

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 October 2023 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: ; Councillors Edwards, Owen-Hughes, Albon, Ara, Austin, Bambridge, Barlow, J Bayford, Boyd, Braidwood, Bright, Bright, Britcher, Crittenden, Currie, d'Abbro, Davis, Dennis, Donaldson, Driver, Duckworth, Everitt, Farooki, Fellows, Garner, D Green, Huxley, Keen, Kup, Makinson, Manners, Matterface, Pat Moore, Munns, Anne-Marie Nixey, Ovenden, Pope, Pressland, Pugh, Rattigan, Rogers, Rusiecki, Scobie, W Scobie, Scott, Smith, Whitehead, Wing, Worrow, Wright and Yates

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dawson, Rusiecki, P. Moore, Packman, Nichols and Towning.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by the Vice-Chair and agreed that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 13 July 2023 be approved and signed by the Chair.

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. PETITIONS

(a) Jackey Bakers petition

Ms Tyrell presented a petition requesting that the Council improves its management of Jackey Bakers. This included improvements towards the facilities for football matches, bins to improve the amount of littering, updated and working changing room facilities and a hard standing car park to improve congestion. The proposed response notes that such improvements would be looked into by the Open Spaces team, this included signs regarding no parking, improvements to the facilities for football matches and additional bins.

Members noted that the petition had been signed by over 1500 people:

“Jackey Bakers is a public open space, given to the people of Ramsgate, by Dame Janet back in 1924. Over the years, we have seen a decline in the way Jackey Bakers is managed. We want a safe place to be able to walk our dogs, somewhere the children can run around and improved facilities for the weekly football matches. Jackey Bakers is lacking bins, both normal waste and dog waste. More bins should improve the amount of littering that is left on a daily basis. The changing room has had no hot water or electricity for a couple of years, meaning the footballers have nowhere to change or clean up. The football pitches are in a very poor state, not being rolled and the grass not

being cut, especially around the goals. This is causing injuries each week. Car parking is also another concern. Planning permission has previously been requested for a hard standing car park to be built at the Sainsbury's end of Jackey Bakers, yet has never happened. Highfield Road is becoming congested due to the amount of cars being parked there on a Sunday morning, and only recently caused issues for emergency services to get through. Each week the pitches are in use, funds are accumulating, but where is this money going? Some weeks, this amounts to just over £400! So let's all come together and make Jackey Bakers fit for purpose, by the people of Ramsgate, for the people of Ramsgate!"

During the debate the Leader noted that he would consider the petition at a future Cabinet meeting. Following the debate by Members, the petition was noted.

(b) **Northdown Park Petition**

It was noted that the council's response to the petition had been outlined in the agenda.

Members commented that they were pleased to see the Council's response to the petition. Northdown Park was considered an important green open space in Thanet. The petition was considered positive for the area, there had previously been some neglect to this area.

6. QUESTIONS FROM THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

(a) **QUESTION NO.1 FROM A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC REGARDING THE ARLINGTON ARCADE**

Mr Lucy was not in attendance at the meeting to ask their respective questions. As a result this question would be responded to in writing after the meeting.

(b) **QUESTION NO.2 FROM A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC REGARDING THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY POLLUTION RISK ALERTS**

Ms Bailey asked Councillor Albon the following question:

"Environment Agency Pollution Risk alerts were issued at Viking Bay over several days at the height of the season. TDC put up warning notices, the RNLI flew red flags and ordered people out of the sea over a tannoy causing alarm. These widely reported alerts had a seriously detrimental effect on local businesses and the wider reputation of Broadstairs. According to the EA website, Pollution Risk Forecasts are made daily based on measurements of Rain, Tide, Time, Sunlight & Wind, however the seawater is only tested weekly. Do we know the accuracy of these 'forecasts', are they ever confirmed by retrospective testing? Is this arrangement between TDC and the Environment Agency optional? If yes, what is the rationale for signing up, how long is the agreement and can it be reviewed? If not, is there anything we can do to mitigate the adverse effects on tourism and businesses?"

Councillor Albon responded:

- The objective of the Pollution Risk Forecast (PRF) system is to alert beach users to the potential for temporarily increased bacteria levels in bathing waters. The Council displays notices to advise that a PRF is in place and this enables bathers to avoid times or locations where the risk of pollution is higher than normal and where health risks from bathing may be higher than the annual classification suggests.
- It is important to note that this is advice against bathing, this season the RNLI chose to fly a red flag at Viking Bay in response to pollution risk forecasts but they did not order members of the public out of the sea.

