director (Operations)	Made a Voluntary Announcement as a Director of the ABC Property Company.	221, 226
Head of Finance	Made a Voluntary Announcement as a Director of the ABC Building Consultancy Company.	221, 226

## 218 Minutes

### Resolved:

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2015 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## 219 Questions from Members of the Public

The Chairman advised that as he understood a member of the public had questions on a number of issues he would allow him to ask them at this stage of the meeting.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Mr Relf, a local resident addressed the meeting. He firstly referred to the Minutes of the last meeting where a Member had asked about the valuation of International House and asked if in future Members could be referred to by their name in the Minutes so that he could chase up an answer from that Member. The Senior Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer advised that the Council's Committee Minutes were not written in this way but if Mr Relf wanted to contact the Member Services department, they would always endeavour to advise him which Members has asked which questions.

Mr Relf then asked if he was allowed to object to the Statement of Accounts on the grounds that he understood people were not paying Council Tax and their properties were not even on the Council Tax Register. Emily Hill advised that it was possible to object to a set of accounts that was not certified i.e. where the audit had not been completed. The audit for the 2014/15 set of financial statements had been completed and certified on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015 so he was not able to object to that particular set of statements. It would be possible to object to the 2015/16 financial statements if somebody could identify an item of account which they believe to be unlawful or where there was a particular issue which it was considered to be in the public interest for the External Auditors to investigate. A summary of rights regarding the Council's accounts and the rights to object could be sent to Mr Relf if that would be helpful.

Finally Mr Relf referred to benefit fraud and asked if the cost of the service was £100k, and the department was only recouping approximately £100k, and he considered there were serious flaws in how the system operated, was he able to object to the accounts on the grounds of that expenditure? He also asked if he could question expenditure related to the Council sending Officers to Chilmington caravan site to monitor benefit claimants who he believed were also working whilst claiming benefits, and whether that was a correct use of Council funds. Emily Hill advised that again, obviously not for the year just passed. Going forward, an individual could object to an item of expenditure that they believed had been made unlawfully. So if the expenditure in relation to housing benefit had been correctly recorded and any overpayment or error identified had also been correctly recorded, then there were no grounds on which to object. If there were allegations of fraud or other such matters then the Council did have procedures and processes internally which should be referred to in the first instance, and if there were further allegations of fraud after that which he felt had not been investigated appropriately by the Council which could be substantiated, then those matters should be taken to the Police.

The Portfolio Holder then responded to the points made on fraud. He advised that at its June meeting, this Committee had reviewed the value for money of the Council's Counter fraud team and had been assured that, in purely cash terms, they were getting back more money than was being spent on the team. However, the issue was more important than that because the simple presence of the team was dissuading people who may be thinking about attempting to be fraudulent. The

successful prosecutions that had been made and the publicity of those cases did act as a deterrent to other members of the community who may consider entering in to a fraudulent act. So there were immeasurable elements of gain/worth to the Council simply by having a competent and active fraud team. He wanted to give Mr Relf that reassurance.

## **220 Safeguarding Audit Report**

The Head of Audit Partnership introduced the report which set out the findings and brief of the recent audit into the controls designed and operated by the Council to ensure it met its safeguarding obligations. Its findings and recommendations had been accepted by Officers. The report had come to the Committee following Members' request to see reports which had received a 'weak' or lower assurance rating. Recognising the prominence of safeguarding as an issue for Local Authorities generally, similar reviews had already been undertaken at Swale and Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells would be looked at in the spring. Swale and Maidstone's reports had also resulted in weak assurance ratings initially and Swale's, the first to be re-assessed, had now been upgraded to sound so they were pleased at the response the recommendations had been getting. The weak assurance rating was principally because of weaknesses, delays and gaps in process and practice which could lead to a lack of resilience in the arrangements and be difficult to keep levels sustained in the longer term.

The Cultural Projects Manager then ran through the Management Action Plan with the Committee as Members had been chiefly interested in the response to the audit findings. She explained that she was the Designated Safeguarding Officer for the Council and she was joined by the Head of both Cultural and Housing Services which demonstrated the seriousness with which they had taken this matter. In her view, although it was marked as a medium priority, the key recommendation surrounded the development and implementation of an appropriate reporting regime. This would include high level 'buy-in' from Management Team and Members (including the Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the Portfolio Holder). She also ran through the other five recommendations in some detail and outlined the management response and the actions to each.

