

Ashford Borough Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Ashford Borough Council held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **18th October 2018**.

Present:

Her Worshipful the Mayor, Cllr. Mrs J E Blanford (Chairman);

Cllrs. Barrett, Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Bell, Bennett, Buchanan, Burgess, Clarkson, Clokie, Dehnel, Mrs Dyer, Farrell, Feacey, Galpin, Heyes, Mrs Heyes, Hicks, W Howard, Howard-Smith, Knowles, Koowaree, Krause, Link, Macpherson, Miss Martin, Mrs Martin, Michael, Murphy, Ovenden, Pickering, Shorter, Suddards, Waters, Mrs Webb, Wedgbury, White.

Also Present:

Chief Executive, Director of Law and Governance, Director of Finance and Economy, Director of Place and Space, Head of Legal and Democracy, Head of Planning and Development, Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development), Member Services Manager (Operational).

Apologies:

Cllrs. Adby, Bradford, Chilton, A Howard, Smith.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Reverend Cathie Aldis said prayers.

203 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.

204 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
W Howard	Made a Voluntary Announcement as he was one of the Ward Members for the Landscape Protection Policy Petition.	212
Miss Martin	Made a Voluntary Announcement as she was one of the Ward Members for the Landscape Protection Policy Petition.	212
Murphy	Made a Voluntary Announcement that she was currently in arrears with her Council Tax	

205 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 19th July 2018 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

206 Announcements

(a) The Mayor

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting. She advised that the last few months had provided her with a very full diary. Containing everything from military activities, such as the Step Short parade in Folkestone and the Drum Head Service at Canterbury Cricket Ground, Garden Parties, Carnivals, visits to vineyards and dinner at a Turkish restaurant where Councillor Buchanan had done his best not be dragged onto the dancefloor by a Belly Dancer! They had raised flags, unveiled the magnificent new Civic beacon and entertained friends from Fougères and Bad Münstereifel. These had been four action packed days and she particularly wanted to thank the Twinning Association for running the event successfully and also the Members of the Council who kindly hosted guests in their homes. They had experienced lovely weather and the visitors had really enjoyed themselves. In fact, she thought they may have to lock the coach doors on the Monday morning to stop one more final hug and kiss before they left!

It was not all junketing however. Local events which stood out included: - the laying of the Victoria Cross paving stone at Charing in honour of Corporal Coppins; launching the Snowdogs Discover Ashford trail which had been one of Ashford's big successes; opening the new Aldi store in Victoria Road; taking part in a Baptist service in South Ashford; visiting the Park View residential home in Park Farm and seeing their new dementia suite; opening the Repton Connect Community Centre at Repton Park which had been attended by a large group of locals; and unearthing her teddies from the attic and giving them an airing at the Bybrook Nature Reserve's Teddy Bear's Picnic. These were just a few of the many and varied activities she had undertaken. She had also attended a number of AGMs for Kent charities including two that past week. The first had been Hi-Kent - a charity who assisted the deaf and hard of hearing county wide, providing 200 after care clinics, 25 lip reading classes, British sign language classes and tinnitus support groups. From the number of people attending the AGM it was clear that the charity was well supported and a vital charity for the deaf. The second charity had been the Ashford Choral Society who gave notable performances, not only of classic choral pieces, but of more modern work by Benjamin Britten and Michael Tippett, under the baton of Mark Deller who would be retiring after 48 years with the choir at the end of the season. They longed for a performance space in Ashford and hoped that this would be available not too far in the future. They just about made ends meet financially with the addition of raffles and requests, but she felt they should receive more support from the Council as she considered the Borough still lacked a real cultural profile and this was one of the jewels in Ashford's crown.

The Mayor advised that she was also making progress with her two charities and was working with ten different Primary Schools on environmental projects. The following

morning she would be attending Goat Lees Primary School with an Officer from Environmental Services to encourage them with their project. This would be followed by visits to other school assemblies to support them in their endeavours. She was also looking for a site to plant a small grove of trees in the Borough. The Paula Carr Diabetes Trust had been in the news recently, pressing the Government to ensure that the Kent Health Authorities provided patches for Type 1 Diabetes sufferers to monitor their blood sugar levels without having to take blood samples several times a day and night. This was one of the projects for which she was raising funds. To raise funds for her charities she had hosted a dinner dance at London Beach Hotel with a very energetic Freddie Mercury and Brian May tribute act and a more select visit to the Great Dixter Gardens where guests had been shown around by Fergus Garrett, the Head Gardener and Manager. They had also had a guided tour of the house which had brought alive the lives of the Lloyd family who had rescued Great Dixter in 1910. There were two upcoming functions that she would like to draw to Members attention. Firstly a Race Night at Great Chart Village Hall which would involve people acting as jockeys and racing against each other. Gary Fagg of the Paula Carr Trust would be in charge of the evening and he had assured her that it would all be great fun! Tickets were £10 and this included a fish and chip supper and she hoped all would come and enjoy the evening. For those of a more stately demeanour, she was hosting a Christmas dinner at Chart Hills Golf Club on Sunday 9th December and all were encouraged to bring their children and grandchildren. Carols would be sung by the Invicta Singers and rumour had it that Father Christmas also had the date in his diary! November would also see much activity over the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War. The usual remembrance service would take place in the Memorial Gardens in the morning of Sunday 11th November and the lighting of the beacon and blessing of the poppies in the evening in North Park. Many villages would be holding their own events as well.

Finally, the Mayor said she wanted to thank the band of kind supporters who had accompanied her to so many of the functions to which she was invited. It was the greatest happiness to her to have a companion at these events and not one had let her down. She was committed to attending the Christmas pantomime in Maidstone this December – Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs – so were there any volunteers?!

(b) Leader of the Council

The Leader said that over the past few weeks he had been reflecting on what had and was continuing to take place in the Borough over the past four or five years. He felt it was important every now and then to pause and take stock of successes and achievements which were helping to transform Ashford for the benefit of residents. They needed to reflect on how they had responded to the views of the people of Ashford. They knew there was still much to do and they needed to consider what was still facing them.

On housing, the need was well known, particularly for affordable housing both to rent and buy. The Council's Housing department was tackling this in a number of ways. Their approach to Government for the Debt Cap to be lifted in order that they could deliver more homes, appeared to have been successful and they now awaited the detail and implementation date. Proper provision of Bed & Breakfast accommodation for the homeless was being addressed, and the approach being taken was giving more suitable accommodation and it would also be more cost effective to the Borough and the public purse. Housing provision in the private sector was a significant national issue and the

Council had to play its part. They worked hard to endeavour to direct housing development to the most suitable locations. They needed to have a good five year land supply if they were to defend against the most inappropriate development in the Borough.

The Leader advised that the Council was investing in young people. In the past, several hundred of Ashford's young people had had to travel outside the Borough for higher and further education, but with the opening and future expansion of the new Ashford College, they were now able to offer that training and provision right at home in the Borough. Business investors would not have come to Ashford if this Conservative Administration had not created the positive climate for them to thrive and be successful. They had had nearly three quarters of a billion pounds worth of inward investment and that was continuing to grow. Ashford now had exceptionally low unemployment, and an increasingly skilled and flexible workforce which was only going to strengthen as young people gained the skills and qualifications needed in the modern workplace.

With regard to the Park Mall Shopping Centre, many of Ashford's residents were complaining that a third of the shops in Park Mall were empty. The Council listened and responded and bought the 34 shops in Park Mall. Now it was virtually full, with many independent retailers starting off and now growing their businesses.

The Leader said that the Council had taken a stronger stance on the care and maintenance of its Borough. They had been receiving lots of complaints about littering and the state of the town centre. They listened and acted by creating the Town Centre Action Team (TCAT) and they set about cleaning, repairing and painting. He said that littering was a scourge of modern life and they ran campaigns to encourage people not to drop litter. The vast majority of residents and visitors had responded to their appeals, but they were still left with a small but significant minority, who had no regard for the environment around them, and the Council had had to resort to enforcement with fines to stop litter dropping. Fly-tipping was another scourge, and they had taken offenders to court whenever they had been identified. Prior to this approach, there had been very few prosecutions, but in the past three years they had taken two people to court for fly-tipping and this had resulted in fines and court costs being charged. The Council also took a zero-tolerance approach to benefit fraud and Anti-Social Behaviour. The message was clear - when people were found to be breaking the law, the Council would take action. People had also been very unhappy about the state of the Borough's open public spaces and ground maintenance. The Council had listened and acted by taking the responsibility in-house, which was no small task. They had taken on 20 KCC parks staff, created a new depot, costing £1.1m, and equipped them with the state-of-the art equipment and vehicles to do the job that all wanted to see. The response from residents, businesses and indeed visitors had been very positive and everyone could see the great improvements that the Aspire team had delivered. They had now absorbed the TCAT team into the Aspire organisation and together they were doing a really exceptional job that all could be proud of.

