

Ashford Borough Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Ashford Borough Council held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **30th May 2023**.

Present:

Her Worshipful the Mayor, Mrs J Webb (Chairman);

Cllrs. Anckorn, Arnold, Barrett, Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Bell, Betty, Blanford, Brunger-Randall, Buchanan, Campkin, Chilton, Dean, Feacey, Forest, Gambling, Gathern, Gauder, Giles, Hallett, Harman, Hayward, Heyes, Hicks, Iliffe, Joseph, Krause, Leavey, Ledger, Link, McGeever, Meaden, Michael, Mulholland, Nilsson, Ovenden, Pauley, Pickering, Roden, Shilton, Smith, Spain, C Suddards, L Suddards, Townend, Walder, Wright.

Apologies:

Director of Place, Space and Leisure.

Also Present:

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, Director of Customer, Technology and Finance, Director of Health and Wellbeing, Assistant Director of Environment, Property and Recreation, Principal Solicitor (Strategic Development), Communications and Marketing Manager, Member Services Manager, Senior Member Services Officer.

1 Election of Mayor

Her Worshipful the Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and congratulated all new Councillors on their Election to the Council. She said that the Council had an important decision to make later that evening, to elect a new Leader of the Council and she hoped Members would make the right decision for the welfare of the people of the Borough, and put that ahead of personal ambitions.

Prior to the Election of the Mayor, the Retiring Mayor, Mrs Jenny Webb, presented certificates to her outgoing Mayor's Cadets and thanked them for their contributions over the past year: - Leading Cadet Ross Lumsden - Ashford Sea Cadets; Cadet Corporal Grace Ball - Royal Marines; Cadet Warrant Officer Harvey Helme - Army Cadets; and Lance Corporal Regan Gould – Air Training Corps.

Councillor Feacey nominated Councillor Larry Krause for election as Mayor of Ashford Borough Council for the forthcoming municipal year.

This was seconded by Councillor Bartlett.

Councillor Feacey said he was pleased to nominate Councillor Larry Krause as the 50th Mayor of Ashford. Larry was born and raised in Brisbane, Australia and had worked for many years in finance and sales before moving to Ashford in 2001. He was married to his lovely wife Sue, who he was sure would give him pastoral care and guidance throughout his term. Larry had been a Parish Councillor for ten years, serving his community, before becoming a Borough Councillor in 2015.

Councillor Feacey said that one of the Mayor's chosen charities was very close to his own heart – "Men in Sheds" at the Ashford Volunteer Centre. This was among other great fundraising projects which he knew Larry would be supporting this year.

Larry had a great personality and an easy nature which he was sure would be an asset during his Mayoral year.

Councillor Feacey said he was therefore pleased to nominate Councillor Larry Krause and he hoped he would have an enjoyable year representing the residents of the Borough.

Councillor Bartlett said that Larry would be a hardworking and dedicated ambassador for Ashford who would do all he could to promote the Borough. He was therefore pleased to second the nomination of Councillor Larry Krause as Mayor of Ashford Borough Council for the forthcoming municipal year.

There were no other nominations.

Resolved:

That Councillor Larry Krause be elected Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the Municipal Year 2023/24.

2 Declaration of Acceptance of Office by the Mayor

Councillor Krause made his Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

The retiring Mayor, the Chief Executive, the newly elected Mayor and the Mayor's Chaplain then left the meeting. Upon their return, having been invested with his chains of office His Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor Larry Krause assumed the Chair.

3 Appointment of Mayor's Chaplain

His Worshipful the Mayor advised that his Chaplain for the coming year would be the Reverend Dr Sue Starkings. The Reverend Starkings then said prayers.

4 Vote of Thanks by the Mayor for His Election

His Worshipful the Mayor began by thanking Members for granting him the honour of becoming the 50th Mayor of the Borough. He wanted to welcome back all previous colleagues and to welcome those newly elected Councillors. He hoped new Members would find out that they were actually a pretty nice bunch! He also wanted to extend thanks to all those previous Councillors who had not been re-elected on this occasion and thank them for their hard work over the years. He said that the main thing for new Councillors to be aware of was that the most precious thing they had to offer people was their time. Giving that time to people and the new responsibilities they had taken on would support both this Council and the residents of the Borough. It would be important to attend training events and Committee Meetings for Members to familiarise themselves with the activities of the Council, so

he encouraged new Members to embrace those opportunities and if in any doubts, to ask plenty of questions! Group Leaders, colleague Members and Member Services were all there to help and give guidance. But perhaps the most important piece of advice was to enjoy it. Being an elected Councillor was a great privilege and there was nothing better than joining in, being part of the community and truly engaging.

As Councillor Feacey had touched upon, he had chosen two charities to support during his Mayoral year. Firstly, "Men in Sheds" at the Ashford Volunteer Centre which was a small Ashford based organisation offering mental health support to people in Ashford. Secondly, one which he hoped all would be aware of, the Friends of William Harvey Hospital, and he thought anyone who had been present at the hospital would recognise the valuable work they undertook for patients, companions and visitors.

The Mayor said that he would appreciate the support of all Members throughout his Mayoral year. He intended to visit as many Wards as he could to undertake his Mayoral duties and he was keen to help the people of the Borough better understand what the Council did. He would therefore welcome Ward Members to join him and support him and the Council in their Wards when he was present.

He said he and the Mayoress intended to be very busy this year and they already had engagements in the diary dating right up to March 2024. One date he wanted to flag was his Civic Service at St Mary's Church, Ashford on Sunday 2nd July at 2pm. This would be a great afternoon and an opportunity for colleagues to attend and show their support, all at no monetary cost to themselves!

The Mayor concluded by again thanking colleagues for his Election and advising that he would be appointing his Mayor's Cadets later in the meeting.

5 Vote of Thanks to the Retiring Mayor and Consort

Councillor Forest said it was his great pleasure to propose a vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor Mrs Jenny Webb and her Consort David Webb.

As many would know, Jenny's first term as Mayor in 2019/20 had been abruptly interrupted by the Covid pandemic. However, 2022 had seen the opportunity return and Jenny had wasted no time in resuming her duties - reaching out and reconnecting to the individuals and communities still dealing with the aftermath of the virus.

Jenny had served their Borough with dedication, passion, and enthusiasm, not only during her two terms as Mayor, but since she had been elected as Ward Member for the Norman Ward in 2015. Jenny had been a champion of community engagement for people of all ages and backgrounds, and for the environment and sustainability. He said it had been a huge privilege to accompany Jenny on some of her visits, and he thanked her for those opportunities. A particularly memorable example for him was their outing to the Jean Mealham Pop in Centre in Woodchurch for their Christmas Carol event where they had been treated to a live rendition on the Wurlitzer organ by world-renowned organists Chris and Jayne Powell. He could still remember the look of surprise on her face when she noticed that he knew the words to every verse of "Roll-out-the Barrell"! On another visit, dressed in her full regalia, a little girl had asked Jenny if she was the Queen. "No", she said, "I'm much more

important than that, I'm the Mayor of Ashford!" These visits served as a reminder of how important it was that they all worked together to support their Borough, and the incredible efforts that went on outside this Chamber to help people in their daily lives.

Councillor Forest said that on behalf of himself, those gathered today, their former colleagues, and the residents and organisations from across the Borough, he wanted to give a sincere "thank you" to Jenny for her work, and he wished her and her husband David a safe, happy and long retirement. He so moved the vote of thanks.

Councillor Gambling said that she was pleased to second the motion of a vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor, Jenny Webb

6 Election and Appointment of Deputy Mayor

Councillor Chilton proposed that "Councillor Lyn Suddards be elected Deputy Mayor for the Borough of Ashford for the ensuing year".

This was seconded by Councillor Feacey.

There were no other nominations.

Resolved:

That Councillor Lyn Suddards be elected Deputy Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the Municipal Year 2023/24.

7 Declaration of Acceptance of Office by the Deputy Mayor

Councillor Lyn Suddards made her Declaration of Acceptance of Office. The Deputy Mayor was then invested with her chains of office.

8 Appointment of Mayor's Cadets for 2023/24

The Mayor introduced his four Mayor's Cadets for 2023/24. As Members were aware, each Mayor 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: -

- **Lance Corporal George Chisnall – Royal Marines**
- **Cadet Ewan Lumsden – Ashford Sea Cadets**
- **Cadet Liam Burgess – Army Cadets**
- **Cadet Evie Hathaway-Batt - 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.

9 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 27th April 2023 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

10 Announcements

His Worshipful the Mayor said that all that remained to be said was to invite all present for refreshments to be served in the Committee Rooms downstairs after the meeting.

11 Election of the Leader of the Council for a Four Year Term

Councillor Bartlett proposed that “Councillor Bell be elected as Leader of the Council”.

This was seconded by Councillor Mulholland.

Councillor Spain proposed that “Councillor Chilton be elected as Leader of the Council”.

This was seconded by Councillor Lyn Suddards.

Councillor Harman proposed that “Councillor Ovenden be elected as Leader of the Council”.

This was seconded by Councillor Campkin.

As there were three valid nominations the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer advised of the procedure to be followed. The election of the Leader would be decided by a simple majority of those Members present and voting in the room at the time the question was put. If there was not a clear majority of votes in favour of one candidate after the first round of voting then, under Procedure Rule 15.6, the name of the candidate with the least number of votes would be taken off the list by the Mayor, and a new vote taken between the remaining nominees. The process would continue until there was a majority of votes for one person.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 15.4 Councillor Bell asked that a recorded vote be taken on this item. This was supported by at least six other Members (i.e. a total of at least seven) who indicated their support by standing.

A recorded vote was then taken on the Election of the Leader of the Council for a Four Year Term and the Members voted as follows: -

In favour of Councillor Bell: Councillors Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Bell, Blanford, Brunger-Randall, Feacey, Forest, Heyes, Hicks, Iliffe, Krause, Link, Mulholland, Pickering, Roden, Shilton, Smith.

Votes For - 17

In favour of Councillor Chilton: Councillors Anckorn, Chilton, Dean, Gathern, Gauder, Hallett, Joseph, Leavey, Spain, Charles Suddards, Lyn Suddards.

Votes For - 11

In favour of Councillor Ovenden: Councillors Arnold, Barrett, Betty, Buchanan, Campkin, Gambling, Giles, Harman, Hayward, Ledger, McGeever, Meaden, Michael, Nilsson, Ovenden, Pauley, Townend, Walder, Wright.

Votes For – 19

As there was no clear majority in favour of one candidate after the first round of voting, in accordance with Procedure Rule 15.6 the name of the candidate with the least number of votes, Councillor Chilton, was taken off the list by the Mayor and a second vote was taken between the remaining nominees. The Members then voted as follows: -

In favour of Councillor Bell: Councillors Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Bell, Blanford, Brunger-Randall, Feacey, Forest, Heyes, Hicks, Iliffe, Krause, Link, Mulholland, Pickering, Roden, Shilton, Smith.

Votes For - 17

In favour of Councillor Ovenden: Councillors Arnold, Barrett, Betty, Buchanan, Campkin, Gambling, Giles, Harman, Hayward, Ledger, McGeever, Meaden, Michael, Nilsson, Ovenden, Pauley, Townend, Walder, Wright.

Votes For – 19

Abstentions: Councillors Anckorn, Chilton, Dean, Gathern, Gauder, Hallett, Joseph, Leavey, Spain, Charles Suddards, Lyn Suddards.

Abstentions - 11

Resolved:

That Councillor Ovenden be elected Leader of the Council for a four year term.

12 To Note the Names and Number of Members to be Appointed by the Leader to the Cabinet and the name of the Deputy Leader

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Ovenden, said that having just been elected Leader he was not in a position to appoint his Cabinet or Deputy Leader at this stage. As this was such an important decision given that this was the first change in Leadership for a very long time, he would like to take time to consider the names of Members to be appointed to the Cabinet, and indeed the number of Members and the Portfolios that they would hold. He would advise further in due course.

13 Selection and Constitutional Review Committee – 25th May 2023

His Worshipful the Mayor said that given the decision that had just been made in relation to the Leader of the Council, he would like to refer to the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer for his advice on how to deal with these Minutes.

The Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer advised that the election of the new Leader would have some knock on effects for the proposed membership and chairmanship of some Committees as contained in the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee Minutes, and therefore asked the Council if they would like to consider adjourning this meeting for a period to give time to identify and make the necessary changes.

The Leader of the Council was unsure if an adjournment on the night would be sufficient to resolve all of the outstanding issues, particularly as no Cabinet appointments had yet been made.

Members noted that the Joint Transportation Board and Planning Committee were due to meet the following week and it would be useful to have Chairs/Vice-Chairs in place for those meetings at least. The Council therefore agreed to propose 'Interim' appointments for those positions. It was suggested that other Chairs/Vice-Chairs could be elected on a meeting by meeting basis until such time when the Full Council could meet again to appoint permanent Chairs/Vice-Chairs for all Committees etc.

The proposed membership of Committees, Boards and Groups was outlined in the Minutes and this was in the gift of Group Leaders so could be changed by way of a notification to the Monitoring Officer.

Other matters in the Minutes could be dealt with at this meeting.

Councillor Bell proposed that "the Minutes of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee meeting held on the 25th May be approved and adopted with the exception of Minute No. 406 (iii) which would be considered by future Selection and Constitutional Review Committee and Council Meetings".

This was seconded.

Votes were then taken for the appointment of an interim Chair and Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee and an interim Chair of the Joint Transportation Board.

Resolved:

- (i) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on the 25th May 2023 be approved and adopted with the exception of Minute No. 406 (iii).**
- (ii) Consideration of Minute No. 406 (iii) be deferred to future Selection and Constitutional Review Committee and Council Meetings.**

- (iii) the following 'Interim' appointments be made until such time that the Council can make permanent appointments for 2023/24: -

Chairman of Planning Committee – Cllr Jessamy Blanford
Vice-Chairman of Planning Committee – Cllr Bernard Heyes
Chairman of the Joint Transportation Board – Cllr Winston Michael.