The following responses were given to Members questions/comments on the Management Action Plan: -

- The scope of this particular audit was the Council's responsibilities under the Children's Act so did focus on the safeguarding of children particularly. There was a Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adult Board which did examine concerns for vulnerable adults as well and there was a desire for the Council's safeguarding policy to be that much broader to reflect overall safeguarding legislation. A wider audit of safeguarding 'in the round' was scheduled for 2017.
- Officers were committed to improving this whole area and the presence of three Senior Officers at the meeting would hopefully demonstrate that commitment. A lot of work had been put in to the Action Plan and Management Team ownership would ensure that this was delivered.



- The target implementation dates in the report were very much 'by' dates and Officers would be pushing on to make a swift response and if they could bring them forward they would.

**Resolved:**

**That the findings of the Safeguarding audit be noted and the Management Action Plan be endorsed.**

## **221 Annual Audit Letter 2014/15**

Lisa Robertson introduced the report which included the Annual Audit Letter from the Council's External Auditor's Grant Thornton. The letter was a summary of the work undertaken in 2014/15 and reiterated the positive comments made by the External Auditors at the last meeting, when unqualified opinions on the Council's financial statements and the value for money conclusion were reported. One additional point to note was that the audit certification work on the housing benefit grant claim had now been completed and an unqualified opinion would be given. This was an impressive outcome and placed the Council in the top 20% nationally. Audit fees were also noted. There would be no additional fees for Grant Thornton's audit services and the one outstanding fee related to the certification of pooling of housing capital receipts return was confirmed at the minimum level of £2k.

The Portfolio Holder said he wanted to acknowledge the unqualified opinion on all aspects of the accounts which he considered a remarkable outcome when taking in to account the complexity of the work undertaken to compile this. The Committee agreed to note this and express it's thanks to the Officers involved.

**Resolved:**

**That the External Auditor's Annual Audit Letter be received and noted.**

## **222 Internal Audit Interim Report 2015/16**

The Head of Audit Partnership introduced the report which set out progress against the agreed audit plan for the first half of 2015/16, including detail on audit findings and commentary on wider issues on audit and the Service. A colour copy of page 48 of the Agenda which showed the graph in its full context had been circulated.

One item to update on was the outstanding action on the ICT Disaster Recovery audit. This was about running a test of the arrangements which had originally been scheduled for June 2015. This had been prevented because of technical issues and was re-arranged to happen before the end of the calendar year. As a result Internal Audit had been looking to follow this up in January, but that follow up work had been undertaken early to tie in with this meeting and they had learned that the test had been completed successfully in mid-October and the Council was now in negotiations with its provider for annual testing thereafter. Therefore, this recommendation could now be closed. The Portfolio Holder said he welcomed the

update. This had been an area of anxiety for the Committee and he hoped to see the annualised test embedded in processes.

**Resolved:**

**That the Internal Audit Interim Report be received and noted.**

## **223 Annual Governance Statement – Progress on Remediating Exceptions**

The Policy & Performance Officer introduced the report which updated on the progress made towards the areas of review highlighted by the 2014-2015 Annual Governance Statement. He advised that the Statement had outlined two areas of further work: - one around the need for the Council to agree a new Corporate Plan which should be completed by the end of this quarter, (the summary version had been approved by the Cabinet in October with the full version coming back for approval in December); and the second to complete work reviewing the Council's risk management procedures which was now complete, subject to appropriate awareness training for Officers which was ongoing.

In response to a question from a Member the Head of Internal Audit advised that the training of staff on risk was progressing as scheduled. The Portfolio Holder said it was important that Managers ensured that the training was cascaded down to their staff to ensure consistency with regard to the new risk management arrangements.

**Resolved:**

**That the progress made towards the areas of review highlighted by the Annual Governance Statement as detailed in the report be noted.**

## **224 External Auditor's Update**

Emily Hill introduced the report which included a summary of ongoing audit work at Ashford including the good outcome to the audit of the Housing Benefit Grant Claim. She drew particular attention to the fee letter which reported a 25% reduction in fees, the revised guidance from the National Audit Office on the Value for Money conclusion and the new local audit framework.