With regard to lorry parking, the Leader said that five years ago people had complained to him about HGV drivers illegally parking overnight in places like the A20 lay-bys, causing a nuisance and disturbing local residents with their noise and dumping of rubbish. The Council listened and acted. Unfortunately, it was not easy and as a Local Authority, they had to work with partner agencies to bring about real change and that had taken time. However, the Council responded by adopting a number of measures designed to tackle the problem head on. They took steps to educate HGV drivers about the problems being caused by their

actions across the Borough. They had also spoken to the owner of the Ashford Truck-Stop and encouraged him to double its size. They realised that direct and decisive action needed to be taken against HGV drivers who continued to park in those inappropriate locations so they partnered with Kent County Council and the Department for Transport to confront those HGV drivers. They had now reached the position where HGV drivers were having to park overnight at the Truck-Stop if space was available, or face being clamped and fined. The Truck-Stop had launched an app that enabled drivers to book space there in advance. He also reported that construction work had recently started to greatly enlarge the Truck-Stop only a week or so ago.

The Leader mentioned the issue of Brownfield sites and said that Ashford residents, like many others across the UK, had called for Brownfield sites to be used wherever possible both for business and housing. Five years ago the Council focused firmly in responding to that call and this was evidenced by several developments in the town centre, namely Elwick Place, the Commercial Quarter and also much of the work progressing in Victoria Way, from the Curious Brewery and Aldi Supermarket to the Riverside Park Homes on the old Powergen site. These were all on brownfield sites that had laid dormant for decades.

Many of the things that the Leader had mentioned were about physical and material delivery, but he said that above all of that, they must care about the health and wellbeing of the people of Ashford. They needed to ensure that they provided the environment for living and enjoying life in Ashford. Their parks and open spaces were important, as were the leisure facilities they provided. They also needed to protect people from pollution of all kinds. Indeed the Council needed to contribute to, and assist, other agencies in promoting health and wellbeing in all that they did. The One You shop in Park Mall was making a real contribution to this cause and it was so well used that it was having to move to a larger unit in Park Mall. The National Health Service was clearly moving more towards care in the community, in order to free up the more acute care needed in hospitals and care homes. They also needed to do more to encourage the use of cycling and to expand and improve Ashford's existing cycle routes. There were many facets of health and wellbeing and another thing that needed tackling was Anti-Social Behaviour and various addictions, one of which was uncontrolled gambling. The Council, with others, strongly lobbied Government to clamp down on the maximum bet allowed on gaming machines in betting shops and that had now been successful and the limit had been fixed at £2.

The Leader concluded by saying that he could go on and mention many other areas, but the Council had more business to conduct that evening. In taking stock he firmly believed, and hoped that colleagues would agree too, that the Council had made and was continuing to make significant differences, some big and some small, but all very important to the people of the Borough, and they must continue to do so.

207 Cabinet – 13th September and 11th October 2018

(a) Cabinet – 13th September 2018

Resolved:

That (i) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 13th September 2018 be received and noted with the exception of Minute Nos. 145, 148, 149, 151 and 153.

- (ii) Minute Nos. 145, 148, 149, 151 and 153 be approved and adopted.

(b) Cabinet – 11th October 2018

Resolved:

That subject to the expiry of the period by which decisions arising from the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 11th October 2018 may be called in, i.e. 24th October 2018: -

- (i) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 11th October 2018 be received and noted with the exception of Minute Nos. 189 and 191.
- (ii) Minute Nos. 189 and 191 be approved and adopted.

208 Audit Committee – 27th September 2018

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee held on the 27th September 2018 be received and noted.

209 Appeals Committee – 23rd April, 4th May, 9th May (10.00am) and 9th May (11.40am) 2018

(a) Appeals Committee – 23rd April 2018

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Appeals Committee held on the 23rd April 2018 be received and noted.

(b) Appeals Committee – 4th May 2018

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Appeals Committee held on the 4th May 2018 be received and noted.

(c) Appeals Committee – 9th May 2018 (10.00am)

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Appeals Committee held on the 9th May 2018 at 10.00am be received and noted.

