

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2021 at 5.30 pm by Video conference.

Present: Councillor Jason Savage (Chairman); Councillors Albon, Ara, Ashbee, Bailey, Bambridge, J Bayford, R Bayford, Boyd, Coleman-Cooke, Crittenden, Currie, Day, Dennis, Dexter, Duckworth, Everitt, Farrance, Fellows, Game, Garner, Green, Gregory, Hart, Hopkinson, Huxley, Keen, Kup, Paul Moore, Ovenden, L Piper, Rev. S Piper, Potts, Pugh, Rattigan, Rawf, Rogers, Roper, Rusiecki, D Saunders, M Saunders, Scobie, Scott, Shrubb, Tomlinson, Towning, Whitehead, Wing, Wright and Yates.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Pat Moore and Parsons.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by the Vice Chairman and agreed, that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 25 February 2021 be approved.

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

It was noted that Councillor Pat Moore had recently been unwell, the Chair offered the Council's best wishes.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. PETITIONS

No petitions were received in accordance with council procedure rule 12.

6. QUESTIONS FROM THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

(a) Question No.1 From A Member Of The Public Regarding Housing Policy

Mr Hughes, the Committee Services Manager read out the following question on behalf of Mr Dickman:

As Thanet is recognised as an area of high deprivation, which is likely to be exacerbated by the aftermath of Covid 19; should TDC be reassessing the Housing Policy?
Rather than building large developments on arable land, would it be more appropriate to concentrate on smaller projects providing affordable/appropriate housing?

The Leader responded with the following points:

- The Council was required, through its Local Plan, to meet the housing requirements for the area. The housing need assessment had to be undertaken in accordance with Government guidance. This assessment also identified specific local needs for affordability and different age groups, and the mix of housing sizes, types and tenures that were required.

- The Local Plan process looked at the options for providing sufficient housing land, including brownfield sites, and this was then considered at a public examination.
- The adopted Local Plan contained policies and allocations for a variety of housing sizes and types on a mix of different sites, both large and small, urban and rural, brownfield and greenfield.
- In total, 30% of the identified housing land supply in the Local Plan was on sites of 50 units or less, and 25% of the supply was on sites of 20 units or less.
- It was often the case that larger sites were capable of delivering key infrastructure that could not be accommodated on smaller sites.
- The update to the Local Plan would consider future options in the District for any additional development requirements (to 2040) and there would be an initial public consultation on the proposals for the update in the autumn.

(b) **Question No.2 From a Member of the Public Regarding Dog Fouling**

Mr Knibb asked Councillor Albon the following question:

What is being done to combat the scourge of dog manure in Thanet?

Councillor Albon responded with the following points:

- It was illegal to leave your dog's faeces lying around in public. If you fail to pick up your dog's mess you could be fined. Dog wardens and enforcement officers may issue a fixed penalty notice of £100 if they catch someone not picking up after their dog.
- Being unaware that the dog has fouled or not having a suitable means of clearing the mess is not a reasonable excuse and owners would still face a fine.
- There were over 30 Tikspac free dog waste bag dispensers across the District, in strategic locations of parks, open spaces and promenades.
- The FIDO (Faeces Intake Disposal Operation) quad vehicle operated 5 days per week around the District picking up dog mess.

(c) **Question No.3 From a Member of the Public Regarding Litter in Ramsgate**

Councillor Potts joined the meeting during consideration of this item.

Mr Hughes, the Committee Services Manager read out the following question on behalf of Ms Kirby:

Ramsgate is a lovely town but the rubbish is a nightmare. There are lots of groups out picking up litter voluntarily in the community, but unfortunately it's not enough. Are there any plans to employ more staff to help keep our streets clean and tidy?

Councillor Albon responded with the following points:

- Thanet District Council has been working with Ramsgate Town Council and Ramsgate Litter Forum on street cleansing for the last 3 years.
- There would be a review of bin location and the efficiency of bin emptying but there was no additional budget or resource available to increase the size of the street cleansing team.
- The seasonal beach and promenade cleaning would commence earlier this year, on the 29th March.
- The size of some of the bins around our beaches have increased for this year. The overall seasonal bin capacity on the coastline would increase from 75,700 litres in 2020, to 88,000 litres this year. Coastal bins were emptied at least twice daily in the peak season.

(d) **Question No.4 from A Member of the Public Regarding Recycling**

Ms Austin asked Councillor Albon the following question:

18th March was Global Recycling Day. Thanet's recycling rates are poor; many residents have no doorstep collection and public facilities are extremely limited.

In light of TDC's Climate Emergency declaration, how do you plan to improve our recycling rates and facilities, and what targets are you setting to achieve this?

Councillor Albon responded with the following points:

- The Council offered fortnightly kerbside recycling collections to 78% of households in Thanet. Households must have space on their property to store a blue lidded wheeled bin or container in order for kerbside collection of recycling to be possible.
- The need for effective recycling featured heavily in the Council's Climate Change Action Plan and the service was committed to offering readily available and accessible recycling to residents.
- A neighbourhood recycling service was available in Cliftonville West for residents who didn't have room for a blue bin but wish to opt in to the scheme.
- There were a number of publicly available recycling sites in the towns and the Household Waste and Recycling Centre on Manston Road in Margate.
- This year the Council was trialing recycling at some flats including one high rise building. This took careful planning to ensure that there was sufficient secure space for bins that was also accessible to the refuse crew and vehicle.
- There would be large 1,100 litre recycling bins at the Blue Flag and Seaside Award beaches this year. These bins would have 'aperture' type tops to accept bottles, cans etc whilst making it more difficult to dispose of non-recyclable waste in the bins.
- There were plans to increase the green garden waste customer base this year. Garden waste volumes contribute to our recycling performance. As a paid for service any increase in revenue would benefit the waste and recycling service and its ability to fund an increase in recycling provision.
- The Council would further promote the waste hierarchy of reduce and re-use in our public communications alongside clear messaging on what can be recycled and where. Recycling was everyone's responsibility and measures such as the proposed producer responsibility scheme for packaging in 2023 at a national level had the potential to make a positive difference to future product packaging and how we recycle it.
- One of the major issues with the public recycling sites around the District was contamination with non-recyclable waste, which often meant that the contents of the whole container had to be treated as non-recyclable waste.
- The Council would like to further its engagement with resident groups this year where no kerbside recycling was available, to talk about options including the potential for secure community recycling facilities.

(e) **Question No.5 From a Member of the Public Regarding the Local Plan**

Councillor Day joined the meeting during consideration of this item.

Mr Hughes, the Committee Services Manager read out the following question on behalf of Ms Wells:

In light of TDC declaration of a climate emergency will The Council now review brownfield sites such as the 13 hectares in All Saints Avenue that has been identified for industrial building in the local plan, rather than residential or mixed use and so prevent the loss of Thanet's prime agricultural land.

The Leader responded with the following points:

- The Council, in its Local Plan, had to find sites for other uses in addition to housing, such as employment uses. In all cases, this would be a mix of brownfield land and greenfield land, depending on what sites were available and suitable. There was a careful balance required to meet both housing and other development needs in the District. If businesses were displaced as a result of land being re-allocated for housing, they usually needed to find other sites, which might also be on greenfield land. They could also decide to locate outside the District instead, resulting in loss of local jobs or longer journeys for the Thanet residents that they employ.
- In the last Local Plan process, the Council undertook an assessment of existing employment sites, including the All Saints Avenue site, and was able to propose the removal of around 30ha of land from older or inappropriate industrial sites to be allocated for housing.
- The site at All Saints Avenue was not removed from business use. It was a brownfield site of about 3ha, and the site was currently partly occupied by existing businesses. It is due to be reviewed as part of the Local Plan update work.

(f) **Question No.6 from a Member of the Public Regarding Public Toilets in Broadstairs**

Mr Bridges asked Cllr Albon the following question:

Can you make it a priority for all public toilets in Broadstairs to be Open from 12th April? This is going to be a busy year for tourism and we need all of these facilities open.

Councillor Albon responded with the following point:

- All toilets that were usually open all year round and those that were usually only open in the summer season would be fully open this year from 29th March. This was in alignment with the easing of national restrictions on travel and social contact on that date.

7. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

(a) **Question No. 1 from a Member, Regarding the use of Ramsgate Harbour by Jet Skis.**

Councillor Wing asked Councillor Albon the following question:

Will Jet ski users leaving and entering Ramsgate Harbour be required to follow all Ramsgate Port and Harbour maritime rules and regulations and byelaws as detailed in all associated TDC documentation and on the Port of Ramsgate, Royal Harbour Marine website?

Councillor Albon responded with the following points:

- Yes, all vessels including jet skis using the harbour were subject to the published Terms and Conditions and also the bylaws of the harbour.
- In addition it was a requirement for all vessels to call Port Control via mobile phone or a VHF radio before departure or arrival into the harbour. This was to ensure safety of vessels moored or manoeuvring in and around the harbour. Jet skis users would be required to hold relevant insurance and adhere to the 5 knot speed limit within the harbour.

(b) **Question No. 2 from a Member, Regarding Margate Town Deal Funding.**

Councillor Pugh asked the Leader the following question:

With the announcement by central Government that the Margate Town Deal has been awarded £22.2million of funding to support Margate's long term economic growth and well being - how will this Council ensure that this transformational funding truly benefits residents of Margate and the surrounding area?

The Leader responded with the following points:

- Up to £22,200,000 had been allocated to the Margate Town Deal Board (MTDB), of which the Council was a member along with other key stakeholders from the public and private sector and representatives from the community. The Board would ensure the funding was truly transformational for the residents of Margate by prioritising and driving forward the projects contained in the submission to Government.
- Some projects had been carefully chosen because they would act as anchor catalyst projects which in themselves and would generate economic change, other projects were chosen because they would be key to supporting community regeneration in Margate which was crucial to ensuring sustainable change.
- All of the projects included in the Plan evolved from an open call to the community for proposals that met the Government's criteria, and would deliver the maximum positive impact for the town's economic future. The proposals were considered in themes for delivery and then reviewed by the People's Panel.
- As the MTDB did not receive the full £29,000,000 some of the projects would now go through a process of adjustment to fit with the funding allocated. However this work would be overseen by the Board and there would be further opportunities for the People's Panel to make an input. This process did not mean that anything would be permanently lost as Margate now had a long term Investment plan which went beyond the Margate Town Deal fund.

Councillor Pugh followed up his question by asking the Leader to confirm that the Council had an obligation to ensure the funding was spent correctly.

The Leader responded that the Council was the accountable body and would take its responsibility seriously.

(c) **Question No. 3 from a Member, Regarding Birchington High Street**

Councillor Fellows asked Councillor Albon the following question:

Will the administration commit tonight to reopening the toilets in Birchington village and also commit to helping our unique 'high street' in Birchington by offering the same parking scheme that we had up until Christmas, which our small businesses state was a real boost after the last lockdown.

Councillor Albon responded with the following points:

- The toilets in Alpha Road, Birchington would reopen on 29th March
- Currently there were no plans to take forward a parking scheme.

Councillor Fellows followed up his question by asking the Leader if there were any plans to support small businesses after lockdown, and he asked if the leader to specify what proportion of the Government's post lockdown funding would be allocated to Birchington.

The Leader responded with the following points:

- There had been a number of funding streams to support small businesses over the year, and there were a number of measures already in place.

- The Government had recently offered the Council £191,000 in funding and discussions were taking place about how best to allocate the funding. If any Members had concerns, the Leader urged them to meet with him.
- The Council's finance team had done a great in supporting local business with grants over the pandemic.

(d) **Question No. 4 from a Member, Regarding Enforcement within the District**

Councillor Towning asked Councillor Albon the following question:

How will enforcement be carried out to restrict BBQs, prohibit alcohol consumption in public areas, deal with antisocial behaviour, litter, illegal parking across driveways, overnight parking and all night beach parties. how does the Council propose to patrol our open spaces.

Councillor Albon responded with the following points:

- This would take place the new Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) for beaches and coast, and the Council's new coastal code of conduct. The enforcement officer dedicated to the beaches would be patrolling proactively and responding to reports, alongside other members of the enforcement team and the town wardens.
- Obstruction of driveways was a matter for Kent Police, however the council would be patrolling areas where this was a known seasonal problem to deter offenders.

Councillor Towning followed up his question by asking how many enforcement officers were there and what were their shift patterns?

