

Ashford Borough Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Ashford Borough Council held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **19th May 2016**.

Present:

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

Cllrs. Apps, Barrett, Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Bennett, Mrs Blanford, Bradford, Britcher, Buchanan, Burgess, Clarkson, Clokie, Farrell, Feacey, Galpin, Heyes, Hicks, A Howard, W Howard, Knowles, Koowaree, Krause, Michael, Murphy, Ovenden, Pickering, Powell, Shorter, Sims, Waters, Mrs Webb, Wedgbury, White.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting: -

- (i) Her Worshipful the Mayor welcomed distinguished guests and the friends and family of the Mayor Elect. She also advised that the meeting was being recorded by Radio Ashford for broadcast on 107.1FM on the morning of Sunday 22nd May.
- (ii) the Reverend Catherine Wilson said prayers.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Aaby, Bell, Chilton, Dehnel, Mrs Heyes, Link, Miss Martin, Mrs Martin, Smith.

Also Present:

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Law & Governance, Head of Finance, Head of Culture, Member Services and Scrutiny Manager, Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development), Senior Member Services and Scrutiny Support Officer, Member Services and Scrutiny Support Officer.

1 Election of Mayor

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

This was seconded by Councillor Apps.

Councillor Clokie said that it was with great joy that he asked the Council to support his nomination of George Koowaree to be the Mayor of Ashford for 2016/17.

He said that George was extremely well known to all in the Chamber, but it would only be those who were around in 1996/97 who would remember his previous very successful year as Mayor. There may though be many things about George that colleagues did not know and he would attempt to expand their knowledge whilst George stood in the wings waiting for his Mayoral robes.

Councillor Clokie said that George had come to England from Mauritius to study and met his wife Joy whilst shopping at Dickens & Jones on Regents Street and they were married in 1963. George did his National Service and after two years came out

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and worked as a linguist telephonist in the City on an international telephone exchange. Of course his French was perfect as Mauritius was a French outpost. He eventually moved to Ashford, by which time George had become the father to three lovely girls. He had a new job working as a psychiatric nurse at St Augustine's Hospital in Chartham, but was unfortunately forced to take early retirement since he had damaged his spine lifting patients.

Former Councillor Deryck Weatherall, who had become the father-in-law of one of George's daughters, suggested that he put his name forward to be a Liberal Councillor. "But I am not a Political animal" replied George and Councillor Clokie thought they could all vouch for that! Nevertheless he was elected to the Ashford Borough Council in 1987. Sadly George's wife died in 1994 after a knee replacement operation from which she suffered serious rheumatic arthritis. He now had a lovely partner in Gloria who he met several years later.

Councillor Clokie said that one of George's fondest memories was one of his first train journeys in the UK, catching the Golden Arrow from Victoria to Paris. Councillor Clokie had also made that journey with his father when he was 11 and the only things he particularly remembered were changing trains and walking across railway lines in Calais and the wonderful crest on the front of the engine. George remembered it as a wonderful experience of travelling on the train in the UK and Paris. Another first for George on his arrival in this country was strangely queuing. Surely they did queue in France and Mauritius! There was also a story that George did not know he knew! When Richard Vella was the Mayor's Chauffeur, he went to collect George for an engagement at 10am. Driving along he spotted a man in his dressing gown and slippers walking down to the local shops. "That looks like George" he said. It was George! He did not get his newspaper that morning. He was bundled up, re-dressed and made the engagement just in time! George had promised him that he would look at his diary for the next day every night before going to bed. We couldn't have Sandra having to gather him up and get him re-dressed!

Councillor Clokie said he commended Councillor George Koowaree to be the Mayor of the Ashford Borough for the year 2016/17.

Councillor Apps said he was pleased to see Councillor George Koowaree seeking nomination to the Mayoralty and he was happy to second his nomination as Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the forthcoming year.

He said they had known each other for a number of years and had a great business working relationship. He also had a great personal following that had supported him in his years in Local Government. This had begun in 1987 when he was elected to the Ashford Borough Council and then following on with the Mayoralty in 1996/97, which was a role he had held so well and carried out with dignity and respect.