(d) Appeals Committee – 9th May 2018 (11.40am)

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Appeals Committee held on the 9th May 2018 at 11.40am be received and noted.

210 Selection and Constitutional Review Committee – 11th October 2018

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on the 11th October 2018 be approved and adopted.

211 Questions by Members

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

“A series of events has brought much disquiet among residents of Kennington, and they ask the Leader to give a true account of ABC development intentions within their Ward. Resident alarm revolves around three events: - 1. A Planning Application to change use of land and build 9 homes at Ashford Hockey Club; 2. An ABC decision to introduce into the Local Plan land that was previously designated a Special Landscape Area, with presumption against development in both Structure and Local Plan policies, in addition to the general policy of restraint outside the built confines; and 3. Mark Quinn publicly asking through the Kent Messenger for clubs to apply for the sports facility he proposes at Conningbrook Park. Ashford Hockey Club has said it is willing to sign a statement to say it will not seek to move from Ball Lane and to build more than nine homes, but added the caveat “unless Ashford Borough Council wants us to move”. Residents ask why would this caveat be wanted unless there are more developments in the pipeline planned for Kennington, and they believe the dropped 2010 plan is now being resurrected through stealth. By issuing a statement it would not seek to move the Hockey Club, ABC would give the assurance residents want and it would go some way to restoring public trust. On behalf of Kennington residents, I ask the Leader to give an unconditional and binding statement that ABC would never seek to move the Hockey Club from its Ball Lane location, or condone further development of the Ball Lane Playing Field, which includes the Ashford Cricket Club playing field. Residents say a failure to obtain such an assurance will only serve to affirm their suspicions and mistrust of the Council. I call upon the Leader to give such an assurance.”

Reply by Councillor Clarkson

“Madam Mayor, I wish to thank Councillor Michael for his question. The Council’s proposals for development in the Kennington area in the Local Plan period are set out in the draft Local Plan, which is now at an advanced stage in its public examination. These include site S2. As Councillor Michael will recall from the answer I gave to his question on this site at July’s Council meeting, the allocation of this site for new development has

followed a proper process of consultation and debate through the preparation and examination of the new Local Plan. Despite the points he raises, the Council's strategy for the distribution of housing across the Borough has been widely supported by the Local Plan Inspectors following a public examination. The Inspectors' post-hearing advice note raised no concerns or objections to the policy for site S2. As such there are no grounds for calling into question the Council's motives or the process followed. Of course, in addition to the Local Plan site allocations, our new policy HOU5 would be relevant to any housing applications adjoining or close to Ashford, such as a proposal for nine homes at Ball Lane which Councillor Michael mentions. The Council is under a legal obligation to review its local plan at least once every five years and so no plan or set of development proposals or allocations can be regarded as fixed indefinitely. I am not aware of the precise nature and context of any statements given by the Hockey Club to others, but whether the club decides to move its facilities elsewhere at some time in the future is clearly a matter for them. Nonetheless, it would be inappropriate as a matter of principle, and possibly unlawful fettering of discretion, for me or the Council to give an unconditional and binding statement about how the Council will exercise its statutory powers as Local Planning Authority in the future. Our powers must be and will be exercised in the public interest and in accordance with all proper procedures at the time. It would be disappointing if this response is regarded by some residents as suspicious or grounds for mistrust. I wish to place on record that there are no grounds for such suspicion regarding the Council's plans for development in Kennington.

Supplementary Question by Councillor Mrs Martin

"As a previous Councillor for the Ball Lane area, this is somewhere I am very familiar with and I am concerned that residents have not been properly consulted over development in this area. I don't care what the Inspector says, he doesn't live there and any development in Ball Lane would be too much as it doesn't have the infrastructure. I would dispute the Leader's statement that this site has been widely consulted on with residents and I would ask him if that is in fact the case?"

Reply by Councillor Clarkson

"Madam Mayor, I would be very happy to give a written response to Councillor Mrs Martin after this meeting when I've had an opportunity to consult with Officers on this matter. I would though say that as far as I'm aware we have strictly adhered to the correct procedure as far as our Local Plan is concerned."

212 Petition – Landscape Protection Policy

The Mayor directed Members' attention to the report of the Head of Legal and Democracy which set out the procedure for considering the Petition and also the advice of the Planning Policy Manager on the subject of the Petition itself.

In accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme, Mrs Harman of Rural Means Rural, spoke to the Petition she had originally submitted to the Cabinet on 12th July 2018.

