

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2022 at 7.00 pm in Queens Hall, Margate Winter Gardens.

Present: Councillor Jason Savage (Chair); Councillors Albon, Ara, Ashbee, Austin, Bailey, J Bayford, R Bayford, Boyd, Coleman-Cooke, Crittenden, Currie, Dexter, Duckworth, Everitt, Farrance, Fellows, Garner, Gregory, Hart, Hopkinson, Huxley, Keen, Kup, Leys, Ovenden, Parsons, Potts, Pugh, Rattigan, Rawf, Rogers, D Saunders, M Saunders, Scobie, Shonk, Shrubbs, Smith, Tomlinson, Towing, Wallin, Whitehead, Wing, Wright and Yates

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bambridge, Braidwood, Dennis, Green, Pat Moore, Paul Moore, L Piper, S Piper, Rusiecki and Scott.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

(a) Minutes of the Meeting 14/10/21

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by the Vice Chair and agreed, that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 14 October 2021 be approved.

(b) Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting 2/11/21

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by the Vice Chair and agreed, that the minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of Council held on 2 November 2021 be approved.

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair congratulated Councillor Smith on her recent election to the Council and Members offered a round of applause.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. PETITIONS

No petitions had been 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 the Powered Watercraft Site at the Northern End of Ramsgate Main Sands.

Ms Blunn asked Councillor Kup the following question:

“The East Cliff Community Group wrote to Cllr Kup twice over the summer about the published plans to close the unsupervised Powered Water Craft (jetski) launch site at the northern end of Ramsgate Main Sands.

The relocation of PWC launching had been scheduled for March 2021 following the creation of berths in Ramsgate Harbour. Yet ten months later the beach ramp remains in use, including by six hovercraft on a busy day in July. This is now the only unsupervised site in Thanet, posing significant risks to residents, visitors and wildlife.

The first letter asked for the closure date of the Sands launching site. Cllr Kup replied detailing PSPO nuisance reporting measures, but did not answer the Group's question.

The second letter, repeating the Group's concerns and the closure question, received no reply. Cllr Kup, when will TDC close the unsupervised PWC launching site at Ramsgate Main Sands?"

Councillor Kup responded with the following points:

- A consultation in January 2021 on the Beaches and Coast Public Space Protection Order (PSPO), proposed that personal watercraft (PWC), including jet skis, would only be able to launch from the existing clubs on the North Thanet coast or from Ramsgate Harbour.
- Feedback from the consultation called for the Eastcliff PWC launch site to remain open to allow launching when the existing clubs were not open. The retention of the Eastcliff site for PWC launching was proposed as a change to the draft PSPO in a report to Cabinet regarding the consultation feedback on 18 March 2021. This change was agreed by Cabinet.
- Any PWC user launching from the Eastcliff site must be a member of the Water User Group. The Eastcliff site had a bespoke barrier key to control access. These restrictions were to ensure that those launching had qualifications, insurance and abided by the requirements of the PSPO.

7. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

(a) Question No. 1 from a Member Regarding the Ramsgate and Margate Levelling Up Bids

Councillor Everitt asked the Leader the following question:

"I welcome the success of the levelling-up bids for both Ramsgate and Margate. The leader will, I know, want to acknowledge the previous Labour administration's significant role in bringing forward the former, but making a success of the awards is something we should all support and contribute to regardless of party. Can the leader explain what role she sees for the district councillors elected by the people of Ramsgate in overseeing the council's delivery of the Ramsgate levelling-up bid?"

The Leader responded with the following points:

- The Ramsgate levelling up project would be overseen by a Levelling Up Project Scrutiny Panel (LUPSP). The purpose of the group was to meet on a monthly basis to receive reports and updates from the Director of Regeneration and project leads. Its role would also include monitoring progress against the delivery plans and to inform any significant decisions and next steps. The Executive Group would consist of the Leader, the Deputy Leader, the MP, the Chief Executive and a representative from Ramsgate Town Council (RTC). An approach had been made to the Chair of RTC to nominate a member to the Group.
- The intention was that the project leads for each of the projects would provide updates to the LUPSP. There would be regular briefing updates to all Members of Thanet Council and appropriately regular updates to RTC.
- The minutes or action log from each LUPSP meeting would also be made available.

Councillor Everitt followed up his question by stating that there should be more than one RTC representative, all the Councillors representing Ramsgate would want involvement and could add value.