- PRFs are not directly linked to storm discharge notifications and are not informed by a water quality test; the forecast is generated by a model which considers weather, rainfall and tidal conditions in order to make a prediction. High rainfall is known to affect water quality on a temporary basis, mainly as a result of surface water runoff.
- There is no sampling undertaken to verify Pollution Risk Forecasts. However, routine compliance samples that indicate elevated bacteria levels taken during short term pollution may be excluded (disregarded) from the annual classification, provided that the signs have been correctly displayed to alert potential bathers of the PRF in place. In some circumstances the PRF scheme can therefore help to maintain the annual bathing water classification. The bathing water classification is an important qualifying criteria for Blue Flag and Seaside awards.
- There were more PRF's issued during July and August this year than in previous years this was directly linked with the unseasonal weather at the time. We understand the concerns of local businesses who may be impacted by poor weather during the summer season and the issuing of PRFs.
- Officers have therefore committed to engaging with the Environment Agency over the winter months to seek a review of how the PRF system is applied at Viking Bay and consider the council's participation in the scheme. This may also include working with the RNLI to review the use of a red flag during a PRF and consider other ways of communicating the warning to beach users.

(c) **QUESTION NO.3 FROM A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC REGARDING THE LOCAL PLAN**

Mrs Brown asked the Leader the following question:

- 'If developers are asked to fund the full cost of the North Thanet link road and they say it is unviable to provide the agreed affordable housing on developments as set out in the Local Plan, there will be no benefit to the residents of Thanet. Gaining affordable and social housing for the district was the only advantage of allowing these developments. The mass development on some of the very best agricultural land in the country will be for the good of other local authorities, people wishing to move to the area and private investors. Local people will end up in a worse situation with all the infrastructure problems that entails.
- The current Local Plan is written in a way that allows this to happen, does TDC propose to address this in the Local Plan review to ensure this is not the outcome?'

The Leader responded:

- KCC are progressing a bid under the Department for Transport (DfT) Main Road Network (MRN) Fund to support the delivery of the North Thanet Link, a key part of the Inner Circuit proposed through the Local Plan. The bid is now one of only two priority schemes in Kent supported by Transport for the South East (TfSE), and KCC have received funding from DfT to develop the scheme to the next stage.
- If the Bid is successful, it would reduce those costs for the relevant developers, and enable more contributions to a range of other planning obligations, including affordable housing. However, if the bid is not successful, then the site developers will have to fund the provision of the scheme.
- Either way, the Council, as the local planning authority, is required to meet the housing needs for the district, as identified through the Government's housing "standard method". This is based on population change in the district over the Plan period, and is designed to meet a range of existing and future housing needs, and this is the primary benefit of new housing.

- This includes people already living in the district, including new households forming (for example, young people leaving the family home to set up their own home). It also includes people who move into the district. Planning for housing for people moving into the area is not only required by Government guidance, it is also important for local people, because it prevents them (particularly younger people on lower incomes) from being squeezed out of the local housing market.
- Government guidance supports the provision of affordable housing and key infrastructure through development contributions (whether by contribution or in kind/on-site). However, the guidance is also clear that, in setting requirements for development contributions, local planning authorities cannot impose a level of costs which effectively renders development sites unviable, and prevents housing from being delivered.
- Thus the Local Plan was itself subject to a high-level viability appraisal, and planning applications may also be accompanied by viability assessments that are independently assessed and verified. Where viability can be demonstrated to be an issue, then a decision has to be made about the priority and balance of s106 contributions to be provided.
- The clause in Local Plan Policy SP23 (that the requirement on housing developments for 30% affordable housing may be reduced if meeting them would demonstrably make the proposed development unviable) is in line with Government guidance, as was confirmed by the Local Plan Examination Inspectors.

7. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

(a) QUESTION NO.1 FROM A MEMBER REGARDING THE USE OF GLYPHOSATE

Councillor Wing asked Councillor Albon the following question:

“How many litres of weed killer containing glyphosate were used by TDC in the last 4-years; (2019, 2020, 2021, 2022) and where was this applied, for example around parks, play grounds, building etc and why are we still using this out in our communities, giving residents no or little indication of its use or indeed, any choice to avoid, if being applied near them, when the International Agency for Research on Cancer classes glyphosate as ‘probably carcinogenic to humans’, and an increasing number of countries and councils within the UK have banned its in favour of alternative methods?”

Councillor Albon responded with the following points:

- Approximately 90 litres of Glyphosate have been used by the Council in each of the last four years.
- Legally enforceable conditions of use are imposed on the way products can be applied, to ensure the public are not exposed to levels of pesticides that would harm health or have unacceptable effects on the environment. Application is via spot treatment only, it is never sprayed openly and is not used in playgrounds, along the seafront, around trees, in flower beds or around shrubs and hedges.
- I could just say that if you’ve seen anybody spraying or whizzing a spray around as I have; it’s Kent County Council and not Thanet District Council.
- Glyphosate remains approved for use in the UK until at least 2025. The Health and Safety Executive notes that the responsible use of pesticides in amenity areas as part of an integrated programme of control can help deliver sustainable benefits for society. These include management of conservation areas, invasive species and flood risks; access to high quality sporting facilities; and safe public spaces (for example, by preventing weed growth on hard surfaces creating trip hazards), industrial sites and transport infrastructure.

