

Ashford Borough Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Ashford Borough Council held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **21st October 2021**.

Present:

His Worshipful the Mayor, Cllr. C K Knowles (Chairman);

Cllrs. Anckorn, Barrett, Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Bell, Blanford, Buchanan, Burgess, Campkin, Clarkson, Clokie, Farrell, Feacey, Forest, Harman, Hayward, B Heyes, Howard, Howard-Smith, Krause, Ledger, Link, Meaden, Michael, Mulholland, Ovenden, Pauley, Pickering, Rogers, Shorter, Smith, Spain, Sparks, C Suddards, L Suddards, Turner, Walder, Webb, Wedgbury, Wright.

Also Present:

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, Civic Officer, Member Services Manager.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Chilton, Cornish, Iliffe.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting Members remained standing in respect of the late Gerald White who was the Borough Council Member for the Highfield Ward from May 2015, and for the late Sir David Amess MP, who had both passed away recently. The Reverend Hammond then said prayers.

155 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 Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer advised that there were none.

156 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 4th May 2021 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

157 Appointment of Mayor's Cadets for 2021/22

The Mayor introduced his four Mayor's Cadets for 2021/22. As Members were aware, each Mayor now had the opportunity to appoint an outstanding Cadet from each of the four armed services for their term of office. For this year those individuals were: -

- **Leading Cadet Willow Mackenzie - Ashford Sea Cadets.**

- **Cadet Lance Corporal Grace Ball - Royal Marines.**
- **Cadet Cate Phillips - Army Cadets**
- **Cadet Sgt. Niraj Marar – Air Training Corps.**

The Mayor gave a short citation for each Cadet and then called them forward individually to present them with their badge of office for the year.

158 Announcements

(a) The Mayor

The Mayor said he thought it was wonderful for them to all to be together again. It was the first Full Council meeting in the Council Chamber since the 5th March 2020 which had been a considerable amount of time to be apart. Time had flown by and the world was now a slightly different place since they had last met. It was also the first meeting that he had chaired since becoming Mayor back in May, so he wanted to take the opportunity to give a quick update on some of the things he and the Deputy Mayor had been doing since then.

He firstly wanted to thank Cllr. Jenny Webb for all the help she had given him as his Deputy. She had stepped up to the plate many times when he had been unable to attend events – whether there had been a clash with other events, he had been away for a few days holiday or when he had been ill recently with Covid. Jenny had resolutely risen to the challenge or deputising and he hoped she had enjoyed herself at those events.

Between them they had attended 111 events since May of many different types and at many different venues. He had thoroughly enjoyed meeting people from all across the Borough and had really enjoyed getting to parts of the Borough he had never been to before. He had opened several new ventures within the Borough and a few worthy of particular mention included: - a new Coffee Shop at Repton where he had met Peppa Pig, (which he was sure would follow him for the rest of the year!), but it had been really exciting to see young people starting a new venture; the Hampton by Hilton International Hotel – an excellent new hotel that had created new employment opportunities in the Borough; and a new tyre fitting facility which had been particularly poignant to him as the owner had been one of the Syrian refugees that had come to Ashford several years ago. This had shown the value of the refugees to the local community and that they were integrating in to the big Ashford family. Each new business that opened showed that people had confidence in the Borough as they had chosen to open new ventures here. He looked forward to opening more in the coming months.

The Mayor said he had enjoyed the opening of the magnificent new facilities next door at the Stour Centre and had been truly impressed at what had been done to revitalise the Centre. It had been wonderful to see the happy faces of the children playing on the climbing walls and other facilities and to talk to the happy families, many of whom had travelled great distances to attend with their children. It had also been great to join fellow Councillors and Officers to view the new football pitches at the Bromley Green football facility – a wonderful collaboration between the Club and Ashford Borough Council which provided excellent facilities for all ages. He had undertaken several litter picks

across the Borough; attended an Eid Reunion with the Bangladeshi community; unveiled the Shadoxhurst quilt; opened several Fayres in all sorts of weathers; and even hand ground some flour at the Willesborough Windmill. He could not detail all of the visits that he and the Deputy had made as it would take far too long, but he was sorry if he had not mentioned a particular event as they had truly enjoyed everything that they had been to. It had been a real privilege to have been invited to all of the events and he asked Members to continue to invite them to events in their Wards where they felt the Mayor's presence would benefit the event or the organisation.

It had also been a real privilege to present people with Mayoral Achievement Awards. This Borough had some absolute stars. Sadly, not everybody could, or wanted to be, recognised but if anyone was aware of individuals who deserved recognition for things they had done, be that over a long period of time, or more recently during the pandemic, he asked Members to get in touch with him.

The Mayor concluded by saying that he had also hosted a number of events in aid of the Mayor's Charity and it had been a pleasure to see many of his fellow Councillors at his events and he hoped everyone had had a good time. He urged all to continue to attend these events as they supported his charity and it was good for everyone to get together. His charity – Shaw Trust's Live Well Kent - was doing some great work in the Borough with their many projects such as helping people with mental health issues, assisting people back in to employment and trying to help the homeless. There were many other strands to their projects and he encouraged anyone interested to talk to either himself or Donna, the Civic Officer. He also looked forward to seeing many colleagues at his Big Cats event in Smarden the following day, when they were all hoping for kind weather! The next two events after that were a Christmas Curry Night at the Cinnamon Spice restaurant on the 30th November and then a particularly special Beer and Pie Tasting at the Old Dairy Brewery in Tenterden on Tuesday 14th December. There would be non-alcoholic beer options and vegetarian and gluten free pies for those who preferred, as well as a fantastic opportunity for pre-Christmas shopping in Tenterden High Street.

(b) Leader of the Council

The Leader said that he had a very full response to an important question that had been asked later on the agenda about a particularly topical subject, so he did not have any other announcements to make.

159 Cabinet – 27th May, 24th June, 29th July and 30th September 2021

(a) Cabinet – 27th May 2021

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 27th May 2021 be received and noted.

(b) Cabinet – 24th June 2021

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 24th June 2021 be received and noted.

(c) Cabinet – 29th July 2021

Resolved:

That (i) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 29th July 2021 be received and noted with the exception of Minute No. 87

(ii) Minute No. 87 be approved and adopted.

(d) Cabinet – 30th September 2021

Resolved:

That (i) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 30th September 2021 be received and noted with the exception of Minute Nos. 120, 122 and 123.

(ii) Minute Nos. 120, 122 and 123 be approved and adopted.

160 Selection and Constitutional Review Committee – 7th October 2021

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on the 7th October 2021 be approved and adopted.

161 Audit Committee – 15th June, 20th July and 5th October 2021

(a) Audit Committee – 15th June 2021

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee held on the 15th June 2021 be received and noted.

(b) Audit Committee – 20th July 2021**Resolved:**

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee held on the 20th July 2021 be received and noted.

(c) Audit Committee – 5th October 2021**Resolved:**

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee held on the 5th October 2021 be received and noted.

**162 Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Annual Report
2020/21**

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Ovenden, introduced the report and advised that it outlined some of the key activities undertaken by the Committee during the 2020/21 year. During the year the effects of the pandemic had been a huge challenge for all Local Authorities however, despite these pressures, Overview and Scrutiny at Ashford had continued and the Committee had welcomed the use of virtual and hybrid meetings. Doing this had helped the Committee reach a wider audience than ever before, improving the quality of debate and discussion at meetings. The Committee had held two in-depth reviews during the year – a Task Group to review Digital Transformation which had resulted in eight recommendations all approved by the Cabinet in October 2020; and a Task Group set up in January 2021 to conduct the Budget Scrutiny process which had also resulted in some very successful recommendations. He wanted to thank all of the Officers who had been involved in the reviews during the year and who had assisted the Committee proficiently. He also wanted thank Members (both of the Committee and non-Committee) who had played an active role at meetings on various matters. The Committee looked to have a full and busy year ahead, with the Section 106 review approaching its conclusion as well as some major topics due to be brought forward including Budget Scrutiny and a much welcomed review of consultation and engagement. He therefore moved acceptance of the report.

Councillor Wedgbury said he thought this year could have been a golden year for Overview and Scrutiny and the Committee could have picked up the baton on many different issues on behalf of residents. Two particular subjects that he thought they should have scrutinised were the operation of the new Community Councils which had now been running for two years, and the use of Teams and other social media and how they could have been used more by residents to engage with this Council. He wondered why they hadn't looked at these issues and instead, in his view, had spent most of the year navel gazing.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee responded that the Committee had an open process whereby any Member could raise any topic they wanted and those topics would be reviewed by the Committee, discussed on their merits and then brought forward if agreed by the Committee. Community Councils had been raised during the

year and after some investigation it had been determined that, as the Community Councils were bodies in their own right, scrutiny by the Borough Council would not have been appropriate at that time and thus was not taken forward. Should the Community Councils have asked for the Committee's help they would have happily provided it. With regard to Teams, hybrid meetings and use of technology, he thought not one single person on this Council had tried harder on this than himself during the last year and as Chairman of the Committee if he had felt they needed to bring this to Overview and Scrutiny he would happily have proposed it. He did not feel that the middle of a pandemic was the right time to question what they were doing about Teams etc. when there were more important things to discuss. He personally considered the Council had done an ample job in reacting to the pandemic and had done very well in getting meetings on-line very quickly and being able to conduct their business efficiently. He thought all should be congratulated for that and any Member who doubted that should take a serious look at how they behaved with their own business. He said he could say more but he wouldn't at the moment as he thought that most Members in this forum would agree whole-heartedly with what he had already said. He thanked everyone again for their support for Overview and Scrutiny over this past year and hoped that as they moved forward they would embrace whatever format of meeting got them out to as many people as possible in effectively scrutinising the business of the Council.

Resolved:

That the report be received and accepted.

163 Audit Committee – Annual Report 2020/21

Resolved:

That the report be received and accepted.

164 Questions by Members

(a) Question from Councillor L Suddards to Councillor Clarkson, Leader of the Council

Councillor Suddards advised that as she knew the Leader had a lengthy response to her question she wanted to take a few moments to put her question in context. The reason she had brought the question forward was in response to the press release from the Council on the Safer Streets Fund. It was very welcome to know the Council had put a bid in and been successful in gaining monies to make the Town Centre safer. Two of the specific points of her question were about Town Centre lighting and public transport, and whilst she knew these were primarily under the remit of Kent County Council, the Borough Council did have significant influence. As a Street Pastor she had seen people having to leave the Town Centre through unlit areas and feeling very unsafe and she felt her question was a very relevant one given what had been happening recently, including some of their own Councillors being harassed and intimidated, along with school girls and a general message that "they just had to get used to it" because it was commonplace. Her question was therefore: -

“If the Leader accepts the fundamental right of women to walk the streets of Ashford before and after dark, without fear of attack, cat calling, kerb crawling or censure for being alone, how does he plan to address the poor lighting and inadequate public transport that acts as a curfew, preventing women moving freely between the Town Centre and surrounding areas after dark?”

Reply by Councillor Clarkson

“Mr Mayor, I would firstly like to thank Councillor Suddards for asking me this question as it gives me the opportunity to highlight the many things that we have been doing and are currently doing regarding one of the most important issues facing us all – that everyone, especially women and girls, should feel safe on our streets. I get extremely angry when I hear people, especially men, talking about what women and girls should do to make themselves less vulnerable to abuse or attack. We must of course be focusing very much on men and young boys behaving properly.

Tackling violence against women and girls was the focus for the Safer Streets Fund released earlier this year. Ashford Borough Council submitted a bid together with our partners to the Home Office via the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner. The bid had to focus on the Ashford Town Centre. The bid was written by our Community Safety and Wellbeing Manager Alison Oates, please note a female officer, and the CSU Police Inspector. However, even then it was not done in isolation and a number of consultees were involved including Ashford Partnership Against Crime (APAC), Ashford College, John Wallis Academy, Highworth Girls School, Ashford Street Pastors, Clarion (Domestic Abuse Commissioned Service) and the Independent Police Advisory Group. We also conducted a specific survey earlier in June this year linked to safety in the Town Centre and saw 69% of responses being from females. The majority felt very unsafe in the town centre after 20:00hrs and that they would feel safer if there was more lighting, CCTV, and increased visible guardians. Over half of the responses highlighted they were not aware of personal safety apps but would be willing to use them. An Environmental Visual Audit was conducted which further demonstrated the issues within the area which can lead to the community, particularly women and girls, feeling vulnerable and unsafe. Our bid was part of that the Kent’s Police and Crime Commissioner, Matthew Scott’s, bid to Government. He was awarded £741,548 to make the streets of Ashford, Rochester and Chatham safer, particularly for women and girls. Please note that Ashford is set to receive almost £550,000 of that award, by far the greatest percentage. This will provide personal safety equipment, such as drink testing kits and personal alarms, as well as creating safe havens and installing more CCTV. The successful bid will allow us to deliver the following projects: Personal Safety Equipment; educational input to educate particularly young men; improvement to the Memorial Garden fencing; moving cameras at Elwick Place onto the improved system in the Ashford Monitoring Centre (AMC) to allow live monitoring and improved speed for reviews and downloads; creating safe havens through training shop and licensed premises staff in being “active bystanders” and continued development of Shop and Pub watch schemes; a Digital App which supports other popular features of safety apps including alerting systems and SOS functionality - there are also options to include bespoke safety alerts around emerging trends or themes as well as identifying safe routes throughout the town; wall mounted mirrors to improve visibility when entering and exiting alleyways; installation of CCTV in Edinburgh Road car park which will be monitored by AMC; installation of eight additional CCTV cameras in key locations like the Memorial Gardens and entry/exit routes to the Town Centre such as Victoria Park

and Hythe Road; Smart-tag to SIA door staff - smart-water is a recognised crime prevention tactic that has more recently diversified in terms of the scenarios where it can be deployed. The SmartTag product had been developed as a handheld spray intended for use by SIA trained staff to help diffuse and manage situations within the night-time economy; improving the street scene by purchasing an industrial pressure cleaner and litter picking equipment to make our streets look cleaner and therefore feel safer; window wrapping vacant shops to improve the environment; and continuing to support the Street Pastors.

This funding needs to be spent by end of March 2022 so they did have to get a move on and get on with this work. It will complement the investment in more Town Centre Police Officers and PCSOs and help drive down unacceptable anti-social behaviour in our communities. The APAC radios were updated earlier this year from analogue to digital which increase the quality and range, and this had all contributed to a safer environment. Recent tragic events have brought to the fore concerns many women and girls face. The extensive plans we have for this funding will make real improvements to our Town Centre and, I hope, will result in helping all our visitors feel safe within our Town Centre spaces. The PCC is working on this subject and a number of engagements are taking place – Alison Oates attended his round table with Community Safety Mangers just last week. The Chief Constable is holding a number of community engagement events also linked to this subject – one of which will certainly be here in Ashford.

We are blessed to have the AMC, with a dedicated 24/7 CCTV system, staffed by SIA trained CCTV operators. The Monitoring Centre has direct links to Kent Police via the radio system. The Centre acts as a Town Control Room for the APAC radio system, so we have contact with all our shop and pub watch members. The AMC works closely with the Police and ensures that any criminal activity is swiftly reported and thus allows the Police to act upon that information. The clarity of images has improved identification of offenders and led to increased arrests and sanctions.

We currently have six Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) within the Borough. A PSPO is intended to deal with a particular nuisance or problem in a particular area that is detrimental to the local community's quality of life, by imposing conditions on the use of that area which apply to everyone. They are designed to ensure the law-abiding majority can use and enjoy public spaces, safe from anti-social behaviour. The Ashford Urban Order covers Ashford Town Centre and has the following prohibitions: - a) No person shall urinate or defecate in a public place. This includes the doorway or alcove of any premises to which the public has access; b) No person shall refuse to stop drinking alcohol or hand over any containers (sealed or unsealed) which are believed to contain alcohol, when requested to do so by an authorised Officer in order to prevent public nuisance or disorder; c) No person shall use a motor vehicle to perform any of the following activities: - (1) Revving of engine (s); (2) Repeated sudden and rapid acceleration; (3) Racing; (4) Performing stunts; (5) Sounding horns; (6) Playing loud music in a motor vehicle; (7) Driving in convoy; (8) Using threatening, intimidating behaviour towards another person; and (9) Causing obstruction; d) No persons shall play ball games in areas signed as "No ball games"; and e) No person shall use foul or abusive language. Any person found guilty of breaching this order will be liable, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding £1,000. Depending on the breach, the enforcing Officer could decide that a fixed penalty notice of £100 would be the most

appropriate sanction. PSPOs may be enforced by Police Officers, Police Community Support Officers and any Officers designated by Ashford Borough Council.

In terms of wider community safety activity, as an Authority we are engaged and actively participate in a number of meetings to support the safety of residents and visitors to the Borough. There are a monthly CSU meetings where matters are discussed in a multi-agency arena and resolutions found. We have a Council representative at shop watch and pub watch meetings, district contextual safeguarding meetings (focus on adolescent risk and locations), adult vulnerabilities meetings and high risk Domestic Abuse cases. Many will know that the Council has joined forces with Charlton Athletic Community Trust (CACT) on a year-long project which aims to use the power of sport and physical activity to create safer, stronger and more respectful communities by engaging with young people in some of our most high-need areas. The Community Safety Partnership receives an annual crime reduction grant from the PCC and £21,000 from that funding stream and this has been allocated to this project. The Trust have also identified £8,000 from other funding streams, and with the Council matching the PCC's £21,000, thus giving a total funding for this project is £50,000. This will enable CACT to run a range of activities including a one to one mentoring programme, working with a number of young people per week for targeted intervention around crime. There will be weekly ball court/estate sessions, three crime reduction workshops, three ten-week peer enrichment programmes plus a residential trip for 30 young people to attend. This programme will be particularly applicable to teaching young boys to have respect for women and young girls and self-respect for themselves. Within the programme there is also the 'Joy of Movement' programme within schools, which will encourage children to adopt a healthy, active lifestyle, combatting childhood obesity, where they will learn about the body and nutrition and take part in practical sessions. The expected outcomes from this project are to create safer, stronger, and more respectful communities through engaging young people in positive activities within the immediate communities that they live in. In addition, the one to one mentoring sessions can reduce the risk of young people becoming involved in serious youth violence and gang related crime and create a more respectful approach to life. A similar project which ran recently in Greenwich showed an increase in young people's aspirations by 77%. As you can see this is a comprehensive project and Ashford Borough Council is supporting it, inspiring our young people to forge a healthier, happier and more respectful future for themselves and others. A number of referrals have already been made into the one to one mentoring scheme by the Police, local schools and KCC adolescent support team.

There was also the CHESS project which was funded by the Violence Reduction Unit to deliver community engagement projects with young people in two Wards (Beaver and Bockhanger) to produce community based action plans to tackle violence and Anti-Social Behaviour. The Bockhanger project has commenced – 12 young people attended the workshop and ward walk on 2nd October. They are re-grouping on 30th October to review the data and produce the action plan which will then be owned and implemented. The Beaver project will take place in early part of 2022. This project is allowing the voice of young people to be heard and to take ownership of their community.

Just as an aside, and when thinking about people travelling around at night, they did have to think about taxis and ensuring that these were properly licensed and policed. Taxis, hackney carriages and private hire vehicles, along with their drivers and private hire operators, are licensed by this Authority. Licensing provides a visible assurance to

the public that checks have been carried out. These measures ensure that vehicles have been checked at least every six months for safety. They also make sure that the driver has had a medical, criminal history checks, and is fit to hold a licence. I am going to list a few of the checks and training that are required before licenses are granted as many Members may not be aware what we do in this area: - Mandatory safeguarding training and practical driving assessment; Mandatory medical (including eyesight) assessment; Mandatory private hire test (including basic English/maths); Mandatory knowledge test for hackney drivers (in addition to the above test); Mandatory enhanced DBS checks and (if required) certificates of good conduct from relevant embassies for any foreign resident drivers and right to work checks; Mandatory DVLA driver licence checks on application/renewal, Additional common law police disclosure checks – where concerns or suspicion arise, and we are contemplating moving towards such checks for all new/renewals (with police agreement).

Turning to one of the main facets of the question, street lighting, the majority of the lighting within the Town Centre is managed by KCC. If there are issues with them then they can and should be reported to KCC, but we will be looking to improve street lighting where needed, because as Councillor Suddards had said, we are in charge in this Borough and we want to be responsible for the safety of everyone in it. I spoke to the Chief Executive last week as I had been astonished at how many lights were out as I drove down Elwick Road. That is not good enough and we need to make sure that they are on and working properly and if there are any areas where we feel there is more lighting needed, we need to get on to KCC to make sure it is remedied and we will.

Given the increase in reported incidents in the last few years we have formed a Working Group on Member safety to examine this. The Council already has access to a number of personal alarms which they can issue to staff members if they are lone working or are deemed to be at risk. These are also available to any Councillor and I would urge Members to take advantage of them. There are three different options available to choose from: - a My SOS Pebble; Peoplesafe Smartphone App; and My SOS ID Badge. I have one of the Pebbles in my hands now and these alert the AMC 24/7 of your location if any incidents take place and they have two way recording. It appeared that only one other Member has taken advantage of this. A message went out to all Members on the 5th October via the Member Services Manager inviting you to take up one of these and I would urge you all to do so. If any Member would like to see one in action, please speak to Cllr Peter Feacey, the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Wellbeing.

Mr Mayor, I am sorry that my answer has taken so long but this is a matter that merited a full and comprehensive reply. The safety of our citizens, our visitors, our staff and indeed our Elected Members must be our highest priority and I make no apologies about being so thorough on such an important situation that we all need to take ownership of."

Supplementary Question by Councillor L Suddards

"Thank you very much that was very comprehensive. Can I ask, in addition to all of the other measures happening, will the Leader be supporting the "Reclaim the Streets" event being organised by women locally?"

Reply by Councillor Clarkson

“Mr Mayor, I think it is important to say that I am a great democrat and I believe in the right of everyone to demonstrate peacefully on any topic they feel is appropriate. I also know that the Police here in Ashford and Ashford Borough Council actively work with people who wish to demonstrate. So I would support any legitimate demonstration as long as is lawful and does the job of making their points without inconveniencing other people going about their lawful business, otherwise that becomes a frustration for others and a potential *contretemps*. So, the answer is yes, absolutely, to support a lawful demonstration which is the backbone of this Country and or democracy at work.”

Supplementary Question by Councillor Walder

“Listening to the Leader’s very comprehensive, and in some ways extremely reassuring summary of the actions that this Council is taking to make vulnerable people feel safer on our streets, there is also a sense of real despair as it sounds like a war, almost a list of military hardware and it is sad that this is what we are up against. As difficult a subject as it is, I think we also have to talk about the role of online pornography, because the environment that we were all brought up in has gone and I will be taking the opportunity to speak to Officers and the Portfolio Holder about how we can begin to tackle something that is critical in this war and I wonder if the Leader would agree with me on these wider issues?”

Reply by Councillor Clarkson

“I think Councillor Walder is absolutely right and I can say categorically, from a personal and professional point of view, that I never fail to be astonished and saddened at the inappropriate use of social media. Social media can be a wonderful tool but the inappropriate use of it and the lack of controls and a whole host of other things online is beyond belief. Young people are bullied much more than they ever were through social media, it is a faceless thing at times, and you have people committing suicide as a result so I think you have to look at these things. As a Council we took action against Anti-Social Behaviour in a recent court case that we took to the High Court – the first Council in the United Kingdom to use the new legislation to take an errant individual who had gone far over the line by harassing and abusing staff and Members, including telling people to commit suicide. We have to stand up and fight these people through the proper systems when we can and unfortunately it is a bit of a war. We have now set an example, we won that case and that will now be case law in the courts going forward. Why should our staff be subjected to these sort of things? That is no way of behaving and Councillor Walder is absolutely right. This issue is a broader one and we want a zero-tolerance approach to this sort of behaviour in all its guises. We are a caring Borough and we want to look after the vast majority who want to enjoy their lives and go about their business safe in the knowledge that they are not going to be insulted, harassed, threatened and injured.”

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