The Leader responded that the representative from RTC would keep RTC updated, and there would also be regular public updates.

(b) **Question No. 2 from a Member Regarding the Royal Harbour**

Councillor Wing asked the Leader the following question:

"Given the recent withdrawal of the Marine Licence Application to replace Berths 4/5 using one of the pontoons still in our Royal Harbour, could the leader give more detail concerning what the new application will involve and whether an Environmental Impact Assessment will also be undertaken, that will include all those living and/or working within 500m of any proposed work?"

The Leader responded with the following points:

- The previous marine licence application to the Marine Management Organisation for the replacement of Berth 4/5 was withdrawn in November 2021. A new application was programmed to be submitted in January 2022. The new application would be informed by an Environmental Statement which was the output of the Environmental Impact Assessment process that was nearing completion.
- The assessment had been undertaken in compliance with The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. The scheme design for a replacement aggregate berth remained as previously proposed.
- The Environmental Statement would inform the planning prior approval application, and the new marine licence application, there would be a 42 day consultation period for both processes.

Councillor Wing followed up her question by asking whether the Leader would seek advice from Kent County Council in order to avoid mistakes made in the past and to protect the marine environment.

The Leader responded that she would make enquiries to see if the correct process had been followed in the past, and would be happy to liaise with Councillor Wing if she had any further questions.

(c) **Question No. 3 from a Member Regarding the Local Plan**

This question was withdrawn.

(d) **Question No. 4 from a Member Regarding the Action Plan**

Councillor Austin asked the Leader the following question:

"Following Grant Thornton's disturbing external audit report on our culture, I know we all welcome the appointment of an Independent Monitoring Officer and the development of an Action Plan for a much-needed review of our governance. We further welcome the Leader's assurance at our last meeting that all members will have the opportunity to raise their governance concerns with the IMO.

Obviously the IMO's first priority must be existing claims and grievances, but it is clearly essential that he has time and opportunity to move on from there to consider broader governance issues so we can make the significant improvements we need for the future.

Could the Leader please clarify how she sees this happening in practice, and what the process will be to allow concerns identified by members to feed into the Action Plan and be considered by Council?

The Leader responded with the following points:

- At the Council meeting to consider the Statutory Recommendations on 2 November 2021, Cllr Yates proposed and Cllr Austin seconded an amendment to the External Auditor's (Grant Thornton UK LLP) recommendations, to enable the

IMO to interview Councillors and Officers as necessary. The Grant Thornton representatives present at the meeting clarified that the statutory recommendations could not be amended, however, they confirmed that how the Council implemented the recommendations would be for the Council to decide.

- The Leader confirmed at the meeting that it was accepted and understood that the Independent Motoring Officer (IMO) would have absolutely free reign and open access to whoever and whatever he wished.
- The IMO had prepared a project implementation plan, which was shared with all Councillors. This made clear his intention to consider the broader governance issues within phases 2 and 3 of his work.

Councillor Austin followed up her question by asking if emails and discussions with the IMO would remain confidential.

The Leader responded that the interactions would be governed by the usual data protection and governance rules.

8. **NOTICE OF MOTION**

(a) **Notice of Motion - Town Centre Parking**

It was proposed by Councillor Crittenden and seconded by Councillor Albon that:

"The growth of town centre residential developments throughout the District are putting pressure on residential and visitor parking, to the detriment of both residents and visitors.

Whilst it is within the Local Plan, in accordance with National Policy and consistent with climate change targets, that parking facilities will not be required or expected for residential development planning applications within town centres, this does not take into account the needs of workers, especially keyworkers, or residents with disabilities, who genuinely need access to their own transport. Few of those most affected are in a position to pay for resident parking schemes or annual season tickets for car parks. The result has been increased pressure on what limited parking is available in the streets surrounding our town centres and beyond.

Thanet District Council recognises these challenges and commits to undertake a District wide impact assessment of increased pressures on both on and off street parking in our town centres arising from the expansion of town centre residential development, taking into account relevant factors such as access to electric vehicle charging, public transport links, cycle storage and pedestrian safety (especially at night), in consultation with KCC, ward councillors, other stakeholders (eg public transport providers) and the public, in order to develop solutions that support the community, recognising the need for some groups to have access to safe personal transport due to work conditions or disadvantage."