- What I can also advise you, which you don't know, is that since we have been elected we have been considering the use of Glyphosate and we have suspended the use of Glyphosate.
- We have looked previously at alternatives, the alternatives do not do the job, they are not good enough. If we continue and do not use Glyphosate anymore, the issues will be from the residents; we all know that residents will complain more about the state of the weeds. We haven't got the resources to go and hand pull them up.

Councillor Wing asked a supplementary question as follows:

Had TDC suspended Glyphosate because it's the dormant season? And if it went back to using Glyphosate, would the Council pledge to inform residents where they're using it so that those residents can decide where to walk their dogs and avoid the areas where it was used.

Councillor Albon responded by confirming:

That TDC did not use glyphosate in the Winter. One of the things that officers were asked to do is to put signs up as to where Glyphosate was sprayed. Should its use continue, TDC would let all Members know where the signs were put up, but alternatives would continue to be sought.

(b) **QUESTION NO.2 FROM A MEMBER REGARDING THE JUDICIAL REVIEW OF THE MANSTON AIRPORT**

Councillor Worrow asked the Leader the following question:

"Will the leader welcome the clarity with which Mr Justice Dove confirmed that Mr Justice Lane was correct in determining in the High Court that Jenny Dawes had no arguable case for judicial review of the Manston Airport DCO, and will the leader tell us what action he is going to take in order to ensure that the cargo hub works in the interests of Thanet's residents?"

The Leader responded with the following points:

- It wasn't the job of Mr Justice Dove to decide whether Jenny Dawes had an arguable case, it was his job to decide the merits of the case, that's the decision he actually reached. As for clarity, we've been waiting for clarity for a very long time, we're not quite there yet.
- The delays in the process have been the cause of frustration to the council's local review process, and a final decision would be welcome. But there is still a further route to appeal and until the legal processes have been completed, there is a level of uncertainty.
- Once the legal processes have concluded, and, if the DCO stands at the end of them, the council will work with Riveroak Strategic Partners to consider all of the outstanding planning requirements, within the DCO, that have been reserved for the council to determine.
- Nine years of inaction at Manston have been a lost opportunity for the whole of Thanet. Whichever side of the debate you've been on, because our economy needs growth and growth could have been delivered at Manston by one solution or the other. The fact that we've had neither has been no benefit to the community. The uncertainty has been a blight on Ramsgate, because Ramsgate is principally the area affected by the flight path. But it's North Thanet that suffered most from the decision to protect the airport in the Local Plan and in particular, in July 2018, this Council moved 2,500 homes in the Local Plan from the airport, largely onto agricultural land, 1,600 of those were to the rural areas surrounding Westgate and Birchington. That's in the Council minutes and anybody can see it. Labour Group at the time was very small, did not support that proposal. Carbon emissions quite obviously respect no boundaries and they are

an issue and will continue to be. What I do want to say tonight is this administration will respect the outcome of the legal process and we will put the whole of Thanet first as we would do in every decision that we make. After all, Labour Councillors represent almost every part of it now.

Councillor Worrow asked a supplementary question:

Under the leadership of Clive Hart and then Iris Johnson, you and myself stood together in support of Manston Airport, will you publicly declare your support for Manston Airport?

Councillor Everitt responded by stating:

That he did not stand on a manifesto supporting the airport in 2015. He thought that the whole issue of the electors of Thanet casting their votes for and against the airport had been massively overstated by all sides. He confirmed that he had a view on the airport, but as leader he had a responsibility and intended to discharge that responsibility in a proper way.

(c) **QUESTION NO.3 FROM A MEMBER REGARDING THE REOPENING OF MANSTON AIRPORT**

Councillor Pugh asked the leader the following question:

“With the recent outcome of the Manston Airport Judicial Review announced, will this administration finally support the reopening of the airport?”

The Leader responded with the following points:

- It establishes the principle of reopening Manston Airport, what it doesn't do is prove is viability because that isn't the job of the Secretary of State or the minister and it wasn't the job of the judges and actually, if you read the reports and you read all the decisions, there's a considerable area of doubt about its viability. Some people have an almost religious faith in everything that Riveroak Strategic Partners say. The Conservative leaflets which I've referred to before, spoke of a £500 million investment and the potential for 23,000 jobs, which sounds very exciting. The only thing I want to know is where these 23,000 people are going to live, because presumably it's going to be in the fields of rural Thanet, because there isn't room for them in the towns.
- What we've heard from so many people is an act of faith that Riveroak can deliver, if they get the final legal permission. It won't be this Council that stops the airport being viable.

Councillor Pugh asked the supplementary question:

Would the Leader commit to an open and transparent way to have Riveroak in to present their proposals for the airport to all Councillors, whether that be at Full Council or in a Members Briefing so that all Members and Members of the Public as well can ensure that they have the facts and the information as it is. And also, will the Leader confirm particularly in comments I believe he made on ITV News or BBC Southeast, what he meant by certain planning hurdles or issues with planning that still maybe need to be resolved, because I'd like to think the Leader wasn't referring to any action by Labour Members of the Planning Committee to stop planning permissions being granted for structures and buildings on the airport site. Particularly as the Planning Committee is supposed to be non-political.

