

Ashford Borough Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Ashford Borough Council held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **20th October 2016**.

Present:

His Worshipful the Mayor, Cllr. S J G Koowaree (Chairman);

Cllrs. Adby, Apps, Barrett, Mrs Bell, Mrs Blanford, Buchanan, Burgess, Chilton, Clarkson, Clokie, Dehnel, Mrs Dyer, Farrell, Feacey, Galpin, Heyes, Mrs Heyes, Hicks, A Howard, W Howard, Knowles, Krause, Link, Macpherson, Miss Martin, Michael, Murphy, Ovenden, Pickering, Powell, Shorter, Sims, Smith, Waters, Mrs Webb, Wedgbury, White.

Also Present:

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Corporate Director (Law and Governance), Head of Finance, Senior Member Services Officer.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting: -

- (i) The Reverend Alan Dinnie said prayers.
- (ii) His Worshipful the Mayor asked Members to remain standing in silence in respect of King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand who had passed away recently.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Bartlett, Bell, Bennett, Bradford, Buchanan, Mrs Martin.

173 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. The Corporate Director (Law and Governance) advised that there were none.

174 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 21st July 2016 and the Extraordinary Meeting held on the 8th September 2016 be approved and confirmed as correct records.

175 Announcements

(a) The Mayor's Charity

The Mayor advised that he was hosting a Neil Diamond Tribute evening on Saturday the 19th November at London Beach Golf Club, Tenterden. He said he would love as

many Councillors as possible to attend. More details could be obtained by contacting his PA, Andrea Collard.

(b) Leader of the Council

The Leader said that over the summer months there had been some significant developments on which he would like to take a few moments to update colleagues.

In September he had attended the topping out ceremony of the new Ashford College campus. The event marked a significant milestone in the delivery of one of the Council's Big 8 projects. One of the key challenges to economic growth and greater prosperity within the Borough was the improvement of the skills base locally. The delivery of this project should improve the prosperity of businesses and in doing so would support a stronger future economy within the area. With over 1,000 students and over a hundred staff in this location, all within easy walking distance of nearby shops, services and restaurants, this development would begin to change the dynamics of the town centre and would also have a positive effect more generally.

Colleagues would be aware that the Council had recently approved plans for an extension to the popular Cineworld cinema complex at the Eureka Leisure Park near Junction 9 of the M20. Three screens would be added at the site, including Kent's second IMAX screen. The expansion would complement the proposed six-screen town centre cinema at Elwick Place, in the heart of the town, which would breathe new life into an old brownfield site that had laid barren for so long. The Council was also in the process of finalising the legal documents in order that building works could start shortly.

He advised that the site for the first of Ashford's Commercial Quarter office blocks now had a hording around it as a prelude to the commencement of the construction works. This would be part of Ashford's exciting new business hub, which he liked to refer to as CQ38 (Commercial Quarter – 38 minutes from London).

The previous evening the Planning Committee had approved plans by Curious Drinks Limited, the beer and cider subsidiary of the Chapel Down winery, to build a state-of-the-art brewery and visitor attraction centre on the corner of Victoria Way. This would enable the business to grow its domestic and international distribution and provide for at least 40 new jobs. In addition they had approved the creation of 216 homes on Victoria Way and some of the Section 106 sums being levied would allow for great enhancements at Victoria Park.

With all these exciting developments now coming to fruition, Ashford's dynamic growth was set to continue. A growing town needed a strong business support network, which is why the Council had extended its close-working relationship with the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce into a 15th year. Ashford was fortunate to have such an active and strong Chamber and he saw the partnership as a key building block in the Council's vision to achieve greater economic prosperity for Ashford.

This month the Council had also brought the responsibility for grounds maintenance across the Borough back in-house, under the name Aspire Landscape Management. This initiative was a key part of delivering the adopted Land Management Improvement Plan, which aimed to make the Borough a pleasant and enjoyable place to live, work and visit. It also linked to Priority 4 of the Corporate Plan to

achieve an environment that created higher standards of public realm and open landscape and green spaces, thus raising civic pride and making the Borough more attractive for all. There would also be a focus on other areas beyond the town centre and more recent successes included working to promote new community facilities at Repton Park, Charing's new sports pavilion, Kestrel Park and the Spearpoint Pavilion. They must also never forget that they had an aging population and the Council was also looking to expand and enhance its planned provision at sheltered housing schemes such as Farrow Court and Danemore.

He said that Ashford already had a number of cycle paths but he wanted to invite all Members to join him in driving forward a real effort to deliver a meaningful network of cycle paths. Ashford would then be in a position to really encourage the use of cycles. 'Ashford the Cycling Town', certainly of Kent, was the ambition.

The Leader concluded by saying that the Council's Corporate Plan set out the positive direction they were taking to help the Borough to grow, thrive and prosper in the coming years. It was pleasing to see such progress being made against their strategic priorities – they were delivering on their promises whilst still being able to maintain the election pledge of the lowest Council Tax in Kent and one of the lowest in the Country. There was a great deal more to do but he considered they could all take heart from the significant amount of progress the Council had made thus far and they would continue to focus on exciting opportunities to encourage economic growth, provide business and leisure facilities, plan for an aging population and build quality homes for Ashford residents.

The Mayor said that in response to the Leader's statement, as Mayor he had pledged to promote Ashford wherever he went and he was particularly proud to be the Mayor during this year. There was so much going on and he saw this purely by the number of legal documents etc. he was having to sign as part of his weekly sealing process. He considered all Councillors had a responsibility to promote Ashford and all of the positive developments that were going on. People across the County were talking about Ashford and what a great place it was and they had to keep that momentum going.

176 Cabinet – 8th September and 13th October 2016

The report of the Corporate Director (Law and Governance), which had been tabled, clarified the procedure for consideration of the Cabinet minutes.

(a) Cabinet – 8th September 2016

Resolved:

- That (i) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 8th September 2016 be received and noted with the exception of Minute Nos. 120, 122, 123, 124, 125 and 133.**
- (ii) Minute Nos. 120, 122, 123, 124, 125 and 133 be approved and adopted.**

(b) Cabinet 13th October 2016

Resolved:

That subject to the expiry of the period by which decisions arising from the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 13th October 2016 may be called in, i.e. 26th October 2016: -

- (i) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 13th October 2016 be received and noted with the exception of Minute Nos. 164 and 165.**
- (ii) Minute Nos. 164 and 165 be approved and adopted.**

177 Audit Committee – 28th July and 29th September 2016

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meetings of the Audit Committee held on the 28th July and the 29th September 2016 be received and noted.

178 Selection and Constitutional Review Committee – 13th October 2016

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on the 13th October 2016 be approved and adopted.

(DS)

MINS: