

Ashford Borough Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Ashford Borough Council held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **22nd December 2022**.

Present:

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

Cllrs. Anckorn, Barrett, Bartlett, Blanford, Buchanan, Burgess, Campkin, Chilton, Cornish, Feacey, Forest, Hayward, B Heyes, Howard, Howard-Smith, Iliffe, Knowles, Krause, Ledger, Link, Meaden, Mulholland, Nilsson, Pickering, Rogers, Shorter, Spain, Sparks, C Suddards, Wedgbury, Wright

Also Present:

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

Apologies:

Cllrs. Mrs Bell, Bell, Clarkson, Clokie, Farrell, Harman, Michael, Ovenden, Pauley, Smith, L Suddards, Turner, Walder.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting Members remained standing in respect of the late Mr Michael Pearson, the Town Mayor of Tenterden between 2002 and 2004, who had passed away recently. The Reverend Dr Sue Starkings then said prayers.

272 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.

273 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 20th October 2022 be approved and confirmed as a correct record,

274 Announcements

(a) The Mayor

The Mayor said as we reached the end of another challenging year, she felt that the 2020's would go down in history as the period that really tried the human race and tested its tolerance, understanding and patience! However, on a more positive note she

had again been privileged to attend some wonderful and emotive engagements during this Autumn and Winter.

She wanted to begin with the most poignant week of Remembrance - from the dedication of the Poppy Garden, the Armistice Day gathering, and culminating in a very well attended Remembrance Sunday Church Service at St Mary's followed by the Service of Remembrance at the War Memorial. The REME, Princess of Wales' Royal Regiment, the Royal British Legion, Cadet Forces, local organisations and their own Council team had all done the Borough proud. She said it was so humbling to see the community coming together at such times.

The Mayor said that congratulations also had to go to the superb AIMREC Ashford 180 celebrations, marking the 180th Anniversary of the arrival of the railway in Ashford. This had been an outstanding and professional exhibition and an incredible weekend of themed events. She had thoroughly enjoyed her tours and could not believe that some of the intricate models were made out of cardboard! Some may have noticed that her Civic Christmas Card this year had boasted one of the wonderful photographs of the locomotive in the snow, taken by the late local photographer Peter Green.

Over the past month her festive treats had included the lighting up of Warren Lodge which was great fun, a Christmas Coffee Morning at Willesborough Windmill, enjoying the various Christmas Concerts and in particular the beautiful voices of the Ashford Choral Society and her own 'Mayor's Choir' and the musical and magical repertoire at the Jean Mealham Pop In Centre, Woodchurch. However, for her, the young people of the Borough had been the stars on top of the Christmas Tree! Starting with the Finberry School Celebration, which had been declared as one of the few 'Microsoft Showcase Schools' in the world, and seeing how digital technology could transform education offering had been quite overwhelming for her and Councillor Forest. She had also been humbled by the Kumon Awards event and it had been a joy meeting so many talented and dedicated young people who were achieving over and above their age group. More recently there had been the Christmas Market and Carol Concert at the Singleton Environment Centre, where the pupils of John Wesley Primary had performed the most enchanting selection of seasonal favourites from around the globe. With the help of Santa it had been an incredible evening raising funds for her charity – Singleton Spaces.

The Mayor said she had listened to Councillors regarding climate change and the environment and this was why she had chosen Singleton Spaces as her charity. They were positive and creative and their teaching capacity was amazing. The workshops they put on for schools created a fun learning experience for the children, and indeed for any adults present, whilst at the same time educating children of the importance of protecting and caring for our fragile planet and its wildlife, flora and fauna. She therefore looked forward to all Councillors supporting this charity and attending events and putting their commitment to doing rather than just saying. So, one date for diaries was her Charity Civic Ball with Abba Chique on Saturday 25th March at London Beach Hotel, Tenterden. There would be a two course dinner with a lot of dancing and she urged everyone to join her.

The Mayor said she would like to take the opportunity to thank her colleagues and guests for accompanying her on many of her engagements - it had been a pleasure to spend time with them. She also wanted to thank the Officers for the support they had given her and all of the Councillors for their support over the past year and their

continued commitment to assist residents during the challenging months ahead. Additionally, she wanted to give special thanks to her Deputies, Larry and Sue, who had been outstanding and helped her massively during her year so far. Finally she wanted to thank the Mayor's Cadets and their Commanding Officers and families. She was immensely proud of each of them and they had supported her at many special occasions this year with professionalism and reverence.

In conclusion, the Mayor wanted to wish everyone a very Happy Christmas and a more settled and contented New Year. She invited all present to join her after the meeting for some refreshments and amazing wine that had been so kindly donated by Biddenden Vineyard and Sir George Jessel from his own vineyard. She also wanted to thank Sir George for his continuing support and sound advice.

(b) Deputy Leader of the Council

The Deputy Leader said that the Leader was extremely disappointed not to be present this evening at the final Council Meeting of this calendar year but he had passed on some messages which he would update Members on.

The Leader was pleased to report that on the 6th December, he had received the final report from the Greater Ashford Borough Environment and Land Mapping Commission. He wanted to take the opportunity to thank the members of the Commission for their professional input in to the examination of this important subject - having due regard to the Terms of Reference. This final report would now be the subject of detailed discussion and consideration regarding just how this work could meaningfully contribute to the effective good management of the Borough. This work, and the Commission's recommendations, would doubtless assist the Council in further strengthening the protection of its environment, as well as informing its continually evolving Corporate Plan and the ongoing iterations of its vital Local Plan. A hard copy of the Commission's final report had been made available to all Elected Members.

The Deputy Leader also announced the following changes to Member responsibilities in the Administration:

- Councillor Buchanan, the current Portfolio Holder for Housing, had been appointed to Chair the Climate Change Advisory Committee. This Committee had a role across all aspects of the Council's activities, and accordingly he would remain a Member of the Cabinet with a Portfolio for Climate Change.
- Councillor Barrett, the current Chair of the Climate Change Advisory Committee, had been appointed as the Portfolio Holder for Housing.

He advised that Brompton Bikes had now lodged their planning application, which had been validated, and sought a new factory as part of their proposed global headquarters' re-location to Ashford. The application would now be subject to the Authority's rigorous planning process to ensure it met the high standards upheld in this Borough.

The Leader had intended to make a summary slide presentation to go along with his report to Council (Item 14 on the Agenda), but unfortunately Covid had intervened to frustrate that opportunity. He hoped to make a final address to Full Council at its last meeting of this four-year term in March 2023.

Finally, the Deputy Leader said that whilst Christmas was a joyous time to join together with family and friends, he knew that there would be many this year who would be concerned about food, shelter, warmth and paying their bills. He was proud of the work the Council's Officers did in this regard and knew that this would need to continue in to 2023 as they responded to the cost of living crisis. He knew that if the Leader had been there he would want to wish everyone a Happy Christmas and healthy and Happy New Year.

275 Cabinet – 27th October, 24th November and 15th December 2022

(a) Cabinet – 27th October 2022

Resolved:

- That (i) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 27th October 2022 be received and noted with the exception of Minute No. 198.**
- (ii) Minute No. 198 be approved and adopted.**

(b) Cabinet – 24th November 2022

Resolved:

- That (i) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 24th November 2022 be received and noted with the exception of Minute Nos. 228 and 229**
- (ii) Minute Nos. 228 and 229 be approved and adopted.**

(c) Cabinet – 15th December 2022

Resolved:

- That (i) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 15th December 2022 be received and noted with the exception of Minute No. 266**
- (ii) Minute No. 266 be approved and adopted.**

276 Audit Committee – 29th November 2022

Councillor Campkin asked for it to be recorded that some doubt had been expressed about the integrity of the External Audit Plan following a comment made by a Member at the Meeting, which pointed out errors in the report.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee held on the 29th November 2022 be received and noted.

277 Appeals Committee – 7th December 2022

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Appeals Committee held on the 7th December 2022 be received and noted.

278 Councillors Clokie and Smith – Request for Extension of Leave of Absence

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

Resolved:

That the request be granted and the periods of absence be extended to the 4th May 2023 for both Councillors.

279 A Decade of Challenges, Opportunities and Change

Resolved:

That the report be received and noted.

Queries concerning these Minutes? Please contact Member Services
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