

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2024 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

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

In Attendance:

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor Ara;
Councillor Braidwood;
Councillor Crittenden;
Councillor Manners;
Councillor Nichols;
Councillor Worrow;
Councillor Scott;
Councillor Smith.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair proposed, the Vice-Chair seconded, and Councillors agreed the minutes of the meeting of Full Council on 22 February 2024 subject to the following amendments:

Bottom of page 10 - delete "Councillors debated the motion, Councillors agreed and the motion was carried" and replace with "Councillors debated and agreed the proposed amendments, and so the amended motion was now the motion to be debated."

Bottom of page 10 - delete "Councillor Pugh proposed and Councillor Kup seconded the following amendment" and replace with "Councillor Pugh proposed, and Councillor Kup seconded the following alternative amendments to the former motion.

Bottom of page 12 - delete "Councillors debated the motion, councillors voted against the amended motion, the amended motion was lost" and replace with "Councillors debated and voted against the alternative amendments proposed by Councillor Pugh."

The end of the minute should reflect the following detail, that:

Council proceeded to debate the original motion as amended by Councillor Everitt and when the Chair asked Council to vote on the motion, Councillors agreed the following:

"That this Council:-

(a) Notes:-

i. In response to the Hamas-led attacks on 7th October, that 'by mid-December the Israeli army has dropped 29,000 bombs, munitions and shells on the strip. Nearly 70% of Gaza's 439,000 homes and half of its buildings have been damaged or destroyed'. Gaza is one of the most densely populated places in the world and home to 2.2 million Palestinians (of whom almost half are children).

iii. As of 21 st January 2024, 25,105 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza and another 62,681 wounded'. Over 1 million Palestinians have been displaced, and many of the killed and injured are children.

iii. That collective punishment is against international law under the Geneva Conventions.

iv. This escalation in violence has been felt acutely across the district by residents and in particular among health care workers and clinical staff at QEQM hospital, the main medical centre for Thanet, which has a far higher level of diversity than the general population, some of whom have lost loved ones. That residents in Thanet, as in other communities, have been further affected by the rise in antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents across the UK and elsewhere.

Thanet has a significant Jewish community and heritage, and 'more than seven out of ten Jews living in the UK have family in Israel, making the horrific 7 th October attack by Hamas personal'. UK Police have also reported a 'record rise in religious hate crimes, with the Community Safety Trust, a Jewish charity describing the figures as 'shocking' and campaigners against Anti-Muslim abuse stating they are 'deeply worrying'. It further notes that it is affecting communities 'trust in authorities and their sense of identity and belonging'.

v. That the Israeli government have cut off water, food, and electricity to Gaza which is a recognised war crime under International Humanitarian Law.

vi. That on the 30 th October 2023 the World Bank warned that 'oil prices could reach \$150 in 2024 due to the consequences of the war leading to further oil supply disruption' which would 'inevitably mean higher food prices'. 'The IMF estimates that a sustained 10% increase in oil prices shaves 0.15 percentage points off global economic growth and adds 0.4 points to inflation in the following year'. It further adds that 'the cost of a barrel of crude oil is now about 10% higher than it was before the Hamas attack'. Government poverty data continues to rank 'Thanet as the most deprived local authority in Kent', it also 'has the most LSOAs within the most deprived decile with 18' and has seen no change since 2015.

Clearly, the impact of increased food and fuel prices now and as predicted into the coming year, will be felt by all Thanet residents but disproportionately felt by the significant number of residents that live in poverty. In addition, higher costs will also negatively affect the Council's finances. With no end in sight and tensions growing 'if the conflict spreads to major oil-producing nations in the region such as Iran, the global economy could face severe repercussions as energy costs for businesses and households spike.'

(b) Recognises that:

i. What is happening in Gaza is a humanitarian catastrophe with horrific escalations of Violence.

ii. Loss of all civilian lives and atrocities committed against civilians in both the Hamas attacks and the continuing bombardment of the Gaza strip by Israel, is horrific and must be condemned and investigated.

iii. All forms of racism, including Anti-Palestinian racism, Antisemitism and Islamophobia have no place in Thanet or the wider world and condemns any attacks on these groups.

iv. Polls show that UK citizens surveyed overwhelmingly support a humanitarian ceasefire, which has been called for by the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNICEF, Save the Children, the head of the WHO, as well as Oxfam. While Ipsos found '7 out of 10 UK citizens are concerned about the impact of the conflict on Palestinians and Israeli civilians' and that they 'are more likely to want the UK Government to be a neutral mediator or not be involved at all than support a particular side.'

v. All political leaders, at all levels of government, have duties under international law to prevent genocide to the extent it is within their power; and that

vi. Thousands of Thanet residents have joined protests, meetings and other events and gatherings, written to MPs, or contacted their councillors backing these calls for a ceasefire.