Councillor Albon responded with the following points:

- There was one full time enforcement officer at present. There were also other enforcement officers being trained to issue fixed penalty notices.
- Camping in a vehicle or in a tent on promenades and open spaces would fall into the PSPO. If this took place on the highway then a road traffic order would be required.
- Parking over someone's drive, even if on the pavement, would be a matter for the police unless the car was parked on double yellow lines, then the Council could potentially take enforcement action.

8. NOTICE OF MOTION

No motions on notice had been received in accordance with council procedure rule 3.

9. LEADERS REPORT

The Leader, Councillor Rick Everitt, presented his report to Council, covering the following key points:

- The success of the Margate Town Deal bid and all the hard work that went into it. He also acknowledged the work still to be done creating business cases for the projects that are to be taken forward.
- Thanet will be bidding for up to 20 million pounds for Ramsgate, from the Government's Levelling-up fund. Engagement with the community will be crucial to designing a bid which commands widespread public support.
- In light of the importance of these two projects, changes will be made to Cabinet portfolio responsibilities; with the Leader working on regeneration, particularly for Ramsgate, and Cllr Duckworth continuing to be a part of the Margate Town Deal Board.

- Cllr Duckworth will therefore be able to focus on the climate emergency issue and keep producing positive outcomes such as the new grass cutting regime for pollinators.
- Explanation was given to the residents of Broadstairs that the Council had to prioritise areas for funding where it can make the biggest impact.
- Thanks was expressed to the volunteers who helped clear up the polystyrene washed ashore at Ramsgate on Saturday 13 March 2021.
- The first online Q&A session was held with Broadstairs residents recently, themed around beach management. Covering new PSPOs, the early opening of toilets, additional bins, an additional lifeguard at Joss Bay & visitor parking, the meeting was well attended, well received and a great success.
- TDC have pressed local MPs for funding to support Thanet with the additional stress of being a coastal district in these challenging times.

Leader of the Conservative group, Councillor Ashbee, responded to the report making the following comments:

- In relation to the funding acquired for Ramsgate and Margate, the hard work begins with the delivery of tangible improvements.
- The Leader's new role in this regeneration will enable him to keep Members and residents updated on progress. Clarification was requested on how this will be communicated.
- Thanks was given to the finance team for their hard work administering funding during the pandemic.
- The Leader was asked what had been put in place in preparation for the end of lockdown, though it was acknowledged that this question had been covered earlier in the meeting.
- The outer areas of Thanet, combined with Broadstairs, makes up 38% of the overall population. Although it was understood that funding ought to go to the areas that it will have the greatest impact for, greater consideration of how these areas could be more included in the overall Thanet picture would be welcomed.
- The success of the first video conference with residents was applauded for the excellent use of technology for communication. Moving forward a fine balance would be needed to ensure the democratic process was not distorted or restricted by these developments.

Councillor Everitt replied as follows:

- Updating people on investment plans will happen by involving them in the processes, ensuring that the projects are inclusive and reaching the outskirts of Thanet. Change as a result of these projects will take time to materialise but TDC will work hard to keep people informed.
- Birchington and Westgate were included in the area that could have been included in the Margate Town bid. The Conservative MP for those areas was on the board so any feelings of neglect in this decision could be directed to him.
- In relation to the pandemic, yes the government had disbursed a lot of funds, but this council was still worse off than it was prior. The Council was grateful for what had been received and it is the job of the Council to make the best use of it.
- Thanks was expressed to all staff across the Council, especially those on front line services during this time.

Leader of the Thanet Independents, Councillor Piper, commented on the report that:

- Posting it online would have given the public more time to digest the information.
- The Council should thank the government wholeheartedly for the money it had received.

- People from Ramsgate may be pleased that the Leader and officers from TDC will be supervising the Town Council in its approach to spending the funding.
- The development of Westwood Cross could be blamed for the demise of the high streets.
- Corporate performance graphs showed TDC's performance in refuse collection to be consistent during the pandemic, despite there having been more cars blocking the streets.
- With the purchase of a new fleet of diesel refuse lorries, it seemed that the electric dream was too much of a financial nightmare.