In accordance with council procedure rule 3.7, Councillor David Saunders provided a response to the motion.

Councillor Albon proposed, Councillor Rawf seconded and Members agreed to debate the motion.

Following the debate the motion was forwarded to Cabinet in accordance with council procedure rule 3.8(a)v.

9. **LEADERS REPORT**

The Leader, Councillor Ashbee, presented her report to Council, covering the following key points:

- The first Margate Town Deal business case summary had been submitted on 15 October. This was for a Creative Land Trust. Mr Horton had also been newly appointed as Chair of the Margate Town Deal Board.

- The success of the Margate and Ramsgate levelling up bids offered an opportunity for all of Thanet to attract future private investment and develop a highly skilled workforce.
- Work had started at the former Marks and Spencer building in Margate High Street. It would house the Margate Digital project and was due to be completed by Spring 2022.
- The planning prior approval application and the marine licence application for berths 4 and 5 at the Port of Ramsgate would be subject to a 42 day consultation period. It was intended that construction would begin in May.
- The Ramsgate High Street consultation on changes to roads and pedestrian areas was now complete; this was part of the Future High Street Funding bid. The result of the consultation would be published online in the near future.
- The Local Plan's latest engagement began in December; members of the public would have the opportunity to comment until 4 February 2022. A visual presentation from the Leader and the Director of Housing and Planning would be shared through the Council's media channels to encourage people to engage in the consultation.
- The Council signed up the Litter Lotto, encouraging people to bin litter for the chance to win prizes.
- The Housing Options Team had been awarded £175,000 to prevent homelessness by the Kent Housing Group. This money was to support private sector tenants and homeowners who were struggling to pay rent or mortgages as a result of COVID-19.
- The Private Sector Housing Team had secured over £76,000 of funding for a project to improve the energy efficiency standards in privately rented properties.
- In line with the External Auditor's section 24 recommendations, Mr Baker, Director of Law and Governance for Hertfordshire County Council, had been appointed as Independent Monitoring Officer (IMO). Mr Barker started the role on 8 December 2021. All progress would be shared regularly with the General Purposes Committee and at Full Council.
- The 2022-23 budget proposals would be considered by the Cabinet on 13 January 2022. An increase in government funding was welcome, however a considerable amount of savings still needed to be found to reach a balanced budget. Net service spending would increase by 7% and £180,000 was set aside to replenish the Council's reserves. Thanks were offered to the S151 Officer and his finance team for their work that included the opportunity for Members to comment on the proposals at workshops and group presentations.

Councillor Everitt as Leader of the Labour Group made the following points:

- The budget would be discussed further at the Budget Council meeting next month.
- There needed to be clarity on how the External Auditor's recommendation for an IMO came about. The Leader should share the details of the letter she sent to the former Secretary of State in September 2021.

The Leader replied to Councillor Everitt's comments with the following point:

- She would not share the content of her letter to the former Secretary of State, however moving forward the section 24 recommendations were the correct tool to assess the Council's governance arrangements.

Councillor Garner as Leader of the Green Party made the following points:

- Congratulations should be offered to the Regeneration Team on their success, however it was unclear what governance arrangements were in place to ensure the Council had adequate oversight of all the projects. There should be more than one Ramsgate Town Council (RTC) representative and more representation from the public on the proposed Levelling Up Programme Scrutiny Panel (LUPSP).

- It was good that the Council had signed up to the Litter Lotto, however more needed to be done to address the issue. The Council staff who cleared the littering over the Christmas period deserved our thanks.
- The funding for private sector energy improvements was good, however the Council needed to ensure its own housing stock was also energy efficient.
- The appointment of Mr Baker as IMO was important, he would review the Council's democratic process to ensure it is fit for purpose, this would give the public confidence in the Council's governance.
- The finance team deserved recognition for their work on the budget.
- Everyone should be encouraged to take part in the Local Plan engagement, this was the only way to ensure the next Plan met local needs.

The Leader replied to Councillor Garner's comments noting that:

- The amended report for item 15, attached as a supplementary to the agenda should provide some reassurance about the Council's oversight of the projects and governance.
- Members of the community could be invited to some LUPSP meetings; this option would be considered when agreeing the terms of reference.
- Fly tipping had become acute over Christmas, so there needed to be a joint effort to tackle the problem.

Members noted the report.

