

Ashford Borough Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Ashford Borough Council held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford on the **19th May 2022**.

Present:

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

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

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Reverend Lindsay Hammond said prayers.

Apologies:

Cllrs. Anckorn, Campkin, Tina Heyes, Pauley, Walder, Wedgbury.

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, Director of Place, Space and Leisure, Civic Officer, Member Services Manager.

1 Election of Mayor

Prior to the Election of the Mayor, the Retiring Mayor, Councillor Callum Knowles presented certificates and a gift of thanks to his outgoing Mayor's Cadets: - 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.

Councillor Barrett nominated Councillor Jenny Webb for election as Mayor of Ashford Borough Council for the forthcoming municipal year.

This was seconded by Councillor Forest.

Councillor Barrett said it was actually quite difficult to give an introduction to Councillor Jenny Webb as everyone knew her so well. Introducing someone quite so well-known required a little bit of forethought and planning so he would do his best and hopefully do her justice. Firstly he wanted to ask a couple of rhetorical questions – What made a good Councillor? Was it passion? Dedication? Empathy? Well, you needed all of those traits but primarily you needed determination and for him that separated the movers and shakers from the politicians who existed in the background and the word determination really summed up Jenny.

So who was Jenny Webb? Jenny was born on the 10th March 1949 in Canterbury and went to get at St Thomas' Roman Catholic School. Back then Canterbury was a

much more rural place than it was now and Jenny's early memories were of happiness, freedom and being able to be a kid without the pressures that children encounter today. In a world without social media and constant self-scrutiny 'kids could be kids' and he knew Jenny cherished those early years. Leaving school at 15 she went to work at Bing Mineral Water as a Finance Clerk and like all the other new starters she was expected to 'muck in' to a myriad of other duties from cleaning to deliveries. Jenny learnt at this early stage the importance of an eye for detail and she felt this early career experience helped to form her as a person. The 1960s and 70s were Jenny's favourite decades with too many fond memories to mention but these set in stone the image of the Councillor and the woman all knew today. During the 1980s Jenny was working at Lenley's Furniture and it was there she met David, her husband who she was still happily married to today. In 1993 they moved to Ashford in to the Norman Ward and it was at this moment that her political awareness really began to pique. Noticing things around her from dirty rivers to litter in roads, Jenny began to both contact the Council and write letters to the local newspaper to try to affect change.

Councillor Barrett advised that Jenny was actually headhunted by the Conservative Party as they had already recognised her talents. Councillor Peter Feacey was tasked with knocking on her door and asking her if she would be interested in making the move from active citizen to active politician. After not much thought she decided it was the right thing to do. A light had gone on in Jenny's mind and the rest was seven years of history! By the time Jenny was elected to Norman Ward in 2015 she was already well known and indeed it was difficult to visit her Ward with her without a resident saying hello, or asking her for an opinion, help or advice on a local issue. He said that Jenny never shied away from a difficult topic, be that Adley's Yard or a housing query. Once she began a task she made sure she finished it, even if that took years, and it was this determination that he had already spoken about that separated Jenny from an average Councillor and gave evidence to the huge body of work she had achieved in her seven years as a Councillor.

Councillor Barrett said that Jenny had already been a hugely successful Mayor in 2019-20 but that time had been hit by Covid-19. He believed that this year would be an even better one for Jenny and they would all be richer for the year of service that she would undertake. He said he was therefore pleased to nominate Councillor Jenny Webb to be the Mayor for the Borough of Ashford for the upcoming Municipal Year.

Councillor Forest said that truth was that it was extremely difficult for him to second the nomination because it would result in the loss of such a superb Deputy Portfolio Holder to him. Jenny had been beside him in his Portfolio for Culture, Tourism and Leisure over the last couple of years since her last term as Mayor had been so cruelly cut short by the pandemic. However, he was in no doubt that Jenny would again be a magnificent ambassador for this Council and would reach out to the individuals, groups and communities who they strived to assist as an Authority, and who so often helped the Council with the work it was trying to do. He knew Jenny's touch would help those relationships to flourish. He said it therefore gave him great pleasure to second the proposal for Councillor Jenny Webb to be Mayor.

On a final note, Councillor Forest said he wanted to give Jenny thanks for the unwavering support she had given him in the Portfolio – both at the Council and in his personal life. He wished Jenny the best for her return and thought it was a role that was made for her.

There were no other nominations.

During the vote Councillor Wright said that during the current Term of Office the Mayor had refrained from wearing the traditional fox hair on his robes and asked if the incoming Mayor would follow that lead? Many Ashford residents, especially the younger people who they wished to engage with, felt very strongly against the use of fur on clothing. She said she was aware that this particular fox would have been hunted to death some years ago, but it was about the message that was sent out by such an outdated tradition.

The Retiring Mayor said that this was a topic that should be correctly addressed by the incoming Mayor.

Resolved:

That Councillor Jenny Webb be elected Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the Municipal Year 2022/23.

2 Declaration of Acceptance of Office by the Mayor

Councillor Webb made her 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 her chains of office Her Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor Jenny Webb assumed the Chair.

3 Appointment of Mayor's Chaplain

Her Worshipful the Mayor advised that her 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

Her Worshipful the Mayor said she would firstly like to address the question raised by Councillor Wright regarding the robes. She said that she was in complete agreement with what she had said, but the Mayor's robes were part of the heritage of Ashford. Unfortunately, the newer ones that Councillor Knowles had worn during his Term of Office were currently too long for her to wear and had not yet been adjusted and she knew that Councillors would not like her to trip on the stairs! So, this was something she would look at during the year.

Her Worshipful the Mayor began by thanking everyone present. He thanked Councillors Barrett and Forest for their nominations and fantastically kind words. She hoped she could live up to their expectations in the coming year and would try not to put a foot wrong!

She said that following the pandemic and the upheaval of the last couple of years, it was good to now be coming back to some normality. Her focus therefore for the year ahead would be to encourage the rebuilding of communities and raising support and awareness for the regeneration of businesses after a prolonged pause in everyone's normal working and family activities. She hoped all would be pleased to know that

her chosen charity for the year would be Singleton Spaces who operated Singleton Environment Centre. She would be working alongside their team of volunteers to raise funds for new interpretation panels and increasing the educational and community activities that were open to all, as well as creating awareness for the work they did. Ani and Darren were present this evening and were working extremely hard for the Environment Centre and people in general because they loved Ashford, and she looked forward to working with them this year.

Her Worshipful the Mayor said it was a real honour and privilege to be Mayor for a second term, especially in this extra special year celebrating Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. There would be a fabulous range of activities to mark this milestone, including participation in the Queen's Green Canopy project. Her message therefore to everyone was to look forward and celebrate a brighter future, whilst also considering the greater care of the natural environment. As she got out and about across their great Borough to visit its diverse communities, she would be doing everything she could to preserve, protect and enhance their green spaces. She thought it would be a great year and that they would all be working together to achieve that.

5 Vote of Thanks to the Retiring Mayor and Mayoress

Councillor Pickering said that when he proposed Councillor Callum Knowles to be the Mayor this time last year he was expecting him to do a good job but this had not been the case, he had done a fantastic job. He said that Callum had had to meet the 'gold standard' for being a Mayor, but he had set a 'platinum standard' which would make it very difficult for all future Mayors.

In a first for the Borough, whilst Callum had been Mayor of the Borough, his wife Lisa had been the Town Mayor of Tenterden and they had been able to undertake many joint engagements which had been enchanting. One point he had noticed though was that he thought they should swap the Mayor's badges as Tenterden's was much nicer! In his year, which had included different Covid lockdowns, Callum had attended some 291 events which was an awesome total. During the year there had also been an avalanche of media notifications regarding engagements he had undertaken and events he had attended.

Councillor Pickering said that Callum, like himself, was ex-military and all things military were vital to their psyches. Ashford was a military town and rightly proud of that fact, and also had a significant community of wonderful Gurkhas – a group who had been vital to the British military for generations. He had first met them on active service in the jungles of Borneo and ever since he had been grateful for their presence. Unfortunately, in recent times, they had become somewhat isolated from Ashford's community and so Callum had made a special effort this year to tie them closer to that community. This had involved a great deal of reaching out, especially to the senior members of the community through the military. Callum had worked with many businesses, signposted funding for veterans, shared time litter picking and generally being close to the community. A demonstration of the affect Callum had had on the Nepalese and Gurkha community was that during the previous weekend they had organised an Ashford Cleaning Day which they now intended to make an annual event. The final icing in the cake had been to involve the Senior Gurkha Military in the resurrection of the local Ashford branch of the Royal British Legion, together with Wing Commander Ryles of the Royal Air Force. Callum had become the Vice-President of the Ashford branch of the Royal British Legion and also the

Ashford branch of the Royal Naval Association. It had certainly been a successful year, combining his role as Member Champion for the Armed Forces.