Councillor Everitt responded by stating:

- That he didn't talk about the planning process. He stated that there were legal hurdles as they needed approval from the Civil Aviation Authority and they need

lots of other technical approvals around the site. He confirmed that it was not up to him what the Planning Committee did, if matters went before the Planning Committee, it was a matter for them and that his members would behave with integrity and in an appropriate way, or they would no longer be members of his group.

- He also confirmed that he wrote to Tony Freudman on September 29th asking him to meet senior officers and himself, so they could discuss the way forward and how they could work together. Mr Freudman had agreed to this.

(d) **QUESTION NO.4 FROM A MEMBER REGARDING THE RESTORATION OF PASSENGER SERVICES AT MANSTON AIRPORT**

Councillor Dennis asked the Leader the following question:

"Will the leader confirm his support for the airport as they seek to restore passenger services as soon as possible?"

The Leader responded:

- The DCO application applied for consent to primarily establish a cargo hub at Manston airport with some provision for passenger services.
- Once the legal processes have concluded, and, if the DCO stands, the council will work with RSP (Riveroak Strategic Partners) to consider all of the outstanding planning requirements, within the DCO, that have been reserved for the council to determine. As for whether there'll be passenger flights and when they'll be, I think that's principally a matter for Riveroak Strategic Partners and will depend on the market.

(e) **QUESTION NO.5 FROM A MEMBER REGARDING WALKERS CONSTRUCTION**

Councillor Bambridge asked the Leader the following question:

"Walkers Construction recently closed the B2050 at Manston for several weeks during the recent school holidays. The consequences of this were as follows:

The owners of Manston Golf Club and their children's activity centre, Rascal Bay lost 60% of their expected revenue.

Chaos ensued as drivers used Spratling Street, Spratling Lane and Preston Road as uncontrolled rat runs.

Pedestrians were put at risk because no footpath arrangements were made to protect them from the huge increase in vehicular traffic during the road closure.

Stagecoach suspended their bus service through Manston village, leaving many people who depend on public transport totally isolated.

In view of all this, can Cllr Everitt inform me of what arrangements have TDC made to lobby KCC Highways and Highways England to ensure that this chaos is never allowed to happen again?"

The Leader responded:

- Kent County Council (KCC) are the Highway Authority and are responsible for coordinating the planning and scheduling of all work on the publicly maintainable highway. KCC operate a permit scheme with the following objectives:
- To carrying out road works more effectively, limiting disruption,
- To improve the consideration of people who live near, or travel through roadworks,
- To promote safer roadworks.

- The council receives advanced notification of street works and road closures for information. This ensures that impacts on services such as household waste collections can be mitigated.
- The works on the A256, Haine Road centred around the Viking roundabout are an improvement scheme undertaken in accordance with a S278 agreement between a developer and the highway authority.
- However such works are essential for the long term improvement and capacity of our road network. The safety of temporary traffic management is a core consideration of the contractor and the highway authority when works are planned and any concerns in this regard should be raised directly with KCC at the time they are observed. Disruption to residents and businesses is another important factor when planning works but where business representatives consider that they have been negatively impacted by temporary works or road closures they may choose to raise their concerns with the Highway Authority and/or the contractor, this is not however a matter for the district council.

Councillor Bambridge asked a supplementary question:

Would the Council monitor and manage all future requests?

The Leader responded by stating that the Joint Transportation Board had not been proceeding in a positive manner for some time now. The council would continue to lobby Kent County Council on these issues.

(f) **QUESTION NO.6 FROM A MEMBER REGARDING FARMLAND IN THE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW**

Councillor Braidwood asked the Leader the following question:

“The inclusion of greenfield in the current Local Plan is negatively impacting local tenant farmers and farmer/landowners alike. Their livelihoods rely on being able to continuously farm year on year. Parcelling off sections for development reduces viability of the remaining farmland, forcing them to consider other ways of maintaining their income, including turning farmland into solar installations. This decision is a direct result of the Local Plan including land for development on our grades 1, 2 and 3 agricultural land.

Does this administration accept this and what steps are being taken to ensure no further farmland is included in the Local Plan review even though it may be offered up in the latest call for sites?”

The Leader responded with the following points:

- The Council, as local planning authority, is required to meet the housing needs for the district, as identified through the Government’s housing “standard method”.
- In the 2006 Local Plan, the Council had to meet a lower housing target and was able to allocate on largely brownfield sites. In the five years following the adoption of the Plan, over 95% of completions were on brownfield land. Partly as a result of the successful “brownfield first” approach taken in that Plan, the district does not now have a significant stock of available brownfield sites, and the 2020 Plan had to accommodate a much higher housing requirement.
- As part of the Local Plan process, the Council carried out an extensive brownfield land search. In the absence of sufficient alternative sites to meet the housing requirements, the Council had to consider the use of farmland.
- The Council only allocates sites that have been submitted to it through the “call for sites” process, by landowners and their land/planning agents, who sometimes already have options agreements with developers/development agents.