In response to a question about the increasing reliance on voluntary organisations and whether this was a risk to the Council's resilience, Emily Hill advised that this was part of a different type of model for delivering public services and whilst there were clearly risks involved they were probably no more serious than with any other contractor used by the Council. Risks would need to be mitigated by ensuring that any grants or contracts went through the Council's normal procurement and due diligence arrangements to allow for proper monitoring.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted and the Committee should receive further briefings on the topical matters raised, either at appropriate Committee pre-briefings or in written briefings between meetings.**

## **225 Annual Report on Reserves and Balances**

The Head of Finance introduced the report which had been requested by this Committee last year. The Council had a policy to have a General Fund Reserve of no less than 7.5% of the Council's net budget requirement (£13.7m which equated to a reserve of approximately £1m). The Council also held a number of earmarked reserves that were reserves held for specific purposes, a schedule of those was attached to the report. He advised that a review of reserves and balances was undertaken as part of the scrutiny of the budget and this report would be better placed there going forward.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted and it be noted that for this year and all future years a review of Reserves and Balances is undertaken as part of the scrutiny of the budget.**

## **226 Reporting for ABC Companies**

The report set out the governance arrangements that had been put in place for the ABC Companies, outlining the relationships and structures that had been put in place to manage the Council's interfaces with its Companies. It also discussed the appointment of External Auditors for the Companies and the mechanics of the loan agreement that had been established with the Property Company.

In response to a question about 1 to 1 borrowing by the Property Company and the potential liability for loans in the event of a significant fall in property values, the Deputy Chief Executive advised that the loan facility had been devised to protect the Council's interests as far as was possible in such an event. Ultimately, because the Council was the shareholder, that liability would rest with the Council.

**Resolved:**

**That the governance arrangements between the Council and the Council's wholly owned subsidiaries, A Better Choice for Building Consultancy Ltd and A Better Choice for Property Ltd, be noted.**

## **227 Procurement and Appointment of External Auditors**

Further to the information item received by this Committee in June, the report provided a further update advising that the Department for Communities and Local Government had recently determined the timing by when Councils must have newly procured External Audit services in place.

**Resolved:**

**That the further update be noted and the Committee should receive another report in the New Year to consider the options more fully, once further guidance is published by CIPFA.**

## **228 Report Tracker and Future Meetings**

The Committee noted that the Deputy Chief Executive, Paul Naylor would shortly be moving to flexible retirement and the Head of Finance, Ben Lockwood would be taking up responsibility for the Audit Committee and the Section 151 Officer role.

The Vice-Chairman advised that the Committee would like to have an additional meeting, earlier in June than the one proposed on 30<sup>th</sup> June, in order to have time to properly consider the Statement of Accounts. Perhaps that meeting could also consider the follow ups from both the Safeguarding and ICT Disaster Recovery audits. The Senior Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer said he would source a suitable date.

**Post Meeting Notes: The date for the additional meeting is confirmed as Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> June 2016.**

**Resolved:**

**That the report be received and noted.**

## Selection & Constitutional Review Committee

Minutes of a Meeting of the Selection & Constitutional Review Committee held in Committee Room No.2 (Bad Münstereifel Room), Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **3<sup>rd</sup> December 2015**.

### Present:

Cllr. Clarkson (Chairman);  
Cllr. Bell (Vice-Chairman);  
Cllrs. Bennett, Mrs Blanford, Burgess, Chilton, Clokie, Galpin, Koowaree, Mrs Martin, Ovenden, Shorter

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.2 (iii) Councillor Clokie attended as Substitute Member for Councillor Mrs Bell.

### Apology:

Cllr. Mrs Bell.

### Also Present:

Cllrs. Britcher, Buchanan, Miss Martin, Sims, Smith.

Corporate Director (Operations), Principal Solicitor for Property & Projects, Electoral Services Manager, Policy & Performance Manager, Senior Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer.

## 229 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Smith	Made a 'Voluntary Announcement' as a Director of the SWAN Community Group.	231

## 230 Minutes

### Resolved:

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of this Committee held on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2015 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.**

## 231 Community Governance Review Recommendations

The Principal Solicitor for Property & Projects introduced the report. She advised that the Community Governance Review (CGR) process had been a long and detailed one which had commenced in February 2015. The report summarised in some detail the process, the consultation that had been carried out, the ballot run by the

Electoral Reform Service and the responses that had been received in respect of the draft recommendations of the CGR as well as the work of the Local Government & Polling Districts Task Group. The report asked the Committee to consider the draft recommendations put forward by the Task Group and to make its own recommendations to Council.

