

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 8 July 2021 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor Rev. Stuart Piper (Chair); Councillors Austin, Boyd, Currie, Coleman-Cooke, Huxley, Keen, Pat Moore, Paul Moore, L Piper, Rattigan, Tomlinson, Whitehead and Wright

In Attendance: Councillors Albon and J Bayford

315. ELECTION OF CHAIR

As the Vice Chair of the Panel, Councillor Stuart Piper chaired the first part of the meeting and thanked Councillor Bob Bayford for his work as the Chair.

In order to fill the casual vacancy for the role of Chair for the remainder of 2021/22, Councillor Piper asked for nominations from the Panel.

Councillor Keen proposed that Councillor Currie be the Chair of the Panel. Councillor Pat Moore seconded the proposal.

Councillor Lynda Piper proposed that Councillor Stuart Piper be the Chair. Councillor Fellows seconded the proposal.

As councillor Stuart Piper was presiding over the opening part of the meeting, and had been nominated for the role of the substantive Chair of the Panel, he then left the meeting room to enable the election of Chair to proceed.

Councillor Stuart Piper left the Council Chamber.

Mr Nick Hughes presided over the election of the temporary Chair who was then going to preside over the election of the substantive Chair of the Panel.

Councillor Fellows proposed, Councillor Tomlinson seconded and Members agreed that Councillor Lynda Piper be the temporary Chair.

Councillor Lynda Piper in the chair.

Councillor Piper asked for Members' vote for Councillor Stuart Piper and Councillor Currie's nominations and the result was as follows:

8 Members voted in favour of Councillor Stuart Piper;
4 Members voted in favour of Councillor Currie;
1 Member abstained from voting.

Councillor Stuart Piper was therefore duly elected as the new substantive OSP Chair for the remainder of 2021/22.

Councillor Piper came back into the Council Chamber and took to the chair.

Members asked if a casual Vice Chair vacancy that had arisen as a result of the former Vice chair taking up a new role of the chair, could be filled at this meeting. When advised that because it was indeed a casual vacancy, the Panel could elect a substantive Vice Chair for the remainder, Councillor Stuart Piper asked for nominations.

Councillor Keen nominated Councillor Currie to be the vice chair and Councillor Pat Moore seconded the nomination.

Councillor Rattigan nominated Councillor Fellows and Councillor Coleman Cooke seconded the nomination.

Councillor Piper asked for Members' vote for Councillor Currie and Councillor Fellows's nominations and the result was as follows:

8 Members voted in favour of Councillor Fellows;
5 Members voted in favour of Councillor Currie.

Councillor Fellows was therefore elected as the new substantive OSP Vice Chair for the remainder of 2021/22.

POST MEETING NOTE:

Please be advised that the election of the Panel's Vice Chair was void. This was because the successful candidate – Cllr Fellows was, at the time, also the Vice-Chairman of Council. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Council are not allowed, as per the Council Constitution, to be Chair or Vice-Chair of any other Committee. This was an oversight on the part of officers and immediately after the meeting, the Committee Services Manager advised the new OSP Chair about the anomaly.

Democratic Services added an item on "Election of OSP Vice Chair" to the Panel agenda that was to be published on Monday, 12 July for the meeting scheduled for 20 July where a new election was held in accordance with the Council Constitution.

316. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from the following Members:

Councillor Huxley, substituted by Councillor Whitehead;
Councillor Scott, substituted by Councillor Wright;
Councillor Fellows was the substitute for a seat left vacant as a result of Councillor Bob Bayford's resignation from the Panel to take up a Cabinet post.

317. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations made at the meeting.

318. PROPOSED DISPOSAL OF 18 ALBERT STREET: CALL-IN OF CABINET DECISION

Bob Porter, Director of Housing and Planning introduced the item for discussion and said the following:

- The report had been considered by Cabinet on 17 June and Members agreed the officer recommendations;
- The property was owned by the council through the housing Revenue Account (HRA);
- The council negotiated a purchase back of the shares and the property was currently in a poor state;
- A number of options had been considered regarding the property. This included turning into social housing;
- However that option was not viewed as the best option. This was because of the internal structure of the property. As a result officers recommended disposal as the best option.

Members asked questions and made comments as follows:

- This was a property in an upcoming area in Ramsgate. Residents were concerned about the loss of the property with historical significance;
- The Ramsgate Future Project would make good use of assets like this one;
- The property could be turned into a community asset if funding was available;
- This property could be used for training students on asset restoration for historic assets;
- Cabinet should be requested to delay the decision for disposal in order to consider other options;
- The Levelling Up Fund was not meant for the purchase of properties like 18 Albert Street, Ramsgate;
- Instead the council should be looking best value for this property;
- Would there be any negative impact if the decision for disposal was delayed for three months to consider other options?
- Delay in disposing the property would be mean delay in income getting into the HRA;
- Was there any way in which local interest in the property could bid at the auction?
- Whilst it was a good idea for the community to own the property, the challenge was the community groups often ran out of money to manage such properties, as has been demonstrated on previous occasions.

Bob Porter gave further explanations as follows:

- The implications for delay in disposing of the property were that the property would deteriorate further;
- Discussions were held with the Regeneration Department and it was indicated that there were no likely funding sources that could be used for the property;
- It was up to council to allocate funding to the HRA to compensate for this property if other options (other than disposal) were considered.

Councillor Austin proposed that Cabinet delayed taking the disposal decision for three months to enable discussions between the Director of Regeneration and potential buyers of the property at 18 Albert Street, Ramsgate.

Councillor Keen seconded the proposal.

Councillor Paul Moore proposed that the Panel takes no further action.

Councillor Tomlinson seconded the proposal.

When the two proposals were put to the vote Members agreed that no further action be taken by the Panel regarding this call-in. As a result the Cabinet decision became implementable from this point.

Meeting concluded: 7.33 pm