The Leader responded by saying:

- The issue of not posting this report on the website was due to heightened sensitivities around using Council resources for political speeches during a pre-election period.
- Although the Leader doesn't share Councillor Piper's concerns regarding Ramsgate Town Council, RTC are not the controlling body when it comes to this money, TDC is, but the Council will work closely with them in the process.
- Westwood Cross was the right solution for Thanet, but we must do all we can to support our high streets.
- New visibility and transparency on corporate performance coming to the website will be a welcome change for residents.
- Electric vehicles would be great if possible, however they were twice the cost, required a substantially better charging set-up than TDC currently had and there were questions regarding the reliability of this relatively new technology. Bigger authorities would have to take the risk of innovating that TDC is unable to, but the Council hopes that technology will move on so that the replacements for these vehicles can be electric.

Councillor Garner, Leader of the Green Party, responded to the report:

- He welcomed the funding for Margate and commented that as it was short of the original amount bid for, the council will have difficult decisions to make about which projects it is best spent on.
- The bid for Ramsgate was also commented on as positive, but concerns were raised that the Council should hold open and respectful dialogue with stakeholders and residents during the process.
- The Leader was right to note the reduction in the general fund revenue budget. The change in the way funding is delivered will disadvantage smaller authorities.
- Agreeing that funding needs to be delivered to the areas with larger pockets of deprivation, he asked that areas of concern in Broadstairs and the villages were not forgotten.
- Thanks was expressed to the volunteers who helped clear the polystyrene - a key question remained as to how sure TDC was that the remaining pontoons would not come loose, and whether the Council had conversations with Dover District Council regarding this?
- A question was put as to whether now might be a good time to ban polystyrene take-away containers across the district?
- Feedback from the online meeting was positive and Cllr Garner hoped that this communication with residents will continue.

The Leader replied to these comments as follows:

- It had been assumed that we couldn't ban polystyrene as a Council, but the Council will now look at how that can be achieved.
- The Council shared Cllr Garner's concern on the pollution and TDC officers had spoken to Dover about it.

- Funding for local governments did appear to be biased. There was a consultation happening with regard to the New Homes Bonus and TDC will be submitting a response in respect of that. It seemed that some Councils were doing well out of the existing system and others will do better for a revised one.

Members noted the report.

10. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Councillor Robert Bayford, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, presented his report which noted some of the panels key activities and achievements over the year. Thanks were offered to those Members and Officers who had supported the panel throughout the year, and to members of the Cabinet for their presentations and engagement.

Members noted the report.

11. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Mr Tucker, the Independent Chairman of the Standards Committee presented his annual report which summarised and commented on the work of the Committee over the 2020/21 year.

Members noted the report.

12. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

Councillor Garner, Chairman of the Governance and Audit Committee, presented his report on the work of the Committee. He noted that the work of the Committee would be very important over the coming year.

Councillor Garner offered his thanks to Councillor Day, who had been Chair of the Committee for the majority of the year, and he wished to thank Officers and Members of the committee for their effort over the municipal year.

Members noted the report.

13. MEMBERS ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2021/22 - REPORT BACK FROM EKJIRP

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by the Vice-Chairman and Members agreed the recommendations as detailed in the report, namely:

‘a. That the levels of allowances as set out in Annex 1 of the report on the Members’ Allowances Scheme 2021-22 be adopted.

b. That in respect of the Dependant Carers’ Allowance, the Panel would support a move to actual cost reimbursement instead of a reimbursement based on an hourly component using the National Living Wage. The Panel did not support a cap on the amount payable if such a scheme was introduced.’

14. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM STANDARDS COMMITTEE - FULL COUNCIL QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by the Vice-Chairman and Members agreed the recommendations from the Standards Committee as detailed at paragraph 6.1 in the report, namely:

‘1. That Full Council does not introduce an appeals process for rejected questions.

2. That Full Council does not allow Members of the public to ask supplementary questions.
3. That when the Chief Executive considers rejecting a question, they should consult with the Chair of the Council first.
4. That information on the process for submitting questions and the support available is shared at full council and on social media.
5. That the word limit for questions from Councillors and Members of the Public be increased from 50 to 150.'

15. PROPORTIONALITY

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by the Vice-Chairman and Members agreed the solution detailed at paragraph 3.4.1 in the report, namely:

'That a seat on the Governance and Audit Committee is removed and that the Labour Group representation on the Governance and Audit Committee is reduced from five seats to four seats.'

Meeting concluded : 7.35 pm