The Chairman of the Task Group advised that it had been an extremely comprehensive process and he wanted to thank all of the Officers involved for their hard work. He reminded the Committee that the review was not simply about urban parishing, although that was understandably the most contentious issue. The Task Group had had long discussions at its two meetings in November and following consideration of all the facts it had agreed to amend the original Officer recommendations, which had been to approve the creation of parish areas and subsequent Community Councils for the Kennington and South Willesborough and Newtown areas, to not recommend parish areas or Community Councils for any of the currently unparished areas.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 9.3 Mr Morley, Chair of Kennington Community Forum (KCF) attended and spoke on this item. He said he would like to thank Officers for their hard work in the CGR process and to raise some points on the report. He advised that Kennington's campaign for a Parish Council dated back to around 2006 when ABC formalised the current Forum boundaries and stated in its Constitution that a move towards Parish Council status in the future would be seen as a natural and positive progression. In February 2015 residents of the KCF area had petitioned for an independent Community Council for Kennington with 1090 valid signatures representing over 13% of electors (significantly exceeding the 10% then required to trigger a CGR). The recent ballot had secured 1522 votes in favour and this showed an increase in the number of residents in favour since the start of the CGR process. In terms of the CGR itself he said it was difficult to see how the Council had met its obligations under the legislation to take bodies such as KCF into account when the Task Group had not engaged with organisers of the campaign in Kennington or considered other alternative forms of community governance. As a result of the outcome of the ballot Officers had originally recommended to the Task Group that Community Councils be created for both the Kennington and South Willesborough and Newtown areas. The Task Group had in turn decided not to recommend the creation of any Community Councils based on turnout, the number of votes in favour as a percentage of the total possible vote, the permanence of Community Councils and the precept they will be able to raise as part of the Council Tax and the context of the ballot and promotional activity of the Forums. In response to those points Mr Morley wished to point out the following – Kennington had achieved a turnout in the ballot of 34.9% which compared well with the average turnout in Local Elections of 35.5% and was much higher than many of the ABC Ward Elections in 2015. If the number of votes in favour as a percentage of the total possible vote was to be a consideration, it would have been helpful to set those criteria at the start of the process and included that within the Terms of Reference. Permanence and precepting should also not be considerations as such Councils would be no more permanent than any other form of governance and the precepting powers would be no different to any other existing rural parish or urban fringe area that was part of a Parish Council.

In conclusion Mr Morley said that as it stood, Kennington felt significantly disenfranchised in comparison to residents in existing Parished areas, particularly with regard to the rights granted under the Localism Act 2011. National governments of all parties from 2007 had recognised the need for local communities to have a stronger voice in the management of their affairs and he sincerely hoped that ABC would have the foresight to look beyond their current tenure and do what was right for the local community in the longer term and approve the formation of a Community Council for Kennington.

The Ward Member for South Willesborough then spoke in his capacity as a Director of the SWAN (South Willesborough & Newtown) Community Group. He said the situation there was very similar to Kennington. There had been a longstanding desire in the area to create some kind of Community Council and this process had afforded that ability. The ballot had produced a 26% turnout and a 56% vote in favour. People in the area were now confused that a democratic process was seemingly being ignored by the Borough Council. The ballot had secured a majority in favour of a Parish Council for South Willesborough & Newtown and ABC were saying no. This appeared to be wholly undemocratic and he asked the Committee to accept the decision of local residents and amend the recommendation to allow Community Councils for both Kennington and South Willesborough & Newtown.

During the course of the debate the majority of Members spoke in favour of an amendment to the recommendations to allow urban parishing and Community Councils in both Kennington and South Willesborough & Newtown. They believed that this was about democracy and if any kind of ballot was carried out then the results of that should be accepted. Two out of the five urban areas balloted had favoured urban parishing and if the Council went against what the residents of Kennington and South Willesborough & Newtown had asked for then there was little point carrying out the ballot in the first place. In the same vein the three areas who had voted against urban parishing should have their view accepted as well. Establishing democratically elected Community Councils would give these groups some status and a stronger grounding and it was considered that the areas that said no might see the benefits in the future. The process had been thorough and scrupulous and the Council should act on what they had been told by local residents.

