

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 July 2017**.

Present:

His Worshipful the Mayor, Cllr. W R Michael (Chairman);

Cllrs. Aaby, Barrett, Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Bell, Bennett, Mrs Blanford, Bradford, Buchanan, Burgess, Chilton, Clarkson, Clokie, Farrell, Feacey, Galpin, Heyes, Hicks, A Howard, W Howard, Howard-Smith, Knowles, Koowaree, Krause, Link, Macpherson, Miss Martin, Mrs Martin, Murphy, Ovenden, Pickering, Shorter, Sims, Suddards, Mrs Webb, White.

Also Present:

Chief Executive, Director of Law and Governance, Director of Place and Space, Head of Finance and IT, Senior Member Services Officer.

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

Apologies:

Cllrs. Dehnel, Mrs Dyer, Mrs Heyes, Smith, Waters, Wedgbury.

118 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 Director of Law and Governance advised that there were none.

119 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Aaby	Made a Voluntary Announcement that he was an employee of Southeastern trains.	122 (b)
W Howard	Made a Voluntary Announcement that he was a Director of Ashford (Kent) Bowling Green Ltd who owned the land where the Ashford Town Bowls Club was situated.	122 (b)

120 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 18th May 2017 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

121 Announcements

(a) The Mayor

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting. He said that over the past few weeks he and the Mayoress had fulfilled 35 engagement requests plus held two functions for their own charities. They had been great opportunities to share with the Borough's communities and learn about their hopes and aspirations. Three events had particularly stood out because they showcased wonderful things that the Council was doing for important sections of the community. It was important to underline this as some of the good things remained invisible to residents, particularly when large ticket items were preoccupying their minds and making it hard to understand their benefits.

He firstly wanted to mention Quarry View in Aldington and The Spires at Tenterden - extra care homes which were a quantum leap from those of the past. Residents were proud to call these their home and he understood why when he had visited, because their privacy was retained but help was also on hand when needed. Social isolation could be a big problem for the elderly and these care homes fully addressed that issue as they were community-centric. The facilities on hand also made the homes a hub for their surrounding community as they had shops, hairdressers, beauty salons, fitness rooms and superb cafeterias. He had been so impressed that in his speech he thanked residents for welcoming him to their 'play park' which had brought laughter, but it was a wonderful credit to Ashford Borough Council that it was creating a new type of care home for this country and he was sure plenty of others would follow that lead.

Another visit he wanted to mention was Belgic Court which had also raised the bar, this time in terms of homes for vulnerable young people. It was a fantastic facility that pro-actively helped young people to become self-supported over a two year programme. He had met with two of the residents and had been impressed by what they had told him. The number of vulnerable young people was on the increase and more facilities like this were desperately needed because the future was with today's young and they needed to do everything to show them that they were valued members of society. He said he looked forward to a time when facilities like Belgic Court were no longer necessary because they did not have vulnerable young people.

The Mayor said that last Friday (14th July) something wonderful had happened in Ashford that would remain in the memories of all those that had attended for many years to come. The first Kent Challenger Games had taken place and was judged to be an outstanding success by schools, teachers, the children taking part and attending dignitaries. Some 650 children from 47 schools across Kent had participated in fun and games that were out of the ordinary, challenging, exciting and gave them a sense of achievement. A choir of 160 children, from across schools, sang ten inspirational songs including the Games Anthem 'One in a Million'. Also, during the day, the Gurkha Military band had given outstanding performances as had the Towers Cheerleaders Stunt Team. On a personal note it had been a tearful day as he had seen his dream of 2012 realised, but more so for the children as they had lived out their dreams to do such activities and represent their schools. The Games aimed to level the playing field by scoring on effort, teamwork and participation and this had seen some unexpected winners. The children had in fact enjoyed it so much that they had asked if they could come back next Friday! With a huge military presence at the Games, Ashford and Kent's Military Covenants had been able to be

reaffirmed. A small group of Councillors had seen the immense value in the Games and given him day to day support and he wanted to give heartfelt thanks from both him and the children to Councillors Dehnel, Miss Martin, Mrs Dyer and White who had all been absolutely amazing. He also wanted to thank the 60 volunteers who had made the event safe and enjoyable.

He said that the months ahead would be challenging for the Council as the new Local Plan progressed and significant developments came on stream. He looked forward to all Councillors working together for everyone's benefit.

In conclusion, the Mayor said that his next two charity events would be in November, at Cinnamon Spice and in January when he would be holding a 'black and white masquerade ball' at London Beach. He looked forward to all attending and raising huge sums of money for his young person's charities.

(b) Leader of the Council

The Leader said before he made his usual announcements he did want to reflect on the Kent Challenger Games. In his article for the Kentish Express he had said that this had been the Mayor's inspiration and the Council needed to recognise that and give him the credit for that. He thought that they would now be a recurring presence in the calendar and whilst he was sorry he had personally not been well enough to be there, the Games had been a great accolade not only for Ashford but the whole of Kent. He also wanted to echo the Mayor's comments about Quarry House. He had made a point of visiting some of the Borough's extra care homes and had been astonished by the facilities. Perhaps some visits should be organised for Members as a whole to see some of these projects.

The Leader said he would like to take the opportunity to provide a short update on recent developments. Many of them had already been covered widely in the local newspapers.