Mrs Harman introduced herself and advised she was one of the founder members of Rural Means Rural (RMR). She advised that their petition reflected the continuing concerns in the villages around the Borough about the management of development in

rural areas and the cumulative impacts that result from it. This had been a constant topic throughout the consultation phases of the Ashford Local Plan 2030. RMR welcomed many of the main modifications that were currently out for public consultation. They were delighted by the Council's strengthened position now that the requirement for a five year housing land supply could be demonstrated and they very much hoped this could be maintained. They also welcomed the reduction in the dwelling requirements that had been made in the rural parts of the Borough and the deletion of several small villages from the scope of HOU3A, relating to residential windfall sites within rural settlements. Also the revised paragraph 5.44 in the same Policy which acknowledged that, for locations remaining on the list, any infilling and edge of settlement development must be of an appropriate scale for the settlement size and service availability. This latter point was a grave concern given today's economic environment and the constantly reducing rural services.

She advised that RMR had been formed to support the Landscape Protection Policy instigated by Councillor Jane Martin, initially for Saxon Shore Ward but latterly proposed for all rural locations. They acknowledged that although the Landscape Protection Policy was not adopted as a whole in the Ashford Local Plan, many elements of the proposed policy had been incorporated in to other policies within the Plan and were shown in the main modifications text. Particularly in changes to Policy HOU3A (main modification 60) and in the reduction in the list of smaller settlements to which Policy HOU5 applied (main modification 61). This similarly acknowledged residents' concerns about the type and quality of day to day services and public transport that are needed to support development. There was also a small change to Policy ENV5 that added criteria relating to the impact of development on "other local historic or landscape features that help to distinguish the character of a local area". Whilst this addition was welcomed, it did not go far enough to overcome concerns about the cumulative impact of multiple developments on a locality. One of the central objectives of the Landscape Protection Policy was to address the impact of cumulative effects. In responding to RMR's evidence at the Examination in Public, Council Officers had argued that there were no means available for assessing cumulative impact and, by implication, it could not therefore be reflected in policy. She wanted to put it to the Council, supported by the concerns of rural residents all around the Borough, that this was a matter of political will.

Mrs Harman asked that as the Council debated the RMR petition, Councillors consider how they could lead the Borough to become one of the best national examples of planned and sustainable development – a Borough that grew and at the same time respected residents views and protected its rural character. Ashford was a rural Borough and this was the way to build an Ashford all could be proud of. She considered that a methodology could easily be established for collecting measurable indicators of the cumulative impact over time. This needed to start now so that informed decisions on individual planning applications could be made and residents observations validated. This was achievable without making heavy demands on Council Officer time. One current trend in many local villages provided easy access to extremely relevant data – speed indicator devices. These did much more than just deterring speeding traffic, they counted the number of vehicles using roads, showing exactly what happened when there was an event nearby, or a road closure, or the ports were struggling. The Council and Parish Councils needed to analyse this data. She considered that they needed to do this urgently as the impacts from development that would soon be hitting villages would not only come from that which was within the Council's control, but from adjacent Boroughs on all sides of the town. Continuous, even small scale development, had a

serious cumulative impact on nature, on the character of a village, the health and wellbeing of the Borough mentioned earlier by the Leader, and a detrimental impact on the quality of life for residents. As part of Ashford's Local Plan 2030, the Council would need an agreed monitoring methodology for systematically collecting data that would enable them to understand cumulative impacts across the Borough. The information could be collected at a local level by Parish Councils, schools and interested local groups such as RMR, and published at suitable intervals, possibly in conjunction with the monitoring arrangements for the Ashford Local Plan 2030. Encouraging greater involvement would build trust and transparency in a system that was currently viewed as flawed and highly suspect by a large part of the population as well as making discussions about future development fact based.

She said that RMR understood that planning was extremely complex. Currently there was no provision within the Ashford Local Plan, or the proposed main modifications, to address the cumulative impact of development in rural areas. They considered this a major omission and would like to suggest that this was the focus of the debate at this meeting. She wanted to conclude by pointing out that the cumulative impact of development was a material planning consideration. The Government's own Environmental Impact Assessment guidance stated the following – "Each application should be considered on its merits. There were occasions however when other existing or approved development may be relevant in determining whether significant effects were likely as a consequence of proposed development. Local Planning Authorities should always have regard to the cumulative effects arising from any existing or approved development." She considered that to have regard to them, the Council needed to have a factual understanding of what they were. At present Ashford's Local Plan remained dependent upon residents vigilantly watching the Planning Portal for applications and providing their observations as part of the consultative process. She asked would it not be so much better if residents had the tools to be able to inspect the facts?