- The scale of housing that needs to be met, and the extent to which agricultural land can be protected from development, are largely determined by Government guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).
- In March 2023, the Council made comments in response to the Government's consultation on the Levelling-Up & Regeneration Bill and proposed revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework. That response has been published on the Councils' web-site.
- In that response, the Council argued that the current housing "standard method" used by the Government to determine housing targets requires urgent review, and questioned the evidence for the Government's annual housing target of 300,000 dwellings.
- The Council also argued that proper protection should be provided in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for all best and most versatile farmland, pointing out that in Thanet, Grade 1 agricultural land comprises some 40% of the district area.
- Unfortunately, both the NPPF amendments and the review of inputs to the housing "standard method" have been delayed until 2024. The extent to which local planning authorities can protect farmland in future will be determined by whatever changes the Government makes to the current guidance.

Councillor Braidwood followed up his question by asking if the council had been in touch with local farmers to ask if there were any derelict farm buildings that are no longer used, which could be renovated to provide more housing in the district?

The Leader responded that this course of action had not be ruled out, and could be looked into.

(g) **QUESTION NO.7 FROM A MEMBER REGARDING THE EDGAR ROAD SITE BEING OCCUPIED BY RISE**

Councillor Bayford asked Councillor Whitehead the following question:

"As we do not currently have a communal residence for people registered as homeless, I'd like to know when the Edgar Road site is likely to be ready for occupation by RISE."

Councillor Whitehead responded with the following points:

- Rough sleeping and homelessness provision is of great importance to me; principally because one of my main reasons for first considering becoming a Councillor was my time spent volunteering at the Thanet Winter Shelter, and my belief that we needed to have year round, 24/7 and multi agency provision.
- I have always believed that it is our duty as a Council to provide long term, one site provision. Our first communal residence came about the last time I was Cabinet member for Housing, during the pandemic, and unfortunately ended due to the fact that we didn't own the building and were only leasing it until it was brought back into its usual usage.
- Across this period our communal accommodation typically housed between 20-25 people per night in individual rooms, with access to common areas and multi agency support.
- When this lease ended in February 2023 6 residents still required support into individual accommodation. From those six, four went into Temporary Accommodation and 2 went into RISE Supported accommodation.
- The benefits of this one site model are clear, especially for those with complex needs; through having this communal base and outreach we were the first Council in Kent to successfully offer and administer COVID vaccinations to those rough sleeping or known to RISE, as well as offering medical and dental services

- on site. The next step to take was to ensure that these services had a Council owned home, not subject to external lease or instability of provision linked to that.
- These services are provided via our RISE service that provides support for people that are at risk of rough sleeping in the district. Rough sleeping is a complex and highly individual matter; and the premise of our RISE team functions so well precisely because it recognises the importance of combined services, multi agency approaches, and genuine connection and understanding; these processes are often not short term, and building trust and belief in the ability of services to help, and individuals ability to empower themselves within their own tenancies is vital. This includes outreach services to provide support for people sleeping rough as well as help with finding and managing a home and with preventing eviction.
 - We have completed the acquisition of a large site in Edgar Road Margate, with the long term intention of converting it into self-contained homes for affordable rent. We are currently using it as our first ever council owned home for RISE, providing not only accommodation but also essential on site services and multi agency support for residents, to provide homes whilst building confidence and ability to maintain long term individual tenancies. This is a huge step forward for us, and an important and necessary investment in the health and wellbeing of our residents and community. It will increase the supply of available accommodation for homeless people. The Edgar Road site will provide sixteen units of independent accommodation within a communal building; providing access to support, as well as more independence and privacy than a shelter model.
 - We are currently completing essential health and safety works in the building and as soon as these are completed the service will be able to use the building. We anticipate residencies will begin from the 4th of November.
 - Unfortunately, as we have discussed many times in this Chamber, funding allocations are not continuous, which makes long term rough sleeping and homelessness planning challenging for all Councils. The RISE service currently has government funding until March 2025 and will be able to use the building in Edgar Road throughout this period; housing and homelessness is an absolute priority for this administration, as demonstrated by our commitment to increase our provision of social housing and in house temporary accommodation for local residents, and we will continue to bid and do our absolute best to secure funding for residents in need of this service.
 - As soon as Edgar Road is available, which should be by the 4th of November, we will have sufficient accommodation to accommodate every known rough sleeper in Thanet. All those currently accepting support from RISE will be able to access our first ever Council owned, multi agency rough sleeping provision, which is an exceptional achievement, and I thank RISE and Housing Officers for all their work on this project.

Councillor Bayford followed up her question asking whether the RISE team were able to provide their full services to homeless people in their current format, by meeting homeless people in multiple different locations?

Councillor Whitehead responded that the RISE team worked in many different ways, and outreach work was a huge part of this. The communal model was argued as providing the best possible outcome, however this should diminish outreach support, or ongoing work after people leave the centre.

(h) **QUESTION NO.8 FROM A MEMBER REGARDING THE LOCAL PLAN**

Councillor Kup asked the Leader the following question:

"When the Local Plan, which is a legal document, states that developers have to supply at least 30% affordable homes and land for schools and doctors surgeries, how can

developers not deliver this due to it not being “viable”. In the interest of local communities and our residents, how can we allow developers to contradict our Local Plan?”

The Leader responded:

- The Council did not.
- The Local Plan states, in Policy SP23 that the requirement on housing developments of more than 10 dwellings to provide 30% as affordable housing will only be reduced if meeting them would demonstrably make the proposed development unviable.
- If demonstrated and independently verified, it is not contradictory to allow a reduction.
- There are no cases where land required through planning policy for “schools and doctor surgeries” has not been provided.

Councillor Kup followed up his question by asking if developers did not fulfill their promises to deliver vital amenities for residents the carbon footprint would rise, what safeguards and conditions was the council willing to implement on any future planning application which comes forward?

The Leader responded that it was possible to force these contributions, however the workforce was not always there. For example when discussing the need for doctors surgeries and schools.

(i) **QUESTION NO.9 FROM A MEMBER REGARDING STRUCTURAL SURVEYS OF HERITAGE SITES**

Councillor Manners asked Councillor Albon the following question:

“We cannot afford to see more of our heritage allowed to fall into disrepair - Walpole Bay Pool comes to mind. When was the last structural survey made of the chalk reef foundation and pointing of the concrete blocks - are these investigations part of the bi-annual inspection process and if so can members please see the most recent survey report?”

Councillor Albon responded with the following points:

- The Walpole Bay Tidal Pool is inspected twice a year by the Technical Services Team as part of a programme of routine coastal inspections. The Autumn 2023 coast inspection is being carried out this week and the observations from this report can be shared for information upon request.
- Defects identified through routine coastal inspections are categorised on a priority basis for repair. Most repair work is funded via revenue budgets. However a capital coast protection scheme is planned for 2024 at Walpole Bay which will include works to the tidal pool. The schedule of works will include toe protection from undermining through erosion of the chalk reef, pointing works and concrete repair. This scheme will be funded via a mixture of Environment Agency grant and local levy funding.

Councillor Manners followed up his question by stating that it would be positive if there was a proper structural survey implemented.

(j) **QUESTION NO.10 FROM A MEMBER REGARDING THE GEORGE OSBOURNE TWO CHILD BENEFIT CAP**

Councillor Austin asked the Leader the following question:

“George Osborne’s two-child benefit cap, introduced in 2015, has been described by a leading academic as ‘the worst social security policy ever’. Far from increasing

employment, it's left families poorer, with families of as many as 1 in 4 children in our poorest constituencies at least £3,000 worse off.

What information do we have about the impact of this cap on families in Thanet? What measures can we take within our own District Council remit to reduce its negative effects at a time when so many families are struggling with cost of living increases?"

The Leader responded:

- There are a number of recent reports, from welfare agencies or research and policy units, that have analysed the two child limit and concluded it has a negative impact on families.
- Of note is the fact that the policy has been examined up to Supreme Court level, and found to not be in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).
- It's important to note that even if the two child limit were to be abolished (highly unlikely given the extensive testing in court that it has been put through above), that would not (of itself) simply 'hand back' lost benefit to those families caught by it. The overall national benefit cap could come into play for some of those families, if their income from all benefits (per annum) were to reach £22,020 (for families outside of London).
- In terms of understanding the impact of this policy locally, we only have limited knowledge. In our Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support (CTS) caseload, we know how many children are in each family (approximately 830 families have more than two children). What we cannot know is how many families receive no welfare support because of the limit (i.e where they would have an entitlement to state welfare support, after taking into account their income, if there was no limit on the number of children). For Housing Benefit, we cannot amend the rules locally – the regulations apply nationally, so the 2 child limit has applied since 2017. Some customers who have been in receipt of Housing Benefit since before 2017 may not be impacted by the 2 child limit rule.
- Council Tax Support, the council can set its own rules – The scheme in place at Thanet is based on the traditional Council Tax Benefit rules, which are inherently linked to Housing Benefit rules. As a result, the local CTS scheme also contains a 2 child limit in the majority of cases. However, where a customer is in receipt of CTS, the council could choose to increase the generosity of the CTS scheme, and allow payment for more than two children – but that would come at a cost. Every additional £1 of CTS awarded is £1 less council tax collected. It would result in decreased revenue for council tax preceptors, such as Kent County Council. Any changes to the CTS scheme would require public consultation. And a scheme can only be amended from 1 April each year – schemes cannot be amended 'in year'.
- Thanet District Council does have funding to help local people on low incomes – the Household Support Fund is used to assist people. For 2023, Thanet's budget is £521,000.
- The Household Support Fund Tranche 4 is currently being allocated to agencies across Thanet to allow families who are struggling with the cost of living to apply for support. This includes support for household items, food, increased energy costs and rent arrears which are as a result of the cost of living increases.
- In addition, Discretionary Housing Payments can provide additional interim support for housing-related costs, particularly where households have experienced an income shock.
- The council also provides support to its own tenants, through our dedicated Financial Wellbeing team. This support includes:
- identifying financially struggling households (There are currently 455 children living in tenant's families affected by the two-child limit and 143 households affected by the benefit cap), providing benefits and money advice to help manage

finances and maximise entitlements, and making referrals are made to other specialist support services.

- The council had committed to the delivery of at least 400 affordable rented homes over 4 years. The programme will deliver a range of sizes of rented homes, including larger homes for families with more than 2 children.

Councillor Austin followed up her question by asking whether the Leader would write to the opposition party asking to lift the cap?

The Leader responded that the council would continue to lobby colleagues in the Labour Party. The real changes would be present within the benefit system whilst regarding lifting the cap.

(k) **QUESTION NO.11 FROM A MEMBER REGARDING THE PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER**

As a result of timings of questions for Members over-running, the question from Councillor Munns would be responded to in writing after the meeting.

(l) **QUESTION NO.12 FROM A MEMBER REGARDING THE PARKING REVIEW**

As a result of timings of questions for Members over-running, the question from Councillor Rattigan would be responded to in writing after the meeting.

(m) **QUESTION NO.13 FROM A MEMBER REGARDING MINSTER MARSHES**

As a result of timings of questions for Members over-running, the question from Councillor Smith would be responded to in writing after the meeting.

(n) **QUESTION NO.14 FROM A MEMBER REGARDING A LACK OF PARKING ENFORCEMENT**

As a result of timings of questions for Members over-running, the question from Councillor Rogers would be responded to in writing after the meeting.

(o) **QUESTION NO.15 FROM A MEMBER REGARDING IMPROVEMENTS TO THE STANDARDS OF HOUSING STOCK**

As a result of timings of questions for Members over-running, the question from Councillor Scott would be responded to in writing after the meeting.

(p) **QUESTION NO.16 FROM A MEMBER REGARDING THE REGENERATION SIMPLIFICATION PATHFINDER PILOT SCHEME**

As a result of timings of questions for Members over-running, the question from Councillor Davis would be responded to in writing after the meeting.

8. NOTICE OF MOTION

(a) **Motion regarding pausing new planning permissions for major applications**

During the last meeting of Council, Thursday 13 July 2023, Members agreed to debate the motion regarding pausing new planning permissions for major applications.

Councillor Garner read the motion as followed:

“Motion to pause the granting of new planning permissions, for builds of more than 10 dwellings, and allow for a review into the impacts the current house building programme is having across Thanet.

While it is important that new homes are built in Thanet, it is likely that the continual increases in mortgage interest rates will have a slow-down effect on both the build of new homes and of their purchase, possibly for the rest of 2023.

This presents us with an opportunity to pause the granting of new planning applications, for builds of more than 10 dwellings, and review and address the concerns of residents on the following issues:

Southern Water’s infrastructure is not fit for purpose to service the current households and businesses in the district. What impact will the proposed number of new dwellings have on the current residents in Thanet and on the environment around our coastline because of increased sewage releases?

There are too many dwellings across Thanet which remain unoccupied. Investigate how many empty properties there are across the district and the reasons for this. How many previously approved planning applications are still to commence development?

How many of the already approved numbers of affordable homes have been built and made available at an affordable price?

Have the GP surgeries, primary schools, social amenities promised in previously approved planning applications been adequately delivered by the builders? What is the impact of the recent new builds on traffic and highways in Thanet?

This Council agrees to pause the granting of new planning permissions, for builds of more than 10 dwellings, and set up a cross party working group of 7 councillors to work with officers to carry out the review, using the Treasury Green Book Gate Review process as a guide for that review.’

During debate Members made the following comments:

- The council recognised the general concern in which the motion puts forth.
- There was some risk in the motion misleading residents on what the council could and could not do legally.
- It was of importance to provide ecologically safe and sound homes for Thanet. • There were no sustainable or affordable houses being produced in the district, this was an issue.
- A short pause in considering new large applications was considered a sensible and reasonable measure.

Councillor Worrow and Councillor Wing recorded their vote in favour of the motion under Council Procedure Rule 17.5.

Members voted against the motion. The motion was lost.

9. LEADERS REPORT

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

- Bin strikes disrupted services for residents but also damaged public confidence in the council. An agreement had been reached with the GMB to resolve the dispute.

- The Ramsgate Market went out to tender in August 2023 and an experienced operator had been appointed to deliver the market from April 2024.
- Tenders for lifts at Leopold Street had been achieved.
- It was being proposed to increase the street cleansing resource on a permanent basis under 2024 budget.
- During the summer months the council had installed 80 additional purple wheelie bins and 75 large waste bins in locations around the coast.
- Beach toy collection points was a success during the summer months. • There had been major challenges with the removal of seaweed, approximately 1,000 tonnes had been removed in 2023.
- Public toilets was an ongoing concern to the council.
- The administration would expand and accelerate on the in-house accommodation for residents.
- Following the district boundary review, boundaries may need to be redrawn. This would strengthen relationships between the council with parish and town councils.

Councillor Pugh, as Leader of the Conservative Group, made the following points:

- It was positive that the dispute with the GMB had been resolved.
- Increasing members allowances was a rash decision, and was not considered positive.
- How will new services proposed by the administration be funded?
- Manston airport had not been included in the leaders report, this was an important factor in the council moving forth.

The Leader responded to Councillor Pugh's comments with the following points:

- The increase in allowance was the first increase in 10 years, and was of importance.
- The last Labour administration took place during the pandemic.
- It had been challenging to remove the seaweed, as there had not been enough resource to remove this.
- Manston airport was not in the report.

Councillor Garner, as Leader of the Green Group, made the following points:

- Thanks were given to the officers and the GMB.
- The news of Ramsgate Market reopening was positive, the council would look forward to seeing this in the future.
- Congratulations were given to the private sector housing on achieving awards. • The parking review was long overdue and was welcomed.
- It was agreed that issues surrounding public toilets needed to be tackled urgently.
- It was disappointing that bins had been removed without replacement bins being installed.

The Leader responded to Councillor Garner's comments with the following points:

- Ramsgate Market would reopen in the Town Centre.
- It was disappointing concerning the bins disappearing, this would be looked into by the relevant head of service.
- The parking review provided an opportunity for the council to be involved.
- Councillor Worrow, as Leader of Thanet Independents, made the following points:
- The bandstand project near Walpole bay was important to residents, funding had been removed from this project. This was disappointing.
- The administration was Ramsgate centric.

The Leader responded to Councillor Worrow's comments with the following points:

- It was disappointing that funding had fallen aside for the bandstand project.
- The council intended to deliver for all areas of Thanet. It was not focussed solely on Ramsgate.

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

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

- It was a busy time for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
- Discussions had included the negative impacts of tourism in Thanet.

Members noted the report.

11. ADOPTION OF THE WESTGATE-ON-SEA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

It was proposed by the Leader, seconded by Councillor Albon and Members agreed the recommendations of the adoption of the Westgate-on-Sea neighbourhood plan, namely:

'That Thanet District Council make the Westgate-on-Sea Neighbourhood plan.'

12. ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW 2022/23

Councillor Yates proposed, Councillor Duckworth seconded and Council agreed the recommendations of the annual treasury management review 2022/23, namely:

'That Council:

1. Notes the actual 2022/23 prudential and treasury indicators in this report;
2. Approves this Annual Treasury Management Report for 2022/23.'

13. BUDGET MONITORING 2023/24: REPORT NO.1

Councillor Yates proposed, Councillor Keen seconded and Council agreed the recommendations of the budget monitoring 2023/24: report no.1, namely:

- '1. That Council approve the supplementary budgets for:
- i. The £10k requirement for the Legal system upgrade to be funded from reserves as set out in section 2.1.
 - ii. The £154k identified at section 2.2 from the Business Rates Growth Reserve to fund the Legal and Procurement fees associated with Port projects.
2. That Council approves the supplementary capital budgets, numbered i to vii inclusive, as set out in section 3 to this report.'

14. AMENDING THE MEMBERS ALLOWANCE SCHEME 2023/24

The Leader proposed, Councillor Whitehead seconded the following recommendation:

'To adopt the proposed amended 2023/24 Members' Allowances Scheme as set out at annex 1 to this report inclusive of the 10% increase to basic and special responsibility allowances and to index link a yearly rise in allowances to the cost of living increase that staff members receive and to refer the scheme to EKJIRP to consider, with any amendments being reported back to Council.'

Councillor Worrow recorded their vote against the recommendation under Council Procedure Rule 17.5.

Councillor Wing recorded their vote to abstain against the recommendation under Council Procedure Rule 17.5.

When put to the vote, Members agreed the recommendation.

15. FUNDING NEW AFFORDABLE HOMES

Councillor Whitehead proposed, Councillor Yates seconded and Members agreed the recommendations as set out in the report be adopted namely:

'It is recommended that Council:

1. Approve an additional interim budget of £12m to the single acquisitions and development budget to continue delivering the accelerated affordable housing delivery pledge.
2. Note that detailed projects will continue to be presented to the Cabinet for approval as they are identified.'

16. REVIEW OF OUTSIDE BODIES

The Chair proposed, the Vice Chair seconded and Council agreed the recommendations of the review of outside bodies for 2023/23 be adopted namely:

1. That Council agrees the updated list of Executive appointed outside bodies;
2. That Council agrees the updated list of Non-Executive outside bodies.

17. CHANGES TO COMMITTEE'S

The Chair proposed, the Vice Chair seconded the recommendations in the report be set out.

The Leader had informed Democratic Services that he wished to replaced Councillor W. Scobie with Councillor Everitt as a member on the Boundary and Electoral Arrangements Working Party Committee.

Councillor Pugh had no new nomination changes.
Councillor Garner had no new nomination changes.
Councillor Worrow had no new nomination changes.