

Ashford Borough Council

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Ashford Borough Council held on Microsoft Teams on the **16th July 2020**.

Present:

Her Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor J A Webb (Chairman);

Cllrs. Anckorn, Barrett, Mrs Bell, Bell, Blanford, Buchanan, Burgess, Campkin, Chilton, Clarkson, Clokie, Cornish, Dehnel, Farrell, Feacey, Forest, Harman, Hayward, T Heyes, Howard, Howard-Smith, Iliffe, Knowles, Krause, Ledger, Link, Michael, Mulholland, Ovenden, Pauley, Pickering, Rogers, Shorter, Spain, Sparks, C Suddards, L Suddards, Walder, Wright.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Reverend Dr Sue Starkings said prayers and asked Members to respect a period of silence for Carol Ann Brunger who was the Borough Council Member for Singleton South from 2003 to 2007 and Mayoress in 2005/06 to the Mayor Councillor Malcolm Eke, and who had passed away recently.

Apologies:

Cllrs. B Heyes, Smith, Turner, Ward, Wedgbury, White.

Also Present:

Chief Executive, Director of Law and Governance, Director of Finance and Economy, Head of Culture, Head of HR and Customer Services, Head of Corporate Policy, Economic Development and Communications, Head of Corporate Property and Projects, Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development), Civic Engagement Officer, Member Services Manager (Operational).

1 Election of Mayor

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

This was seconded by Councillor Knowles

Councillor Clokie said it was always an honour to be able to propose a new Mayor for their worthy and exciting Borough. There were few Councillors better qualified to be taking up the Office of Mayor than Councillor John Link along with his wife Jill as Mayoress, who had supported John over all his years of Civic duty. John was uniquely qualified for the tasks ahead as he had been the Borough Mayor for the Municipal Year 2008/09, and again in 2014/15. He had also, unlike many previous Mayors, also been well trained in the arts of 'Mayorship' when Town Mayor of Tenterden, one of Ashford's crown jewels, for four years from 1991-1994. He was also one of the Borough's longest serving Councillors, 44 years in total when taking into account his 24 years' service as a Parish and Town Councillor.

Councillor Clokie said that no proposal speech was complete without its traditional history moments and he was deeply indebted to his former late lamented colleague

Major John Kemp for the following information. Councillor John Link was born with a bang on the 5th November in the year that: - Doctors had denounced drink driving tests as 'unfair'; Southern Rail opened a station to serve Gatwick; Auguste Escoffier, the chef who invented the peach melba died at the age of 88 in his Swiss home; Lawrence of Arabia died; Major Atlee was elected as Leader of the Socialist Party; Jack Hobbs wrote his letter of resignation; Joe Louis married and then later on the same day knocked out Max Baer in the fourth round! He was obviously keen to get home! In that year a football commentator declared that English players were not up to the required standard, so few things had changed over the years! Finally the Highway Code and Driving Test came in. The main tests were being able to reverse, stopping and starting on a hill and a compulsory question such as 'when is it permitted to sound your horn when stationary?' The answer – 'when someone is about to back in to you!'

He said that there were, however some things colleagues may not know about John. He was a Great-Grandad twice. He enjoyed walking, which was strange for a man who had spent his life with all forms of mechanical transport and for many days, underneath them. However this may have originated from his love for Westmorland and the Lake District. If John could ever not be found, you should send out the helicopters and he would be found on The Fells. He had been told that the food and beer there was quite exceptional, including the cream teas. Probably something to do with the constant rain there, which we were led to believe from the TV weather forecasts never stopped! John played cricket in his younger days but unlike many cricketers he had left that for golf and bowls. Unfortunately the duties of Mayor, as John may remember, were not conducive to shrinking your handicap! In addition to all the Tenterden affiliations and Cinque Ports Mayors' Committee (of which he would shortly be Chairman), there would now be a whole new sea of voluntary and leisure organisations in the Borough who would seek him out for a visit. It was amazing how many there were, somewhere around 800 at the last count.

In concluding Councillor Clokie said he would like to mention John's "long suffering" wife, who had for too many years to mention, put up with greasy overalls and smelly walking socks! Jill would be as charming and graceful a Mayoress as any before her. She brought with her an experience to the task like no other Consort before her. He said he would like to nominate Councillor John Link to be the Mayor for the Municipal Year 2020/21.

Councillor Knowles said it was his immense honour to second the nomination of Councillor John Link to be Mayor of the Borough of Ashford. He considered he set the gold standard for the role of the Mayor.

There were no other nominations.

Resolved:

That Councillor John Link be elected Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the Municipal Year 2020/21.

2 Declaration of Acceptance of Office by the Mayor

Councillor Link made his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

There was then a short interlude whilst the new Mayor was robed and invested with his Chain of Office. Upon his return, His Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor John Link assumed the Chair.

3 Appointment of Mayor's Chaplain

His Worshipful the Mayor advised that his Chaplain for the coming year would be his good friend, the Reverend John Emmott. The Reverend Emmott then said prayers.

4 Vote of Thanks by the Mayor for His Election

His Worshipful the Mayor began by saying that when he was first elected on to the Ashford Borough Council, he remembered that the then Mayor's Driver, Richard was always saying "you'll be Mayor one day". He never took much notice of him, but here he was, about to start his third term of office – what a privilege. He thanked all Members for their support and encouragement, especially his proposer and seconder, Councillors Clokie and Knowles. He also wanted to extend a special thank you to Councillor Jenny Webb for an outstanding year (plus a few extra weeks!) Particularly during this recent pandemic which had been a very trying time indeed.

He also wanted to thank his wife Jill, the new Mayoress, for once again supporting him. Together they were looking forward to representing the Borough of Ashford over the next ten months. He said he felt most honoured to be elected once again and it gave him the chance to again raise funds for his charities, which he would give more details of later on. He thanked everyone very much.

5 Vote of Thanks to the Retiring Mayor and Mayor's Consort

Councillor Clarkson said it gave him very real pleasure to propose a sincere vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor, Councillor Jenny Webb and her Consort David.

He said that Councillor Jenny Webb had been a truly excellent First Citizen of the Borough. Jenny was one of those most special people who set the scene of what the Council was promoting as a caring Borough. Councillor Webb cared deeply about people across the entire Borough and she had attended many events, across the Borough and beyond, and had met many people, but it was not just about merely attending and meeting people for Jenny. She had also created and promoted many special events in the Borough, involving people of all ages and walks of life. She had also brought many of these people into the Civic Centre. Even Covid-19 had not been able to halt Ashford's Mayor and First Citizen, and whilst it had been an interruption, Jenny continued throughout that period and even quite recently had held a small, socially-distanced, flag raising ceremony to mark Armed Forces Week, which Councillor Clarkson himself had attended as his first outing of the lockdown period.

Councillor Clarkson concluded by saying that Jenny and David had been excellent as the First Citizens of the Borough, and whilst he could go on at length about Jenny and her achievements and attributes, he just wanted to give her their heartfelt thanks for a first class Mayoralty.

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Councillor Buchanan said it was his very great pleasure to second the vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor, Councillor Jenny Webb.

It had been a fantastic and interesting year, which was unfortunately, but understandably, cut rather short due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Looking back at the Mayor's Blog and the photos on his own phone, it seemed odd how different normal life was before lockdown and it all somehow seemed a long while ago.

Councillor Buchanan said that the year had involved all manner of events, including quite a lot of tree planting ceremonies. It had also been a real treat for him to visit, with Jenny, three schools in the Borough who had won awards for their Eco garden designs. When they had visited the schools, the children had seemed more fascinated by the Mayoral chains, and asked questions such as "do you live in the White House?", "how much money does the Mayor get paid?" and "are you the Queen?" Jenny had easily been able to answer such questions with her natural sense of humour and gravitas. He had also gone with Jenny and David on the coach, for the official Civic twinning visit to Bad Münstereifel for five packed days of activities, as well as receiving their French friends from Fougères for a long weekend. Also, who could forget dancing to the ABBA tribute act at the London Beach Hotel charity fundraiser?

The last time he had seen Jenny in her official capacity, it had been most surreal, not least because he gatecrashed it! He was going for his normal Monday morning bike ride with a friend and they always met in the Civic Park. As he rode down Tannery Lane, in full cycling gear, he saw Sandra (the Mayor's Driver) and Donna (the Mayor's PA) standing on the pavement outside the Civic Centre. So he stopped and there was Jenny, the Leader, the Chaplain and one person from the British Legion. It was the Armed Forces Week Flag raising ceremony, which had been not publicised due to the pandemic. Despite there not being the usual crowds and festivities, it had still been a moving and important event.

Councillor Buchanan said it had been an honour and privilege to be with Jenny and David through her Mayoral year. With her natural charm and laughter, you could also clearly see how very honoured Jenny had been to represent the Borough. He so seconded the vote of thanks.

The Member Services Manager (Operational) advised that the presentation of badges and gifts to the Retiring Mayor would take place following the conclusion of the meeting.

6 Response by the Retiring Mayor

Councillor Webb congratulated Councillor Link on his election as Mayor and thanked Councillors Clarkson and Buchanan for their moving speeches. She said she would get them both later!

Despite the premature interruption to her Mayoral year, it had been a wonderful journey. She and David had been greeted with so much kindness and friendliness across cultures and societies which had made every event a memory to be cherished. Little did she know that when choosing and highlighting her charities in the volunteer sector, her 'Silent Army', just what a vital role the voluntary sector would play in supporting the community during the Covid-19 crisis. Ashford Volunteer Centre, Homestart, and all of the individuals who volunteered across the

Borough made an enormous contribution to the feeling of security and wellbeing for residents across the Borough. There was nothing stronger than the heart of a volunteer. She had also experienced so much joy from working with the Royal Marines and the Sea Cadets and would continue to publish their local histories and Albacore story. She was incredibly proud of them, and in particular her Mayor's Cadets.

Working closely with Donna Sowerby, the Civic Engagement Officer, had allowed her to open up the Mayor's Parlour to so many afternoon teas and to present certificates of achievement to local individuals, societies and businesses who had all arrived as strangers, but left as friends. Donna's enthusiasm and expertise had made her Mayoral journey a pathway of delight, fun and achievement and she could not thank her enough. Behind every successful journey was a strong team and she said she was blessed to have had so many who had helped make the journey such a delight including many individuals in the Council's Media Team and Print Room, particularly Ben Jones – she could not thank them enough for all their support and help. She also wanted to thank St Michael's Car Hire and their drivers for their kindness and attention and wonderful sense of humour which had always been appreciated by her and David.

Councillor Webb said she also did not want to forget to thank all of those who had escorted her when David had been unable to, as well as all of the Councillors who had supported her charity events. Finally she wanted to say a special thank you to Dr Sue Starkings for stepping in to become her Chaplain and saving the day when Reverend John Mackenzie had moved away to a new Parish. She looked forward to continuing to work with both her and the Sea Cadets in the future.

She thanked everyone for their support in helping make her Mayoral Year such a special and rewarding one. She wished John and Jill a happy year going forward and she knew they would receive the same warmth and friendship that they had been fortunate enough to have from the Borough of Ashford this past year.

The Member Services Manager (Operational) advised that the presentation of gifts to the new Mayoress would take place following the conclusion of the meeting.

7 Election and Appointment of Deputy Mayor

Councillor Pickering proposed that "Councillor Callum Knowles be elected Deputy Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the forthcoming Municipal year".

This was seconded by Councillor Feacey.

There were no other nominations.

Resolved:

That Councillor Callum Knowles be elected Deputy Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the Municipal Year 2020/21.

8 Declaration of Acceptance of Office by the Deputy Mayor

Councillor Knowles made his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

The Member Services Manager (Operational) advised that Councillor Knowles would formally sign the declaration and he and the Deputy Mayoress would be presented with badges and gifts at a later date.

9 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Buchanan	Made a Voluntary Announcement as a member of the Stour Centre gym.	14, 19
Chilton	Made a Voluntary Announcement that the School where he was Chair of Governors had a service agreement with the Stour Centre.	14, 19
Feacey	Made a Voluntary Announcement as Chairman of the Ashford Volunteer Centre.	14, 16
C Suddards	Made a Voluntary Announcement as a Governor of St Mary's School.	14, 19
Webb	Made a Voluntary Announcement as a Director of the Ashford Volunteer Centre.	14, 16

10 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 5th March 2020 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

11 Announcements

His Worshipful the Mayor advised that the key focus for his year in office was to work with local charities, groups and individuals on the wellbeing of communities across the Borough, and particularly during this time of insecurity and uncertainty. As the new Mayor, he wished to provide something positive towards supporting those principles. Therefore, for his time in office he would be supporting the following three charities: - Ashford Street Pastors; Parkinson's Ashford; and Tenterden Memory Café.

Since 2010, Ashford Street Pastors had been patrolling the streets of Ashford throughout the nights over the busy evenings of Fridays and Saturdays. The group of caring volunteers provided a peaceful presence on the night-time streets by caring for, listening to and helping vulnerable people. These may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol or homeless or disorientated by mental illness, or simply young, or lost, or lonely. The charity helped people on the streets and other public places by giving guidance, support or signposting them to other support services. They ensured people were safe and for people who needed assistance or a listening ear, the team members were there for them. The charity assisted people to ensure that those in need could get home safely by offering help and guidance or they referred people to local emergency or support services. This worthwhile charity directly benefited the

local community as their positive actions helped to reduce Anti-Social Behaviour, minimised exploitation, decreased abuse, avoided violence, relieved sickness and preserved health.

The Parkinson's Ashford branch had around 120 members on its membership list and on average, 60 different people attended each course during the month. Parkinson's Ashford provided a wide range of activities. This important service offered information, friendship and support to local people who were suffering with Parkinson's, their families and carers. All of whom needed vital support. The branch organised a range of events and social activities, including regular get-togethers where there was mutual support and a chance for a chat and a cuppa, exercise classes, singing groups, the lunch club, the Parkinson's Café and the carers group to name but a few! There were excursions and special activities such as the bowls days, the annual garden party and the Christmas tea party.

Tenterden Memory Café was a volunteer led organisation that had been in existence for four years. They currently had approximately 60 people attending and they were recognised by the Charity Commission as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. The café was originally located in the buffet at Tenterden Railway Station, and after two years the numbers rose by so much that it was necessary to relocate to a bigger hall. They were now at St Andrew's Catholic Church Community Hall which met their needs in every way, with the group meeting there every Friday afternoon. Their aim was to provide an informal setting for those people living with dementia and dementia related illnesses, their families and carers. The café provided tea and cakes – most cakes were made and donated by volunteers. Volunteers engaged with those living with dementia, allowing carers to interact with others in similar situations. The carers, many of whom were elderly themselves with their own medical and physical issues, shared experiences and coping mechanisms and were able to have a "normal conversation" with friends. The café linked with the local Junior School and the local Nursery to encourage engagement with young people. They also provided monthly musical afternoons (involving the guests in singing and playing musical instruments) and they also had film events too. Excursions took place to local attractions such as the Rare Breeds Centre and short breaks to Eastbourne.

So in summary, the Mayor said that it would be an interesting time for his fundraising programme of events and activities. It would be somewhat different than planned for the first few months but he was looking forward to using this time to get out and about in the community, meeting representatives of his charities, visiting some of the excellent projects in the area and arranging civic visits to the Ashford Borough with the Lord Lieutenant, High Sheriff and Chairman of Kent County Council. He trusted he could count on Members' support.

12 Confirmation of Cabinet Arrangements for 2020/21 by the Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Clarkson, confirmed that the make-up of his Cabinet for 2020/21 would be as follows:-

Member	Portfolio	Deputy Portfolio Holder
Clarkson	Leader (including Corporate Policy, Ec Dvpt and Comms)	N/A
Bartlett	Deputy Leader (including	N/A

	Legal and Democracy)	
Barrett	Housing	Mulholland
Bell	Finance and IT	Krause
Buchanan	Environment and Land Management	Howard
Clokie	Regeneration and Corporate Property	Iliffe
Feacey	Community Safety and Wellbeing	Howard-Smith
Forest	Culture, Tourism and Leisure	Webb
Pickering	HR and Customer Services	Mrs Bell
Shorter	Planning and Development	Blanford

The Leader said he also wanted to briefly mention a topical issue. The Department for Transport had recently informed the Council that they had acquired the Mojo Site at Sevington, just off Junction 10A of the M20, with the intention of using only the western part (the area covered by existing planning consent). He understood that it was not the Government's plan to develop this area as a permanent lorry park, but their interest was twofold. Firstly for it to be available as a contingency for lorry holding, but only during the end of the transition period for the exit from the EU where there may be significant disruption, and secondly other Government departments envisaged using it on a more permanent basis for facilities related to future border processing – notably HMRC for goods movement under transit and DEFRA for a border control post. He advised that he had made it very clear to Government, as had Ashford's MP Damian Green, and his Deputy Leader, that they were absolutely opposed to any suggestion that a permanent lorry park be established in this rural location of their Borough. The Minister in question had indicated that it was not the Government's intention to do so and the Leader had this in writing.

Councillor Farrell said he had listened to the Minister Michael Gove just this morning on this issue, and asked as a point of information what the Leader considered were the differences between a lorry park and a lorry holding pen, because he considered these were exactly the same thing. The Leader responded that he did not want to get in to a discussion about the different meaning of words used by different Ministers, but he said that he understood a permanent lorry park would be one that would hold several thousand lorries, and it had been made clear that this was not in any way something that they would support and they would defend Ashford against it. He considered they should be very guarded about the language and phrases that were used and it would be inappropriate to comment further on that at this stage.

Councillor Chilton said he had also heard Michael Gove (the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office) earlier that morning indicate that the site would indeed be used as a lorry park. Indeed a spokesman for the Department for Transport was also quoted in today's Guardian as saying "the site may also be used as a contingency lorry area", so in his view the indication from Government was pretty clear – they did see it as a lorry park. Given that there had been no consultation by the Department for Transport, he asked what the Council was going to do to ensure that the people of Ashford's voices were going to be listened to on this issue. The Leader responded that what Councillor Chilton had said was at odds with what he understood the position to be. During the transition period, it may be the case that lorries were held there, but he could only take on face value what had been put to him and this was that it would not be a permanent lorry park.

13 Selection and Constitutional Review Committee – 30th June 2020

Councillor Clarkson proposed that “the Minutes of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee meeting held on the 30th June 2020 be approved and adopted”.

This was seconded.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on the 30th June 2020 be approved and adopted.

14 Cabinet – 28th May and 25th June 2020

(a) Cabinet – 28th May 2020

Councillor Spain referred to Minute No. 409 which referred to the Recovery Delivery Plan. He had kindly been shown an early draft of the plan and had discussed it with the Deputy Leader and he did have concerns that despite assurances about the Bockhanger Community facilities, these were not referred to in the latest draft. The Council unanimously committed to these about a year ago and he did not consider that the proposed community involvement scheme run by a consultancy, should have led to the Council removing its commitment to community facilities from the Recovery Plan. He asked from some reassurance for the people of North Ashford from the Leader that the Council remained committed to providing a 21st Century community facility in that location to serve the residents of Bockhanger and Bybrook as well as Kennington and the wider North Ashford area? Could he also reassure that a commitment to the Bockhanger community facility would be placed back in to that Recovery Plan document so that this facility could play a major part in Ashford’s social, health and economic recovery. The Leader responded that he could categorically say that this Council had at its heart the welfare of a number of less affluent areas of the Borough. The Plan as discussed would not be confined to any particular areas. In particular on the Bockhanger community facilities, the Council awaited the results of the Community Council’s deliberations, and this Council stood by to help as much as it was able.

Councillor Anckorn also referred to Minute No. 409 and the Recovery Delivery Plan and asked about Eurostar services and their recent decision to cease services to and from Ashford International Station until further notice. He asked what efforts the Council was making to engage with Eurostar to get those services resumed for the important economic, employment and tourism connectivity that Ashford’s rail links provided. The Leader responded that he was surprised Councillor Anckorn had raised this issue at this juncture as this was something that he could have easily raised at any time with himself, or indeed the Council’s Economic Development team and received a full answer. He could advise that the Ashford Strategic Delivery Board included representatives of the rail network, and they were working with them constantly on resumption of services. If Councillor Anckorn would like to discuss this further outside the meeting, he would be more than happy to do so. He wanted to assure that all were keen for not only normal services to be resumed, but that they were enhanced and improved - they were very active in that area.

Councillor Bartlett, as seconder, had reserved the right to speak and said that he wanted to briefly mention the benefits that the Council expected from the community engagement project that was being carried out. He believed it was crucial to breaking down barriers and enabling all residents to live safe and secure lives and to generate truly sustainable change. The aim was to break down barriers to social interaction and part of that was to improve community facilities such as those mentioned in Bockhanger. There were real tangible benefits to this process such as a reduction in violence, domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour and a decrease in those having to make use of Community Safety services. It was hoped that this approach could deliver many benefits across many parts of the Borough.

Resolved:

That (i) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 28th May 2020 be received and noted with the exception of Minute Nos. 405, 406, 407 and 409

(ii) Minute Nos. 405, 406, 407 and 409 be approved and adopted.

(b) Cabinet – 25th June 2020

The Leader of the Council proposed that these Minutes be approved and adopted or noted as appropriate, with the exception of Minute No. 436 “Leisure Operations Update” which he proposed be dealt with separately in private session at the end of the meeting.

This was seconded.

Councillor Farrell said he wanted to raise the issue of the Stour Centre at this public meeting of the Council. Whilst he understood the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972, given the nature of the proposals, in his view they should be discussed in public so that the residents of Ashford could view the discussion. The Director of Law and Governance advised that it was recommended that the item should be dealt with in private because of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the Local Government Act, but that would be a matter for the Council to decide when considering the resolution to hear the matter in private later in the Meeting.

Resolved:

That (i) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 25th June 2020 be received and noted with the exception of Minute Nos. 435, 436 and 437.

(ii) Minute Nos. 435 and 437 be approved and adopted.

(iii) the recommendations in Minute No. 436 be deferred for consideration later in the Meeting.

15 Audit Committee – 17th March 2020

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee held on the 17th March 2020 be received and noted.

16 Decision Making During the Coronavirus Crisis

The Leader introduced the report which advised of two decisions to amend the Council's Constitution taken by the Chief Executive in April 2020, under her delegated authority for urgent matters. These were reported to the Council for noting and ratification. The report also advised of some further recommended changes to the Council's Constitution. The aim of these was to enable the Council to continue its decision making effectively, with public participation notwithstanding the impacts of the Coronavirus Crisis. He said that the Coronavirus Crisis had certainly been a trying period for many organisations across the globe and he thought that the Ashford Borough had responded to this dreadful crisis in an exemplary way to assist in ensuring the welfare and safety of residents.

Councillor Chilton said he did want to make a quick comment on Virtual Meetings. During the crisis it had become apparent that the number of families who still did not have access to a computer or the internet was higher than originally thought. He knew that the Council may have to continue operating in this way for some time, but it did mean that some people may not be able to engage in local democracy in the normal way. He asked what measures could be taken to ensure that those on the lowest incomes were still able to access Council meetings in the spirit of openness and democracy? The Leader said he understood the Council had made a great deal of effort to reach all people during this pandemic, but he understood the question and would take his comments away for further discussion with colleagues and Officers.

Councillor Campkin asked if fellow Councillors would join him in paying particular tribute to the Council Officers and staff and workers who had been doing an amazing job over the last four months. He knew many had been doubling up on various duties and having to adapt to new ways of working and a lot of them were under a great deal of stress at the moment, so he thought they deserved a special mention. The Mayor and Leader both said that they certainly agreed with this sentiment.

Councillor Buchanan said he did just want to add his thanks to both Biffa and Aspire. Biffa had been working at Christmas week capacity since the start of lockdown and there hadn't been any degradation in service whatsoever, with all services (including bulk and garden waste collections) running throughout. Aspire too had done an amazing job keeping everything looking neat and tidy and clean as well as assisting with other areas of work.

Resolved:

That (i) the Chief Executive's Urgency decisions dated 8th April 2020 and 20th April 2020, described in paragraphs 13-19 and 20-29 of the report respectively be noted and ratified.

- (ii) **the Supplement to Procedure Rules for Virtual Meetings etc. (at Annex 4 to the report), and the Supplement to the Scheme of Public Participation for Virtual Meetings (at Annex 5 to the report) be adopted with immediate effect and effective until the end of May 2021. Their operation be agreed to be reviewed as part of the review of the Procedure for Virtual Meetings etc. and the Scheme of Public Participation for Virtual Meetings, as decided by the Chief Executive on the 20th April 2020.**

17 Request for an Extension of Period of Absence – Councillor Ward

The report considered a request for an extended period of absence for Councillor Ward under the provisions of Sections 85 and 86 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Councillor Chilton said that colleagues would remember Councillor Ward had been suffering with mobility issues since before Christmas and Members would have seen him attending Meetings in his wheelchair and with a walker. Unfortunately, since then it had become apparent what the physical mobility issues were, and it was Motor Neurone disease. This was a very cruel and evil disease and it had rendered his friend and colleague Alex Ward unable to physically attend meetings and given him severe problems with communicating. He was in full control of his faculties and perfectly able to do ward work, but unfortunately the equipment he needed to help him communicate and get around had got stuck in the United States due to the Covid pandemic and was currently unable to be brought to the UK to be fitted out in the appropriate way. Alex continued to serve his ward and he would continue to do so despite the terrible disease he had been struck down with. He wanted to thank the colleagues who had been aware of this so far and the support they had given, in particular the Chief Executive and the Leader for accommodating tonight's report. Councillor Ward was watching the meeting tonight from his home in Tenterden and he knew all colleagues would wish him well.

The Mayor and Leader both said that they certainly wished Councillor Ward and his family well.

Resolved:

That the request be granted and the period of absence be extended to the 31st December 2020.

18 Exclusion of the Public

In accordance with Procedure Rule 15.4 Councillor Farrell asked that a recorded vote be taken on the decision to exclude the public from the meeting. This was supported by at least six other Members (i.e. a total of at least seven) who showed their support by indicating in the chat function of the Virtual Meeting.

A recorded vote was then taken on the decision to exclude the public from the meeting and the Members voted as follows: -

For: Councillors Barrett, Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Bell, Blanford, Buchanan, Burgess, Clarkson, Clokie, Cornish, Feacey, Forest, Howard, Howard-Smith, Iliffe, Knowles, Krause, Link, Mulholland, Pickering, Shorter, Walder, Webb,

Votes For - 23

Against: Councillors Anckorn, Campkin, Chilton, Farrell, Hayward, T Heyes, Ledger, Ovenden, Pauley, Rogers, Spain, Sparks, C Suddards, L Suddards, Wright

Votes Against - 15

Abstentions: Councillors Harman, Michael.

Abstentions – 2

Absent: Councillor Dehnel

Absent - 1

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 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 paragraphs 1 and 3 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.

19 Minute No. 436 – Leisure Operations Update

The Council consider Minute No. 436 of the Cabinet Meeting of the 25th June 2020 which had been deferred earlier in the Meeting. (Minute No 14 (b) refers).

Councillor Forest, Portfolio Holder for Culture, Leisure and Tourism, introduced this item and the Cabinet recommendations. He referred to the petition which had been submitted to the Council on this subject earlier that day and other objections received, and explained the rationale behind the Cabinet recommendations.

There followed a long debate with various Members making statements and asking questions on the exempt papers and recommendations. These were responded to by the Portfolio Holder.

Resolved:

That Minute No. 436 be approved and adopted.

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