A Member said that this had been a Borough wide review and the ballot on urban parishing had been carried out across the whole urban area which was correct and proper. In that vein she considered that the results should be viewed collectively. 5106 people had said yes to urban parishing and 6354 had said no and she therefore considered that as a Borough, local residents had spoken out against urban parishing. She considered that Parish Councils worked well in rural areas but the Ashford Urban area was a relatively concentrated one which did not need to introduce another tier of Local Government. This would be a binding decision and a legacy for future administrations to deal with and with the current squeeze on Local Government finances she felt it would be unnecessary and would take up vital resources that could be better allocated. She urged the Committee to support the Task Group's recommendations and refuse the creation of urban parishes and Community Councils.

A Member asked about the recommendation in relation to “Existing Parishes” and how emerging changes at Chilmington would affect the existing Kingsnorth (Brisley Farm area) and Great Chart with Singleton Parishes. The Principal Solicitor for Property & Projects advised that the report recommended a further review of Chilmington once the new development began to be populated and they would be working with the Boundary Commission on this, but it was important to put down a marker at this stage.

In summary the Chairman said he would like to thank the Task Group for all the work they had undertaken in this process. He also wanted to thank the speakers this evening. Personally having read all of the documents coming out of the CGR it was clear that there were varying views. It was also clear that this Committee had carefully considered both the original recommendations of Officers and the recommendations of the Task Group and appeared to be more or less in agreement on a recommended way forward. He understood that the ballot was never intended to be binding but he could not see how it could be ignored. He considered that if people did not want Community Councils they should not have them and if people did want Community Councils they should be allowed to have them. It had been a useful exercise, he understood the strong feelings on both sides, but it was now time to ask the Council to make a decision. He advised that there would be a free vote of all Members at the 10<sup>th</sup> December Council Meeting and this would also be a recorded vote.

The amended recommendation was then put to the vote and carried by a majority of 11 votes to 1.

**Recommended:**

- That**
- (i) the consultation responses received and the guidance issued by the Secretary of State contained at Appendix 2 to the report be received and noted.**
  - (ii) Part One of the draft Final Recommendations of the Community Governance Review, in relation to the “Existing Parishes” proposed by the Task Group as set out at Appendix 11 to the report be approved.**
  - (iii) Part Two of the draft Final Recommendations of the Community Governance Review, in relation to the “Currently Unparished Area”, proposed by the Task Group as set out at Appendix 11 to the report be approved, subject to an amendment allowing urban parishing and Community Councils in both the Kennington and South Willesborough & Newtown areas.**

**N.B. A full set of the Committee’s recommendations will be circulated to Members prior to the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2015 Council Meeting.**



## **232 Background and Principles of Political Balance and Administrative Structure**

The report of the Head of Legal & Democratic Services presented the Political Balance for the Authority for the remainder of the 2015/16 Municipal Year following the result of the by-election for the Aylesford Green Ward. The agreed Political Balance is contained at Appendix A to these Minutes.

The Senior Member Services & Scrutiny Support Officer directed Members attention to the membership of Committees, Groups and Forums and the outstanding issues that needed to be decided. With input from Members, the membership for the remainder of 2015/16 was completed. This is contained at Appendix B to these Minutes.

### **Recommended:**

- That**
- (i) the Political Balance of the Authority as contained at Appendix A to these Minutes be adopted, subject to the Council agreeing that the requirements of the Political Balance Regulations be not applied to the Membership of the Joint Transportation Board, Appeals Panels, Standards Committee and the Sub-Committee of the Licensing and Health and Safety Committee established under the Licensing Act 2003 and Gambling Act 2005.**
  - (ii) the Planning Committee be increased from 16 to 17 Members.**
  - (iii) Councillor Murphy be allocated the remaining seat on the Planning Committee and Councillor Koowaree be allocated the remaining seat on the Appointments Committee.**
  - (iv) the changes in Committee membership as notified by the Group Leaders and as set out in Appendix B to these Minutes be noted.**

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## THE POLITICAL BALANCE CALCULATION DECEMBER 2015

### A.1 All Committees to which balance applies

	Committee	Seats/Committee		Total Seats
1 x 12	Overview and Scrutiny	12	=	12
1 x 17	Planning	17	=	17
1 x 13	Licensing and Health & Safety	13	=	13
1 x 12	Selection	12	=	12
1 x 8	Audit	8	=	8
1 x 5	Appointments	5	=	5
<b>Total</b>				<u>67</u>

### B. Percentage of group in relation to total membership of the authority

43 members =		%
35 Conservative	=	81.39534
3 Labour	=	6.97674
3 Ashford Independent	=	6.97674
<u>Note:</u> 1 Liberal Democrat		2.32558
1 UKIP		2.32558
		<u>99.99998</u>

### C.1 Allocation of Seats on Committees in proportion to Group strength

<i>Committee</i>	<b>Con</b>	<b>Lab</b>	<b>AI</b>	<b>Allocated</b>	<b>Total</b>
1 x 12 O&S	10	1	1		12
1 x 17 Planning	14	1	1	1*	17
1 x 12 Selection	10	1	1		12
1 x 13 Licensing, Health & Safety	11	1	1		13
1 x 8 Audit	6	1	1	0	8
1 x 5 Appointments	4	0	0	1*	5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>55 (54.538)</b>	<b>5 (4.604)</b>	<b>5 (4.604)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>67</b>

\*Under the draft calculation all Groups had received their allocations on the above Committees, and when taken collectively their overall entitlement to seats across all Committees, however, one seat remains to be allocated on the Planning and the Appointments Committee.

### C.2 Allocation of seats on all ordinary Committees to achieve overall proportionality

Political Group entitlement in relation to all seats: 66

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>54.538 =</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Labour</b>	<b>4.604651=</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Ashford Independent</b>	<b>4.604651=</b>	<b>5</b>
		<hr/>
		<b>65</b>
<b>1 Liberal Democrat</b>		<hr/>
<b>1 UKIP</b>	<b>=</b>	<b>2</b>
		<hr/>
<b>Total</b>		<b>67</b>
		<hr/>

**D. Committees etc. to which balance cannot apply or will not apply either as a direct result of joint arrangements or the Council agreeing, i.e. no member votes against this arrangement, on each occasion the Council adopts a revised political balance for the Authority.**

\*1 x 3 Appeals (3 Member Panels) 3 Members per meeting drawn on rota from a Panel of 15 Members (which does not meet as a Committee) = 3

<sup>x</sup> 1 x 7 Joint Transportation Board = 7

1 x 3 Licensing Sub-Committee (3 Member Panels) 3 Members per meeting drawn on rota from a Panel of 13 Members (which does meet as a Committee so is itself balanced) = 3

\* Standards – broadly politically balanced as part of membership based on posts.

<sup>x</sup> Due to the Joint Arrangements and the manner in which seats are allocated by the Kent County Council, it is impossible to have an overall balanced allocation of seats.

Committee	Con	Lab	AI	Others	Total
<b>*1 x 15 Appeals</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>15</b>
<b><sup>x</sup>1 x 7 Joint Transportation</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>*Standards</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Plus Chair and Vice-Chair O&amp;S</b>			<b>8</b>

**APPENDIX B**  
**(Minute No. 232/12/15 refers)**

**SELECTION AND CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**3<sup>RD</sup> DECEMBER 2015**

**MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES, GROUPS AND FORUMS,  
INCLUDING CHAIRMEN AND VICE-CHAIRMEN**

On the basis of the draft Political Balance Calculation agreed with Group Leaders the entitlement to seats is set out below.

**Overview and Scrutiny Committee (12 Members)**

Members of the Cabinet may not be appointed to this Committee

<b>Conservative (10)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (1)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (0)</b>	<b>UKIP (0)</b>
Adby	Chilton (Ch)	Michael (VCh)		
Feacey				
Hicks				
A Howard				
W Howard				
Knowles				
Krause				
Link				
Sims				
Wedgbury				

**Audit Committee (8 Members)**

<b>Conservative (6)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (1)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (0)</b>	<b>UKIP (0)</b>
Buchanan	Chilton	Smith		
Link (Ch)				
Powell				
Shorter				
Waters (VCh)				
White				

**Planning Committee (17 Members) (plus 1 ex officio)**

<b>Conservative (14)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (1)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (0)</b>	<b>UKIP (1)</b>
Apps	Britcher	Ovenden		Murphy
Barrett				
Bennett				
Mrs Blanford				
Bradford				
Burgess (Ch)				
Clarkson (EO)				
Clokie				
Dehnel				
Galpin				
Heyes				
Link				
Powell				
Waters				
Wedgbury (VCh)				

**Selection & Constitutional Review Committee (12 Members)**

<b>Conservative (10)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (1)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (0)</b>	<b>UKIP (0)</b>
Bell (VCh)	Chilton	Ovenden		
Mrs Bell				
Bennett				
Mrs Blanford				
Burgess				
Clarkson (Ch)				
Galpin				
A Howard				
Mrs Martin				
Shorter				

### Licensing and Health and Safety Committee (13 Members)

Group Leaders are reminded of the importance of nominating Members who are available to attend day-time hearings of the Licensing Sub-Committee.

<b>Conservative (11)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (1)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (0)</b>	<b>UKIP (0)</b>
Adby	Britcher	Smith		
Apps				
Bennett				
Bradford (VCh)				
Feacey (Ch)				
Mrs Heyes				
Miss Martin				
Pickering				
Shorter				
Sims				
Mrs Webb				

### Appointments Committee (5 Members)

<b>Conservative (4)</b>	<b>Labour (0)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (0)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (1)</b>	<b>UKIP (0)</b>
Bell (VCh)	Chilton (invited non- voting)	Ovenden (invited non- voting)	Koowaree	_____
Clarkson (Ch)				
Clokier				
Powell				

### Appeals (15 Members – 3 Members to be drawn per meeting)

Members should not be a Member of the Cabinet. Group Leaders are reminded of the importance of nominating Members who are available to attend day-time meetings.

<b>Conservative (12)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (1)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (1)</b>	<b>UKIP (0)</b>
Apps	Britcher	Michael	Koowaree	
Barrett				
Bradford				
Mrs Heyes				
Hicks				
Knowles				
Krause				
Mrs Martin				
Pickering				
Sims				
Webb				
Wedgbury				

### Standards Committee (8 Members)

Based on 6 Conservative Members plus the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

<b>Conservative (6)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (1)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (0)</b>	<b>UKIP (0)</b>
Mrs Bell (VCh)	Chilton	Michael		
Dehnel				
Feacey				
Hicks (Ch)				
Knowles				
Waters				



**Joint Transportation Board (7 Members)**

<b>Conservative (6)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (0)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (0)</b>	<b>UKIP (0)</b>
Bartlett (Ch)	Farrell			
Feacey				
Heyes				
A Howard				
Mrs Martin				
Webb				

**Community Grants Panel (7 Members including the Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure & Environment)**

<b>Conservative (6)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (0)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (0)</b>	<b>UKIP (0)</b>
Apps (VCh)	Farrell			
Bennett				
Mrs Blanford (PH)				
Link (Ch)				
Sims				
Webb				

**Joint Consultative Committee (6 Members) – At least one Member from each Group – the remainder from the administration.**

Membership is to include the Leader and/or appropriate Portfolio Holder.

<b>Conservative (4)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (1)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (0)</b>	<b>UKIP (0)</b>
Burgess	Britcher	Smith		
Krause				
Miss Martin (Ch)				
Shorter				

### **Parish & Urban Forum (6 Members) (plus 1 ex officio)**

Membership to include the Portfolio Holder and one Member from each Group

<b>Conservative (4)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (1)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (0)</b>	<b>UKIP (0)</b>
Mrs Bell (Ch)	Chilton	Ovenden		
Bradford				
Clarkson (EO)				
Krause				
Pickering				

### **Member Training Panel (8 Members)**

<b>Conservative (6)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (1)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (0)</b>	<b>UKIP (0)</b>
Adby	Farrell	Smith		
Hicks				
Krause (VCh)				
Link				
Miss Martin (Ch)				
Wedgbury				

### **Local Government and Polling Districts Task Group (10 Members)**

<b>Conservative (8)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (1)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (0)</b>	<b>UKIP (0)</b>
Barrett	Chilton	Michael		
Bell (Ch)				
Mrs Bell				
Clarkson (VCh)				
Clokie				
Dehnel				
Heyes				
W Howard				

**Local Plan & Planning Policy Task Group (10 Members)**

<b>Conservative (8)</b>	<b>Labour (1)</b>	<b>Ashford Independent (1)</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat (0)</b>	<b>UKIP (0)</b>
Bennett (VCh)	Britcher	Michael		
Mrs Blanford				
Clarkson (Ch)				
Clokie				
Galpin				
Heyes				
Shorter				
Wedgbury				