Councillor Miss Martin said that as Ward Member she had been working on the Landscape Protection Policy project since 2015. This had come in to being simply because so many residents had concerns and following the comments from RMR she wanted to say a few words about the Local Plan. Ashford's Local Plan had been in the workings now for about four years and it was vital that it was adopted. Everyone knew there had been problems with the five year housing land supply with a number of predatory applications being made and as a rural Ward Member she certainly did not want to put that at risk. She welcomed the fact that the Council was on the verge of having a Local Plan accepted by the Inspector and all time and energies should be put in to making sure that the Local Plan was adopted as soon as possible, prior to any further discussion on the Landscape Protection Policy. She did however ask the Council to consider, after the Local Plan being adopted, revisiting the Landscape Protection Policy and having a proper debate on the issue. She considered the Council would then be able to focus properly on that policy and she considered this was very important for all elected Members and Parish Councils because people at that level had been working on this and they were the democratically elected individuals. She considered the policy itself was a very important one. The current planning system (not Ashford Borough Council itself) currently isolated each planning proposal from the last, therefore the effect of cumulative development was never properly assessed. This was in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Local Plan. At the beginning of the process the residents of the Saxon Shore Ward felt that they should do something about this and

asked an infrastructure specialist, Peter Brett, to develop a policy that could be incorporated at Local Plan level to allow planning authorities to establish a principle of assessment if they wished to do so. The beauty of this policy was that it was optional. If adopted it would allow local people to get involved in adherence with the Localism Act and if they did not then the Local Authority was not bound to take any notice of it whatsoever. This had the further advantage that it gave local communities a clearer mechanism to consider making objections. They did not have to wade through policy after policy trying to construct a holistic argument against a proposal if they were concerned. They had a single policy that tied together the potentially linked impacts of on-going development in the rural areas. Similarly, developers could be clearer about what tests they had to meet to ensure that development was acceptable in rural areas. The barrier residents consistently came up against was that the NPPF and Local Plans were generally topic based. Planning Officers had quite understandably sought to deconstruct the Landscape Protection Policy so it fit under the various topics. There was an element of subtlety needed however to deal with cumulative appraisal, both between topic areas within the plan and between previous recent and planned future schemes in the same village, which otherwise would simply not be met. She said that the policy sought to: - encourage increased quality of build with greater expectation on developers to respect characteristics and landscape of a given area; manage the pace of cumulative development- one development after another – in an area so that the essence of the area was not gradually eroded; provide assessment and checks on scale of development that could be harmful and damaging to an area; provide input from local residents in a way a Neighbourhood Plan or Village confines exercise could not; and if adopted it would be a strong advocate for Ashford as a pioneering Borough. Ashford had done things such as the Quality Charter at Chilmington Green and the Ashford Model and this would also help lead the way. She said that she understood the inclusion of the Landscape Protection Policy in the NPPF was outside the scope of the Council, and as it had already been updated, it was unlikely to be done so again soon. She said that as Ward Member, she had already had a number of meetings with DEFRA, the Ministry for Housing , Communities and Local Government and the National CPRE, with input from Peter Brett. They now considered that the NPPF had sufficient pointers and the framework to achieve what they thought needed to be incorporated into the Local Plan structure. The route to inclusion was therefore likely to be through National Planning Policy Guidance and they were pleased to have the opportunity to work with Ministers on this point. So in closing she asked that the Council discuss revisiting this issue once the Local Plan was adopted.

The Leader of the Council said that as Councillor Miss Martin had said, the question of incorporating this policy in to the NPPF was not one in the gift of the Council, this was an issue for Central Government. However, the Local Plan and Planning Policy Task Group had also received this document and discussed the merits of the Landscape Protection Policy on the 18th April 2017. In recognition of the concerns raised, the Task Group resolved to amend and strengthen the Plan's draft policy ENV3 to create two further additions ENV3A and ENV3B. The remainder of the Plan and the existing landscape designations were all considered at this time and Members had felt that this had gone some way to address the concerns of Peter Brett Associates. Furthermore, the full consultation process continued and when the Council submitted the formal Plan to the Inspectorate they included those changes to ENV3 and, as part of the consultation, Peter Brett Associates made representations that urged the Council to include a Special Landscape Protection Policy in the Local Plan. Those representations, along with others, were forwarded to the Inspector to consider as part of the examination. The Inspector

did consider these and made no comment. He did not want to repeat any of the ground covered by Councillor Miss Martin but he did want to say that he had no issue with much of what she had said. Like her, he did not wish to hold up adoption of the Local Plan after four years of hard work but he would like to propose the following motion: -