Councillor Apps said that on a personal note, during that previous Mayoral year they had both been involved in a team, with Sir Keith Speed MP, in transferring the nameplate 'Ashford' from the Class 33 locomotive to the Class 92 and that had been a very pleasant experience. Regrettably the nameplate had now been sold.

During George's upcoming Office as Mayor, Councillor Apps was sure that he would more than emphasise the importance of the role, coupled with most importantly the ambassadorial position of the Office, which he knew he would do well. In light of the winds of change blowing through the Borough, he said that as a senior past Mayor

himself he did not hesitate to second the nomination of Councillor George Koowaree as Mayor of the Borough and he wished him well for the year ahead.

There were no other nominations.

Resolved:

That Councillor George Koowaree be elected Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the Municipal Year 2016/17

2 Declaration of Acceptance of Office by the Mayor

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

3 Appointment of Mayor's Chaplain

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

4 Vote of Thanks by the Mayor for His Election

His Worshipful the Mayor began by thanking Councillors for electing him as Mayor. He said it felt like he had been there before! He remembered 20 years ago, when he was first elected as Mayor, the Council had a brand new Chief Executive and now he was the Mayor again the Council again had a brand new Chief Executive. So he asked himself "is it me?", but he knew that there had been other Chief Executives in between. He did want to say though that Tracey was a lot prettier than David Lambert! Seriously though, they went back a long way and he was pleased to be working with her again.

He said he wanted to thank Councillor Clokie for proposing him and Councillor Apps for seconding him. He had known both Councillors for a very long time. He also wanted to thank all Councillors for supporting him as their Mayor. He and Gloria wanted to say a big thank you to Geraldine and Brian for letting them deputise at some of their functions this year. It had been a good experience, especially for Gloria in gently leading her in to the responsibilities expected of her.

His Worshipful the Mayor said that he had to admit something to everyone present. Gloria had not wanted him to be a Councillor again. She had said "you've done it for so long, you are getting old now, just please rest and enjoy yourself". "OK Gloria", he had responded, "I'll listen to you and I am not going to do it". The Group had got somebody else to stand on his patch and he was very pleased, but at the last moment that person had decided to stand where he lived. North Willesborough had always had a Liberal Democrat Councillor and now there was a vacuum. He considered that should not be allowed to go without giving people a choice so, to the dismay of Gloria, he had put his name forward! Luckily, the people had voted him in so he had to go back to Gloria and tell her that he had been elected. She had accepted this and understood the reasons why. Then, at his first meeting back on the Council, the Selection & Constitutional Review Committee, Councillor Clokie said that he had been Mayor before and he could do it again. His first thought was how

was he going to tell Gloria, but if the Members wanted him he would be happy to do it. Once it was confirmed the Councillor sitting next to him had said “you’re going to have to sell that to Gloria now!” He went home that evening and said “Hello darling” to Gloria. Her immediate response had been “what have you done?!” He said “look, you are going to be Deputy Mayoress” and shut the door! She eventually calmed down and got used to the idea and she was there tonight and ready to be the Mayoress.

He said it was really great to see ex-Councillors, friends, family and special guests in attendance this evening. He was really honoured to welcome the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Kent Mr Jessel and his friend and colleague the Chairman Elect of Kent County Council Tom Gate to the Chamber and thanked them both for coming.

His Worshipful the Mayor said that the vote of thanks the last time he had been Mayor had been done by ex-Councillor Deryck Weatherall who was Leader of the Liberal Democrats at that time. In his speech he told that Chamber that he had been talking to the Mayor’s Secretary who had said that she had loved him as Mayor, but she could not control him. He wanted to reassure Andrea that he was a changed man this time around and he would be easy to control!

He said it was an honour to be the First Citizen of the Borough and to be its ambassador. He hoped that he and Gloria would attend many functions both in town and in the villages and he would endeavour to reach all of the Borough’s communities. He wanted to be the Mayor of the people, for the people. Ashford had grown slowly, but the right fertiliser had been added and now this Ash Tree was now full of buds and in a couple of years would be blooming intensively. He referred to the Elwick Road development, the brewery and Aldi developments, the Commercial Quarter and the model railway amongst others. When people asked him how Ashford was, his reply to them would be – “Ashford is great, but come to see for yourself”.

As was customary, His Worshipful the Mayor said had two charities for the year. Firstly Riding for the Disabled - an organisation based in Woodchurch which they had attended when deputising for the Mayor. The charity was looking to raise funds for a new pony and to buy a new modern carriage where the rear wheels turned independently to make it easier for users. They had been overwhelmed by the happiness on the faces of the users and the aims and commitment of those involved with the charity, and he made his mind up that day that this would be a charity he was going to support. The second deserving cause was going to be Carers Support based in South Ashford. As a Member of Kent County Council involved with Social Services, he had come across a number of carers. There were thousands of carers helping in the community, some were known to Local Authorities, but many were not and they quietly got on with their role of caring for family or friends and often did not get any support. One example he wanted to give arose when he was sitting on a Kent County Council Select Committee for Carers and two young people aged 11 and 12 had come along to talk to the Committee Members. They explained that they were carers for their Mother who was an alcoholic and before going to school they had to make sure that she was up, dressed and safe. Consequently, they often arrived late for school but they did not feel they could tell their teachers or fellow pupils why they were late. There were a lot of similar cases to this, so any money raised would hopefully go to supporting these people. The Chief Executive of Carers Support, Sue Ross also wanted to initiate a project to support carers for a six month period after they had finished undertaking their caring role to fill any vacuum and

help their adjustment back to normal life. He hoped all present would consider supporting any functions that were put on for his charities.

His Worshipful the Mayor concluded by once again thanking everybody for his election.

5 Vote of Thanks to the Retiring Mayor and Mayoress

Councillor Galpin began his speech by congratulating Councillor Koowaree on his elevation to the Mayoralty. He understood this was his second time and if he made it to a third time he would get to keep the robes!

Councillor Galpin said he would be delighted to propose a vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor Councillor Geraldine Dyer and her Escort, the indefatigable Brian, for their service to the Borough during the past year.

What could one say about this 'pocket rocket?' In another life Geraldine had been a school teacher who had taught his daughter, and he had felt the full effect of her 'school ma'amishness' when she had attended the Town Twinning Business Day last year at the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce. Councillor Galpin said he was feeling quite pleased with himself as he had arranged for the businesses who were driving the growth of the town to come along and talk to their multinational partners and after a particularly technical presentation from Stanhope, she had taken him aside and told in no uncertain terms that he should arrange for some sort of translation service! Fortunately the next presentation had been by a polyglot person which lightened the mood somewhat.

He said Geraldine and Brian's year had started with a bit of a hiccup, with Geraldine forgetting her handbag and glasses after being sworn in at last year's Mayor Making. Ever dutiful, Brian was dispatched to locate them and that seemed to set the seal on how well the partnership had worked as a finely tuned double act. He also wanted to mention the general support of 'The Dyer Tribe' in Mayoral events. Geraldine and Brian had been able to rely on their children and family to support them. Geraldine herself had been concerned that her smaller stature may hamper her performance in her role as Mayor, but she needn't have worried as she had been a featherweight champion! She had proved the magic of the Mayoralty by fitting straight in to the robes without alteration after inheriting them from some previous incumbents who were a little different in stature!

Councillor Galpin said that Geraldine and Brian had worked remarkably hard over the past year and had been a credit to the Borough as a Mayor and Escort who had exemplified the best of Ashford as ambassadors and advocates. He had been fortunate enough to attend many of the same functions as 'The Dynamic Duo' and had found them the perfect double act - Geraldine in the more official role and Brian doing the 'schmoozing' – keeping everybody happy. They had been a very regal couple even when protocol was overlooked such as at a recent Chernobyl memorial service in Canterbury Cathedral where she had been forced to sit with him and the other common people, and not the VIPs, but she had taken it very well and only kicked him three times! They had welcomed schools to the Parlour, turned sods in the rain, represented the Borough within it as the Queen's Representative, outside as ambassadors and Geraldine had delivered many prepared speeches at functions. Most remarkably had been her ability to respond when somebody unexpectedly said "perhaps the Mayor would like to say something here" - never a word out of place and always far more apposite than "you've all done very well". Geraldine and Brian

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had worked so hard and raised a large sum of money for their charities and he was honoured to say on behalf of the Council and the people of Ashford that “you have done very well”.

Councillor Galpin concluded by thanking Geraldine and Brian for an exemplary Mayoralty and welcomed Geraldine back in to the ranks, but he urged her not to forget her glasses!

Councillor Mrs Blanford said she would like to congratulate Councillor Koowaree on his appointment as Mayor.

She said she would like to second Councillor Galpin’s kind comments about Geraldine and Brian. Their reputation had spread throughout the Borough this year and she had heard comments back from all sources about how active they had been. She wanted to thank their outgoing Mayor Geraldine and her Escort Brian for the time and trouble they had taken on behalf of the Borough. It had been very much appreciated.

6 Response by the Retiring Mayor

Councillor Mrs Dyer said she first wanted to thank Councillor Galpin for his kind words. The person who had actually said to her “would you mind saying a few words here” off the cuff was of course Councillor Galpin himself! He had also been at a lot of the same events that they had this year and she wanted to commend him for his hard work and incredible dedication to his role as Town Centre ‘Tsar’.

Councillor Mrs Dyer said she had spoken to a couple of Councillors earlier and told them what she was going to say and one of them had very kindly said “oh no, that’s going to be the 14th time I’ve heard that”. So apparently all Mayors said the same thing and everyone would find that out shortly!

She said it had been an honour and a privilege to represent Ashford as Mayor. A very enjoyable year had afforded many insights into what was happening throughout the Borough, and the hard work which went in to projects and activities to the benefit of so many. It had been particularly humbling to see how much work was done by volunteers, who gave up their time and worked tirelessly for a cause they believed in.

Looking back at events during the year, perhaps, for her, the most moving was the Freedom Parade. As everyone knew, Ashford had strong links with the military, and in particular the Intelligence Corps. In June last year, the links were reinforced with a spectacular parade through the town, a marching band and the presentation of a silver horse to the Borough which was now proudly on display in the Mayor’s Parlour. She was invited to inspect the troops and spoke to the veteran soldiers who proudly wore their medals, bravely earned in Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia, Northern Ireland and the Falklands.

The Annual twinning visit in September had also been an important occasion for her, with the Mayors and delegations from Fougères and Bad Münstereifel joining them in Ashford, to strengthen the links they shared. Young people from the three towns pointed the way forward and she was very proud of the Highworth students, both in the maturity of their ideas and in the linguistic competence they demonstrated. Business leaders from the twin towns also met and exchanged ideas, ably led by Councillor Galpin. She hoped that the contacts made would be maintained. The visit in September this year would be to Bad Münstereifel and of course all Councillors

were warmly invited to join the group. Bad Münstereifel was a delightful town and all would receive a very heartfelt welcome.

She said that perhaps her happiest times during the year had been spent with the young people. The most demanding occasions had been here in the Council Chamber where Shadoxhurst Scouts, under Councillor Bradford's leadership, had asked her some searching questions and on another occasion Brook Primary School pupils had debated the subject of homework. Having voted to abolish it, they had been very disappointed to discover that they would nevertheless continue to be given it! It was for them all, a glimpse of how the Council worked and the role of the Mayor and Borough Councillors. At the Julie Rose Stadium she had presented awards to talented young athletes. They had been particularly impressed and moved by the courage and determination of those who achieved so well, often overcoming major problems. She said that the stadium was a fantastic facility and it was a delight to see how much value was added to the lives of youngsters in the Borough and beyond.

Councillor Mrs Dyer said that the year had allowed them to really appreciate some of the projects that had greatly benefitted everyone, young and old. At Conningbrook, it was still early days, but the opportunity to join clubs and take part in water sports of every kind would transform the lives of many. They had opened shops in Park Mall and visited the Creative Collective there and also Ashford Art Centre in Park Street. There was some very imaginative and creative work going on there. They were also invited to the site of the new Ashford College and she saw that it was growing higher daily. It was great to be a part of it all. The wonderful progress made in the provision of older people's accommodation had been so good to see at Farrow Court and Chamberlain Manor, which was now open and already full. So much thought had gone in to ensuring that the older residents kept their independence, while feeling secure and happy in the knowledge that help was at hand if needed. It was a far cry from the traditional care model. The residents were part of a community, with opportunities for entertainment and many facilities to make life pleasant and easier. At Luckley House, another great sheltered housing scheme, the residents had teamed up with the pupils of Lady Joanna Thornhill School. The children did the gardens and grew vegetables and it was great for the older residents to get together with young people. It really was interactive learning and everyone was enjoying it the day they had visited. She and Brian had got to know many Mayors from Towns and Boroughs in Kent and all had commented very positively when they had visited Ashford. They had a lot to be proud of.

She said that chairing Full Council meetings had been a challenge - not least because there were so many new Councillors when she became Mayor last May. She had not really had the chance to get to know them and, as it was difficult to read the name plates from the dais, she had had to study the photos before the first Full Council meeting to make sure she got the names right. Imagine her dismay then when, having worked hard to learn the names of the new Councillors, she stumbled over one very well known to her when she called Councillor Chilton, Councillor Clinton! She had apologised afterwards and he was kind enough to say he hadn't noticed, but she thought he probably had! She had encouraged colleagues at every Council meeting to support fundraising events for her chosen charities. She was however totally unprepared for the large article in the Kentish Express, stating that she was asking her "errant" Councillors to "please, please me" by supporting the Beatles evening. The headline read - "She needs a little help from her friends". She wanted to very much thank colleagues who had supported the fundraising, either by coming to events, or donating raffle prizes or money. They weren't entirely sure of

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the final total just yet, but they estimated that together they had raised somewhere in the region of £13,000, to be divided equally between the Pilgrims Hospice and Find a Voice.

She also wanted to thank the Reverend Catherine Wilson for all her support and very thoughtful prayers at Full Council meetings.

Finally, Councillor Mrs Dyer said she would like to wish Councillor George Koowaree and his Mayoress Gloria Champion an enjoyable and successful year. She was sure George would sail through it, having already done it once and because everyone in the Borough already seemed to know him! She also wanted to give her best wishes to Councillor Winston Michael and Doreen in their role as Deputy Mayor and Mayoress.

7 Election and Appointment of Deputy Mayor

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

This was seconded by Councillor Ovenden.

There were no other nominations.

Resolved:

That Councillor Winston Michael be elected Deputy Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the Municipal Year 2016/2017.

8 Declaration of Acceptance of Office by the Deputy Mayor

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

9 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 21st April 2016 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

10 Announcements

His Worshipful the Mayor said that in addition to the distinguished guests he had mentioned earlier, he also wanted to welcome Inspector Nigel Douglas, Councillor Nelson the Deputy Mayor of Tenterden, Councillor Lyons the Mayor of Hythe, Councillor Abram the Deputy Mayor of Faversham and Councillor Larkins the Deputy Mayor of Ramsgate and Councillor Falcon, her Escort. He advised that there would be refreshments served in the Committee Rooms downstairs after the meeting and all were welcome.

11 Confirmation of Cabinet Arrangements for 2016/17 by the Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Clarkson, said he wished to advise of two new appointments to the existing Cabinet. They were Councillor Callum Knowles who was appointed to the Information, Technology and Communications Portfolio and Councillor Brad Bradford who was appointed to the Highways, Wellbeing and Safety Portfolio. He also wanted to advise that following the Queen's Speech yesterday, there would certainly be a need to refocus some of their forward planning within the next year or so, to take account of any enactments that may arise therefrom.

12 Selection and Constitutional Review Committee – 3rd May 2016

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on the 3rd May 2016 be approved and adopted.

13 Cabinet – 12th May 2016

Resolved:

That subject to the expiry of the period by which decisions arising from the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 12th May 2016 may be called in, i.e. 25th May 2016: -

- (i) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 12th May 2016 be received and noted with the exception of Minute Nos. 430, 431 and 432.**
- (ii) Minute Nos. 430, 431 and 432 be approved and adopted.**

(DS)
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