He said that Callum's designated charity had been the Shaw Trust's "Live Well Kent", which included the Samaritans, Age Concern and Demelza Hospice Trust as well as local charities such as JR Counselling, Mid-Kent Mind, 'Shedkwick', the Jean Mealham Pop-In Centre and many others. The Mayor's Achievement Awards had also continued and recognised many people in the Borough. Particularly for those whose community spirit had shone through by reaching out to those in need, helping effective Neighbourhood Watch schemes, litter picking and fundraising for good causes. An increased awareness of wellbeing through his designated charity Live Well had also seen Callum join woodland walks, community gardening projects and promotions. The Mayor's Environmental Action events bringing together the Parish Councils, funding bodies, project leaders and others with the aim of sharing good practice, had also been another legacy for Callum to be rightly proud of. This had led to a resurrection of the schools' Environmental Forum which had been started by Councillor Jessamy Blanford in her Mayoral year. There had also been opportunities to link with The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Green Canopy Project which would continue in to the coming year. There had also been fun events such as the Mayor's ABBA night at the Ashford International Hotel to enjoy, although he understood that Callum's singing voice was a unique one!

Councillor Pickering concluded by quoting a few words directly from Karen Hegarty from the Shaw Trust. She had said - *"We would like to say a massive thank you to Mr Mayor for being chosen as his charity and we were honoured to have been asked. The year has been a fantastic opportunity for us to promote our service and spread the word about wellbeing and mental health and the support we offer. It has been an overwhelmingly positive experience thanks to Mr Mayor's knowledge of local services and his willingness to involve us in so many ways. We have met many new people, linked up with other organisations and visited inspiring projects which we would not have been able to do without his help. We will continue to work with these organisations, share our experiences and help even more people next year. Huge thanks, it had been an incredible year for us which would not have been possible without us being chosen. We look forward to continuing the Mayor's legacy and to help even more people to improve their wellbeing and mental health."*

Councillor Pickering thought there was not much more he could add to that. He was so proud to have proposed him as Mayor after seeing the enormous impact he had made on their Borough and he wanted to propose the vote of thanks to him, and his wife Lisa, for their service.

Councillor Feacey said it was his great pleasure to second the vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor, Councillor Callum Knowles and his Mayoress Lisa, for what had been an extraordinary year.

6 Response by the Retiring Mayor

Councillor Knowles said that he felt so humbled by the words that had been said and what a year he had experienced! First of all he wanted to thank the Members of this Council for voting him in as Mayor and giving him the opportunity to serve for this year. He also wanted to thank the people of Ashford. He had met many amazing people and community groups in his travels around the Borough. When he had become Mayor he promised to try to travel to every single ward in the Borough and he thought he had pretty much achieved that – getting out and meeting people

absolutely everywhere, with a mixture of visits to schools, community groups, charity fundraising events, environmental forum meetings and a variety of other things. As had been mentioned there had been 291 events and he wanted to thank the now Mayor, Councillor Jenny Webb for doing another 44 events as Deputy Mayor when he had been unavailable. He was also amazed to hear from the Council's Communications team that over 161,000 different people had viewed social media content from the Council about the Mayor and his own Mayor's social media posts had been viewed 142,500 times. This showed the importance of social media to the people of Ashford, facilitating interactions with the Mayor and information about what the Mayor was up to.

He said that for his charity, Shaw Trust with their Live Well Kent projects, he had been able to raise in the region of £6000. In a way, he was a bit sorry about this as Covid restrictions had cut his ability to do more fundraising, but he was pleased that many colleague Councillors had been able to support him at events. He wanted to particularly mention Councillors Cornish, Clarkson, Forest, Iliffe, Rogers, Ledger, Hayward, Wedgbury, Bernard Heyes, Mulholland, Walder, Howard, Harman and Charles and Lyn Suddards (even after he tried to feed Charles to a white tiger at the Big Cats Sanctuary!). He wanted to truly thank those Members for their support and company and was sorry if he had missed anyone. He had been a bit hazy when leaving some of those events – particularly the ABBA night! He also wanted to thank Councillors Blanford and Clokie for attending the Ashford Choral Society event on his behalf the previous week when he had been unable.

Councillor Knowles said he really wanted to thank the Parish Councils and community groups that had attended his Mayor's Environmental Forums and the Leader, Chief Executive and other Officers who had taken time to present and help. These had been very important to him and had really showcased the good work going on in the Borough. A lot of good ideas had also been shared and he really hoped that work would continue. Something else that had really warmed his heart was interaction with the staff and pupils from the various Primary Schools who had taken part in the Eco-Challenges begun by Councillor Blanford in her Mayoral year. They had such bright and inspirational children in their Borough, with a passion for learning about the environment and protection of the world around them - this was something they must continue to encourage and support. He also wanted to thank the members of the Nepalese, Bangladeshi, Afghan and Syrian communities that he had engaged with during his year. They were all extremely warm people and an inspiration. A lot of them had come from very challenging backgrounds and they all loved Ashford and being part of the wonderful multi-cultural family of Ashford. As had been said, he had been out litter picking with the Nepalese last weekend and they just wanted to be everywhere, be part of everything and help everyone. He had marked Eid with the Afghans and Syrians and they had been so grateful for the way they had been welcomed in to Ashford's community.