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

Councillor Fellows, the Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, presented the report and the following points were noted:

- The report had been circulated to all Members.
- Thanks were offered to the Officers who supported the Panel.
- An invite was extended to all Members to attend the next meeting of the Panel where there would be a presentation from the Police on modern slavery.

Members noted the report.

11. MID YEAR REVIEW 2021-22: TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

It was proposed by Councillor David Saunders, seconded by the Leader and Members agreed the recommendations as shown in the report, namely that the Council:

1. "1. Makes comments on this report and annexes as appropriate;
2. Approves this report and annexes, including the prudential and treasury indicators that are shown and the proposed changes to the 2021-22 Treasury Management Strategy Statement"

12. BUDGET MONITORING 2021-22: REPORT NO.2

It was proposed by Councillor David Saunders, seconded by the Leader and Members agreed the recommendations as shown in the report, namely that the Council:

1. "Approve a one-off 2021-22 supplementary General Fund revenue budget of £60,000, for legal costs associated with a Private Sector Housing unlawful eviction case, to be funded from the Risk Management reserve;
2. Approve the 2021-22 supplementary capital budgets, as set out in section 3.1 and Annex 2; and
3. That a £897,000 supplementary HRA revenue budget be approved for 2021-22, for the deployment of a waking watch service at the five tower blocks until fire alarm sounders are installed at each site, to be funded from HRA balances."

13. FEES AND CHARGES 2022-23

It was proposed by Councillor David Saunders, seconded by Councillor Pugh and Members agreed the recommendation as shown in the report, namely that:

“Council consider and approve the fees and charges as listed in Annex 1.”

14. APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS

It was proposed by Councillor David Saunders, seconded by Councillor Jill Bayford and Members agreed the recommendation as shown in the report, namely that:

“Council agrees to accept the invitation to opt into the national scheme for auditor appointments.”

15. CAPITAL PROGRAMME SCHEMES - LEVELLING UP FUND PROJECTS FOR RAMSGATE AND MARGATE

It was proposed by Councillor Pugh, seconded by Councillor Kup and Members agreed the recommendations as shown in the report, namely that Council:

“● Approve the addition of two new schemes into the Capital Programme, funded from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Levelling Up Fund. The value of each fund (identified below) is the maximum award from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, for the delivery of pre-agreed projects within the Margate and Ramsgate Levelling Up Fund programme.

○ Margate Digital Levelling Up Fund: £6,306,078

○ Ramsgate Future Levelling Up Fund: £19,840,000

● That the Director of Regeneration and Director of Law and Democracy are authorised to agree appropriate contracts for works and grant payments, based on approval from the Director of Finance as Section 151 Officer, and in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development.”

16. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by the Vice Chair and Members agreed that the recommendation set out in the report be agreed, namely:

“That Council agree the recommendations made by the Standards Committee on 25/11/21.”

17. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2021/22

It was proposed by the Leader, seconded by Councillor Pugh and Members agreed the recommendations as shown in the report, namely that Council:

“Approve and adopt the Pay Policy Statement 2021/22 attached at Annex 1, after which the Policy will be published on the Council's website.”

18. CHANGES TO COMMITTEES, PANELS AND BOARD

PROPORTIONALITY

Following consensus from the group leaders, the Chair proposed, the Vice Chair seconded and Members agreed to approve the proportionality between groups for committees, panels and boards for the remainder of the 2021/22 municipal year, as shown at paragraph 4.1 of the report.

NOMINATION OF MEMBERS TO SERVE ON COMMITTEES

Councillor Everitt advised of the following changes to the Labour Group's nominations:
Councillor Everitt would replace Councillor Hopkinson on the Planning Committee.

Councillor Garner confirmed the Green Party's nominations as follows:
Planning Committee: Councillor Wing and Councillor Garner
Licensing Board: Councillor Wing
Governance and Audit: Councillor Garner
Overview and Scrutiny Panel: Councillor Austin
General Purposes Committee: Councillor Austin

19. REPRESENTATION ON RAMSGATE CHARITIES

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by the Vice Chair and Members agreed that the recommendation set out in the report be agreed, namely:

"That Council agree the appointment of Mrs Cathy Griggs as a representative Trustee of Ramsgate Charities with a four year term of office starting on 20 November 2021 and expiring on 20 November 2025."

20. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

21. APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF FINANCIAL (S151) OFFICER

This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

Meeting concluded : 8.30 pm