“That the Council note the contents of the petition and fully understand it, but as far as practical they had included some of the points in the new Ashford Borough Local Plan which had been out before the Examination in Public and representations had been made to the Inspectors, both from the Council and from supporters of the petition. So, whilst no further action will be taken at this stage that could impede the progress of the Local Plan, the Council would have further discussions with Parish Councils and Ward Members after the Plan is, as we hope, found to be sound and adopted by Ashford Borough Council (hopefully in February 2019).”

This motion was seconded by Councillor Bell.

A statement was then read out on behalf of Councillor Mrs Martin stating that she considered the Landscape Protection Policy should be debated via Ward Members and Parish Councils as well as there being a Borough wide consultation on the matter. She said she felt very strongly about this matter and it was a very important issue for every elected Councillor. Genuine consultation with residents was needed before decisions were made, not the other way round.

Councillor Hicks said on behalf of the villages in her Ward she would very much support the points made about genuine consultation. There was a lot of concern about the expansion of Ashford and she said that the new Separation of Villages Policy would be an important tool. She hoped this policy would be enforced and potentially improved in future reviews of the Local Plan.

Councillor William Howard said that as the other Ward Member for Saxon Shore he would echo much of what had been said by Councillor Miss Martin about the approach the Council should take. He did also very much support the motion put forward by the Leader to ensure that the current process for the Local Plan continue on its track. There were a number of Parishes in his Ward that very much welcomed the process the Council was going through and would not want to put that at risk in any way. All Members would be aware of the various targets of speculative developers and protection had come through the Local Plan process. The Administration had shown great leadership in trying to ensure that the rural communities were protected from this type of development so he would very much support the motion that had been moved, including a discussion on the Landscape Protection Policy once the Local Plan had been adopted. There were a lot of good things in that Policy and he himself had been involved in collecting some of the data so he knew how much work had gone in to it and he very much supported the general approach of more community involvement in planning matters.

Councillor Miss Martin said she supported the motion, but hoped that any consultation following adoption of the Local Plan would be meaningful and fully involve Ward Members and Parish Councils. She also wanted to say that over 2000 people had signed this petition and this was a material consideration and could not be ignored.

The Leader of the Council summed up by saying that when he mentioned consultation with Ward Members and Parish Councils in his motion he meant just that and this Council had already proved that it listened by making additions to its draft Plan before it went to the Inspector. He said he was sure they would have that debate and that the views expressed would not be ignored. He did not expect for one moment that they would adopt all points raised, but they would be given due consideration, sensibly talked through and hopefully they would be able to make further improvements.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 15.4 the Leader asked that a recorded vote be taken on this motion.

This was supported by at least six other Members (i.e. a total of at least seven) who showed their support by standing.

A recorded vote was then taken on the motion and the Members voted as follows: -

For: Councillors Barrett, Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Bell, Bennett, Mrs Blanford, Buchanan, Burgess, Clarkson, Clokie, Dehnel, Mrs Dyer, Farrell, Feacey, Galpin, Heyes, Hicks, W Howard, Howard-Smith, Knowles, Koowaree, Krause, Link, Macpherson, Miss Martin, Michael, Ovenden, Pickering, Shorter, Suddards, Waters, Mrs Webb, Wedgbury, White.

Votes For 34

Against: None.

Votes Against 0

Abstentions: Councillors Mrs Heyes, Mrs Martin, Murphy.

Abstentions 3

Resolved:

That the Council note the contents of the petition and fully understand it, but as far as practical they had included some of the points in the new Ashford Borough Local Plan which had been out before the Examination in Public and representations had been made to the Inspectors, both from the Council and from supporters of the petition. So, whilst no further action will be taken at this stage that could impede the progress of the Local Plan, the Council would have further discussions with Parish Councils and Ward Members after the Plan is, as is hoped, found to be sound and adopted by Ashford Borough Council (hopefully in February 2019).

(DS)

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