He said that before he closed there were too many others to mention who he could thank, but he had to mention two very important people who helped him organise his year, run his diary and get him to functions on time. Firstly Sandra, who was much more than the Mayor's driver. She was an event organiser, a source of information of all things about the Borough, knowing exactly where to buy the best raffle prize, and her trips to McDonalds after events were legendary! Many past Mayors and Councillors had been frequent visitors to the Drive-Thru and he was certainly a little bit larger than he had been this time last year! More importantly though, after knowing Sandra for many years, he counted Sandra as a true friend and thanked her for the amazing things she did to support the Mayors. Finally he wanted to give a big

thank you to Donna, the Civic Officer. He would not have been able to juggle his events and all of the functions without her. Her amazing organisational skills and seamless knitting together of his diary had been almost magical. This had enabled him to make the most of his time. How she had managed to fit everything in and still got him around the Borough had been amazing – despite once even managing to book him in for an event in Ashford, Middlesex! He would really miss the diary sessions in the office and trying to eat all of the chocolates he had brought back from Spain!

Councillor Knowles said that finally he wanted to say thank you to Ashford for allowing him to be their Mayor for the last year.

7 Election and Appointment of Deputy Mayor

Councillor Clarkson proposed that “Councillor Larry Krause be elected Deputy Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the forthcoming Municipal year”. He said Larry was not a flamboyant person but he was a thoroughly solid and good Member of this Council, serving on a range of important Committees including chairing the Audit Committee. He did a great deal of work in his own ward and Councillor Clarkson said he was often on the receiving end of ideas he wanted to achieve for the people he represented, but that was to be respected! Councillor Krause also contributed to the work going on across the Borough, along with his wife Sue, who was already serving as the Mayor’s Chaplain this year so it was a real “2 for 1” coup going forward! He knew they would support Councillor Webb in her Mayoral Year and prove a good team and he thought all could take comfort in such an appointment.

This was seconded by Councillor Bartlett.

There were no other nominations.

Resolved:

That Councillor Larry Krause be elected Deputy Mayor of the Borough of Ashford for the Municipal Year 2022/23.

8 Declaration of Acceptance of Office by the Deputy Mayor

Councillor Krause made his Declaration of Acceptance of Office. The Deputy Mayor was then invested with his chains of office.

9 Appointment of Mayor’s Cadets for 2022/23

The Mayor introduced her four Mayor’s Cadets for 2022/23. 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: -

- **Leading Cadet Ross Lumsden - Ashford Sea Cadets.**
- **Cadet Lance Corporal Grace Ball - Royal Marines.**

- **Cadet Warrant Officer Helme - Army Cadets**
- **Cadet Sgt. Jack Finch – 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.

10 Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on the 21st April 2022 be approved and confirmed as a correct record.

11 Confirmation of Cabinet Arrangements for 2022/22 by the Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Clarkson, confirmed that the make-up of his Cabinet for 2022/23 would be as follows:-

Member	Portfolio	Deputy Portfolio Holder
Clarkson	Leader	N/A
Bartlett	Deputy Leader (including Port Health)	N/A
Bell	Planning and Development	Blanford
Buchanan	Housing	Burgess
Feacey	Community Safety and Wellbeing	Howard-Smith
Forest	Environment and Land Management (including Sport and Leisure)	Howard
Iliffe	Regeneration and Corporate Property	Mulholland
Pickering	HR and Customer Services	Mrs Bell
Shorter	Finance and IT	Krause

12 Selection and Constitutional Review Committee – 3rd May 2022

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Selection and Constitutional Review Committee held on the 3rd May 2022 be approved and adopted, subject to the inclusion of the changes set out in the addendum paper.

13 Cabinet – 28th April 2022

Resolved:

That (i) the Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on the 28th April 2022 be received and noted with the exception of Minute No. 381

(ii) Minute No. 381 be approved and adopted.

14 Audit Committee – 5th April 2022

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee held on the 5th April 2022 be received and noted.

15 Appointments Committee – 12th April 2022

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Appointments Committee held on the 12th April 2022 be received and noted.