Colleagues would note that builders were now on site at Elwick Place, piling for the foundations, where plans were moving forward to transform the derelict land into a vibrant new leisure quarter with a six-screen picturehouse cinema, hotel and restaurants, complete with a new 282 space car park. The Council was funding the construction of the development, which was on their land, and once the work was complete they would own the leisure facility and would secure a source of income in the long-term for the people of Ashford that would enable the Council to deliver its services to the whole of the Borough. He was sure that all were looking forward to this wonderful new leisure quarter for the town centre because when it became a reality it would breathe new life in to the Borough. Over the road the Commercial Quarter was rising from the ground before their very eyes and, at the latest count, he thought they were now up to the fourth floor.

He had been pleased to see that Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce's Chief Executive Jo James had been awarded the outstanding Contribution to Business in Kent Award at the recent Kent Excellence in Business Awards 2017 ceremony. Jo was a central figure in Kent's, and more importantly, Ashford's business community and he had had the pleasure of working closely with her on a number of projects. Jo was (almost!) as passionate about Ashford as he was, and he was delighted her hard work and dedication to supporting the business community had been recognised.

He advised that Ashford's historic Victoria Park had been awarded a £167,000 development grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This would allow the Council to develop its bid for another grant in to the millions to develop Victoria Park. In partnership with stakeholders and community representatives, the Council had adopted an ambitious masterplan that aimed to create an attractive destination that boosted local civic pride, promoted wellbeing and celebrated the rich heritage of the site. Victoria Park had an outstanding architectural feature, the iconic and exuberant Hubert Fountain and the funding would support timely and beneficial repairs to this Grade II* listed fountain. Other works would include replacing the existing play space with sensory gardens, extending the popular community orchard, restoring the secret garden area and creating a paved path in to the park. Providing the community with a pleasant environment to visit and enjoy was important to the Council and the new funding would help create a well-maintained space, the type of which was needed when there was so much commercial, industrial and housing development in Ashford. Along with the success of the Kent Challenger Games, there had been other successful cultural activities, events and entertainment in recent weeks including the Festival in the Park and of course the Create Music Festival this coming weekend.

Finally, on a more domestic note, the recruitment process for the Council's four senior appointments was underway with the Council's Appointments Committee. It had been a long process of longlisting and shortlisting with consultants and the first of those interviews had been earlier that day and this would continue over the next three days. He was pleased to announce that the Committee had unanimously appointed Ben Lockwood as the new Director of Finance and Economy and he was sure that the appointment would be universally welcomed.

122 Cabinet – 15th June and 13th July 2017

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

(a) Cabinet – 15th June 2017

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 15th June 2017 be received and noted.

(b) Cabinet – 13th July 2017

Councillor Miss Martin said she wished to raise a question on Minute No. 102 – Station Approach. She said that given the Cabinet decision to move the taxi feeder rank to the Stour Centre car park leaving only two taxi spaces in the station forecourt and only allowing taxis to enter the station when one of those two spaces was free, she wanted to ask the Portfolio Holder what the plan was for disabled residents who needed a taxi when the two at the rank could not accommodate disability? She also asked what plans had been made to review this decision and how changes could be made if it was found that this strategy failed the public, the disabled and the taxi trade?

Councillor Bradford, Portfolio Holder for Health, Parking and Community Safety, responded that the number of rank spaces outside the domestic side of the station was not changing. As part of the consultation responses to the enabling works on Station Approach, the importance of a well-designed and properly maintained CCTV system for the enlarged and re-located taxi waiting area had been raised by a number of respondents, along with the need for a back-up system that would include a call system for disabled vehicles and other specific vehicles to be called to the taxi rank at the front of the station. Procurement was underway to ensure that both a well-designed and properly maintained CCTV system and a call up system for disabled and other specific vehicles was delivered. This would be an additional service to what was there currently and, incidentally, this point was covered in Paragraph 34 of the report to Cabinet on the 13th July. In response to the second point, he said that the Council was investing over £100,000 in the enabling works that included the zebra crossing and the increased capacity relocated taxi waiting area and a detailed process had been undertaken to ensure that the proposals would work. Safety studies and consultation had been undertaken with stakeholders and there had been a number of key meetings with taxi representatives. In addition the proposals had been considered by the Joint Transportation Board and the Planning Committee. The impact of the work would be closely monitored by Officers and views would be sought from members of the public, key stakeholders and representatives of disabled groups in the weeks after the new arrangements came in to place.

Resolved:

That subject to the expiry of the period by which decisions arising from the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 13th July 2017 may be called in, i.e. 26th July 2017, the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 13th July 2017 be received and noted.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 15.5 Councillors Miss Martin and Mrs Martin asked for it to be recorded that they had voted against the resolution in Minute No. 102 of the Cabinet of 13th July 2017.

123 Appointments Committee – 22nd June and 12th July 2017

(a) Appointments Committee – 22nd June 2017

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Appointments Committee held on the 22nd June 2017 be received and noted.

(b) Appointments Committee – 12th July 2017

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Appointments Committee held on the 12th July 2017 be received and noted.

124 Selection and Constitutional Review Committee – 13th July 2017

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on the 13th July 2017 be approved and adopted.

125 Audit Committee – 22nd June and 11th July 2017

(a) Audit Committee – 22nd June 2017

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee held on the 22nd June 2017 be received and noted.

(b) Audit Committee – 11th July 2017

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee held on the 11th July 2017 be received and noted.

126 Annual Report of the Audit Committee – 2016/17

Resolved:

That the Annual Report of the Audit Committee be accepted.

127 Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 2016/17

Resolved:

That the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be accepted.

(DS)

MINS: