

Ashford Borough Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Ashford Borough Council held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **27th April 2023**.

Present:

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

Cllrs. Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Bell, Blanford, Buchanan, Burgess, Campkin, Chilton, Clarkson, Cornish, Feacey, Forest, Harman, Hayward, Howard, Iliffe, Knowles, Krause, Meaden, Michael, Mulholland, Nilsson, Ovenden, Pauley, Pickering, Rogers, Shorter, Spain, Sparks, C Suddards, L Suddards, Wright

Also Present:

Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, Director of Place, Space and Leisure, Director of Health and Wellbeing, Assistant Director – Planning and Development, Assistant Director – Environment, Property and Recreation, Principal Solicitor - Strategic Development, Member Services Manager.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Anckorn, Barrett, Clokie, B Heyes, Howard-Smith, Ledger, Turner, Walder, Wedgbury.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Reverend Dr Sue Starkings said prayers.

392 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 Agenda Item 14 was intended to be taken in private and it would be necessary to pass the resolution to exclude the press and public at that point of the meeting.

393 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 2nd March 2023 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

394 Announcements

(a) The Mayor

The Mayor said that as her Mayoral year reached its final few weeks, she had been reminiscing what a wonderful year it had been full of joy and tinged with sadness at the

passing of our late sovereign. The Queen's Platinum Jubilee was a wonderful celebration of a life of dedication of Queen Elizabeth II. The Mayor had had the privilege of making the proclamation announcing a new King and shortly would be part of the coronation of King Charles III - it had truly been history in the making.

She had enjoyed and received so much pleasure from visiting community events like the Big Green Heart Day at Hamstreet, to opening new play areas and congratulating the residents, Officers and Councillors for their combined hard work for the community to enjoy safe environments. The recent installation of a plaque made by Ben Sharp in the Council offices, remembering HMS Albacore, had been another memorable and well attended event. The March for Safer Streets and International Women's Day had been another well attended event and one of significant importance.

The Mayor said she had also recently undertaken a walkabout with Officers to visit local businesses and this had been so worthwhile and she had spent the day speaking to new business owners and independents whose creativity never ceased to amaze her. As part of that she had also visited the Coach Works and all she could say was "wow" – what a haven of activity! The Borough had such wonderful venues on its doorstep and whilst "big was good", she also thought "small was exciting". There was a need to promote, encourage and listen to their ideas for promoting Ashford. These businesses were the heart of their communities, economy, leisure and tourism so it was important not to forget or ignore them.

She had also had such a fun filled morning with Ashford College students celebrating their Culture Celebrations. Listening to the aspirations of those young people from all cultures had been "awesome" – yes, she had picked up some of the jargon along the way and also led the Conga much to the delight of all!

The Mayor had also recently attended INDY at Repton with Councillor Forest and they had enjoyed a morning full of chat, cups of tea and delicious scones. She wanted to say well done to Jilly and Brian for raising the profile of dementia, removing the stigma of the word and making those monthly events full of purpose for families and friends. They, like so many small groups, needed their ongoing support to make lives better.

In between many other visits, her own charity events had been marvellous. The Murder Mystery evening had been a well-attended and incredibly fun filled evening and she wanted to express her many thanks to Colin, Phil, Liz and all the other actors in a really exciting "whodunit". The ABBA event had also been well attended and she wanted to give a big thank you to the generosity of the Savannah Trust and London Beach Hotel. The Garden party at the Jean Mealham Pop In had been another successful afternoon and, despite the weather, they had all enjoyed the atmosphere and music by Graham and the incredible singing voice of Natalie. Again she wanted to give a big thank you to Richard Carley and the team for their support and kindness.

The Mayor said she also wanted to mention the fantastic murals from the Unframed Festival. Meeting with some of the artists and listening to their excitement at being part of this project had been well worth being part of the launch. Chris Dixon and everyone involved had created a portrait of culture and art that Ashford should feel immensely proud of.

This coming weekend the Mayor was hosting her Curry and Quiz Night at the London Beach Hotel, with the Mayors competing against teams from across the Borough, businesses and her charity too. Her final event would be the Bat Walk and Ploughman's Supper at Singleton Environment Centre on Saturday 20 May. This would be a real family event with the chance to learn a little more about those elusive creatures and they even hoped to see them in action too! She wanted to thank everyone who had supported her charity events so far. Without their support Ashford's communities would not be able to thrive and continue to help so many.

The Mayor said that before she signed off, there was someone she wanted to mention who had been very special to the Mayoral role - Colin Leek, her Mace Bearer, who was stepping down after 14 years in the role. She wanted to thank Colin for all his help and dedication in supporting the Mayor and the Civic Office since 2009. His professionalism and thoughtfulness had meant that each Mayor over the past 14 years had been well cared for, relying on his expertise to guide them through. On a personal note, she wanted to express her gratitude for his kindness, help and guidance over her Mayoral years. She wished him good health and happiness in the years ahead and asked him to come forward to receive a small gift of appreciation. Members applauded.

The Mayor concluded by giving a final personal thank you to the Leader of the Council - Councillor Gerry Clarkson. Gerry would be stepping down the following week after 17 years on the Council and the previous 10 as Leader. She said that Gerry was one of the kindest and most caring individuals she had had the pleasure to know. He was passionate about Ashford, its Borough and its inhabitants. To listen to some of his stories about his experiences was fascinating, but also enough to have you in fits of laughter! She knew that his strength of character, wisdom and sense of fairness would be greatly missed. So she wanted to say thank you to Councillor Clarkson for all the help and support he had given her and she wished he and Rose much joy in his, dare she say it, retirement! Members applauded.

(b) Leader of the Council

The Leader said that as Members would know, he would not be standing again at the Local Elections after a period of 17 years on the Council and a decade as Leader of this Council. As this was the last Council meeting of this term he wanted to say a few words, but in doing so he was well aware that they were in the pre-election period, as prescribed in law, and he would be very respectful of that.

He said that at the Full Council meeting back in December he had intended to present a report entitled "A Decade of Challenges, Opportunities and Change". Unfortunately he had been ill with Covid then and it would not be permissible to mention the content of that report this evening. However, he thought it would be appropriate for him to thank all Elected Members who had worked together on behalf of the people of Ashford. In addition, he was sure that all Elected Members would join him in thanking all of their dedicated Officers, led by their Chief Executive Tracey Kerly and her Management Team, for their hard work. He also wanted to thank the Mayor and the Civic team that supported and promoted their Borough.

The Leader said he wanted to conclude by saying it had been an honour and a privilege to have served the people of Ashford, both as an Elected Member of this Authority and, for the last decade as Leader of the Council. He believed it had been a challenging but

fruitful and productive journey that they had all shared. He had enjoyed working with so many good and hardworking people, all striving to make Ashford a safe and more vibrant place to live, work and most importantly enjoy. It only remained for him, and his wife Rose who had been such a great support to him, to wish everyone the very best for the future in their stewardship of this very special Borough.

395 Item Withdrawn

The Mayor confirmed that item number 8 on the original Agenda for the Meeting had been withdrawn.

396 Audit Committee – 21st March 2023

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee held on the 21st March 2023 be received and noted.

397 Greater Ashford Borough Environment and Land Mapping Commission

The report of the Chief Executive summarised the final report of the Greater Ashford Borough Environment and Land Mapping Commission and set out a response to the recommendations and next steps. The Leader said he wanted to thank the Commissioners and the Commission itself for the work they had undertaken and commended the report to Council.

Resolved:

- That**
- (i) the Commission's report be received and the Council's thanks and appreciation be expressed to the Commission for its work.**
 - (ii) the headline principles behind recommendations 1-3 of the Commission's report, as expressed in paragraphs 13, 20 and 30 of the report of the Chief Executive, be endorsed.**
 - (iii) recommendations 4 and 5 of the Commission's report be noted.**
 - (iv) the Cabinet be advised to take into account and explore, as part of its work on the Review of the Ashford Local Plan 2030, the next steps recommended by the Commission.**

398 Ashford Borough Council Constitution

The report gave an explanation of the work being carried out to review and update the Constitution, and made recommendations to ensure its completion in line with the steps outlined in the report, to include making any required corrections after publication of the Constitution.

Resolved:

That the Monitoring Officer complete the re-presentation exercise described in the report, finalise and publish the Constitution when the final verification process has been completed, and if required correct the Constitution after publication.

399 Exclusion of the Public**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 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, 3 and 5 of Schedule 12A of the Act, where in the circumstances the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

400 Declarations of Interest

Councillor	Interest	Minute No.
Member subject of exempt report.	Declared an 'Other Significant Interest' as the subject Councillor of the exempt report, and left the Council Chamber before the debate and vote on this item.	401

401 Possible Indemnity for a Councillor

The Leader introduced the exempt report which asked the Council to decide whether an indemnity, as described in the report, should be given to a Member.

The Monitoring Officer responded to questions from Members and confirmed that the issues raised in the debate regarding appointments to outside bodies would be looked at closely when making future appointments.

Resolved:

- That
- (i) an indemnity be given to the Member named, and on terms outlined, in the exempt report, and
 - (ii) in order to avoid a possible recurrence of the events described in the report, or similar issues arising, in the future, that, with effect from the municipal year 2023/4:
 - (1) all appointments (whether continuing or new) to outside bodies shall be expressly made as liaison members only and on the express basis that appointees are not authorised to act as

directors, trustees, board or management committee members (unless the appointment expressly states to the contrary and the capacity in which the appointee is authorised to act); and

- (2) as soon as practicable after each meeting at which outside appointments are resolved, Officers shall make the above position clear in writing to each relevant outside body and require written confirmation from the body that (a) the appointment has been made on this basis and that it will not permit the appointee to act in the unauthorised capacities, and (b) the body evidences to the Council that it has appropriate insurance in place to protect the appointee against the risk of any personal liability.**
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