(c) Therefore resolves to:-

(i) Call upon the UK Government and all Westminster political parties to-

i. Call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire,

ii. Call for the opening of humanitarian corridors into Gaza to allow aid and other vital medical resources to flow unhindered in,

iii. Call for the immediate unconditional release of the hostages held by Hamas;

iv. Call for resumed negotiations to seek a peaceful two state solution that ensures justice, safety, fairness and equality for all;

(v) request that the Leader submits this Motion to the UK Prime Minister."

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. PETITIONS

(a) **Response to Petition regarding removal of vehicles and unattached trailers from Lyell Court and Briece Court, Birchington**

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

Councillors commented and gave thanks to the petitioner for bringing the petition to the council's attention.

6. QUESTIONS FROM THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

(a) **QUESTION NO.1 FROM A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURAL LAND AND FARMLAND**

Mr Fisher asked Councillor Whitehead the following question:

“On March 23rd last year before the Thanet Council Elections, you actively posted on the Helen for Thanet Facebook site that you were against the development of agricultural Land and Farmland.

2

What has changed and why? You now single mindedly pursuing a farming site and closing off any suggestions from the public, it seems inconsistent do you not think?”

Councillor Whitehead responded with the following points:

- The council was required to balance the competing demands of the need to provide homes for local people with the need to protect the natural environment, safeguard the landscape and land for agriculture and, more recently, plan for increases in biodiversity in the district.
 - These were difficult decisions, not made any easier by the fact that the National Planning Policy Framework fails to provide adequate protection to agricultural land. The NPPF also fails to properly enable effective regional planning that would enable decisions about the country’s housing and infrastructure needs to be made over larger geographical areas, beyond district boundaries. Thanet is a relatively small district, with limited brownfield land options for development to meet the needs of local people.
 - The leader of the council wrote to the Secretary of State for Leveling-Up. Housing And Communities on 11 September 2023, setting out this administration’s position and urging the government to provide greater protection for agricultural land. A letter that I fully support.
 - In the meantime, the report approved by Cabinet on 25 January 2024, in relation to land at Shottendane Road, confirmed that any, ‘proposals for the provision of housing on the wider Shottendane Road site could only be considered, following the assessment of all land submitted to the council as part of the ‘Call for Sites’ and the completion of the current review of the Thanet Local Plan.’
 - The decision to allocate any land for development as part of the Local Plan, is not a matter for the Cabinet Member for Housing, nor a matter for the Cabinet, but would be determined by Full Council and subsequently by the Planning Inspectorate following public examination. This process ensured that suggestions from the public are comprehensively considered.
 - Deliberate misinformation had been disseminated and it was noted that the questioner had attempted to intimidate Councillor Whitehead through social media platforms.
- (b) **QUESTION NO.2 FROM A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC REGARDING POTENTIAL TRAVELLER SITES**

Mr Lane was unable to attend the meeting. Therefore, his question would be responded to in writing.

7. **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

(a) **QUESTION NO. 1 FROM A COUNCILLOR REGARDING JACKEY BAKERS**

Councillor W. Scobie asked the following question to Councillor Albon:

“Would the Cabinet member please provide an update on planned improvements at Jacky Bakers and the proposed Master Plan for this site?”

Councillor Albon responded:

- Cabinet considered a report about Jackey Bakers at its meeting on 14 December 2023. The report recommended the demolition of the existing Pavillion and the installation of temporary portacabin style changing facilities.
- Over the past three months officers had undertaken the design work required to submit a planning application for the installation of the temporary portacabin style changing facilities. In addition officers had also developed the tender documents required for both the demolition work and the new facility installation. The planning application will be submitted early in April 2024, with the tender advertised while the planning application is being considered.
- The report also included a draft master plan for future improvements to the facilities at Jackey Bakers, and recommended that the council consult with the community about this before adopting the proposal. The report also advised that the proposals in the draft master plan were, at that stage unfunded.
- The adoption of a master plan could however provide an opportunity to bid for further external funding if and when opportunities arise, and to work collaboratively with local and national partners to deliver a long term and ambitious vision for the site.
- Since that time the council has agreed a new budget for the financial year 2024/25, including a one-off sum of £50k, to be drawn from reserves, to support sports development in the district. In addition, recent conversations with the Kent Football Association have been positive about funding that could become available via them to increase the work done with local communities and their access to sport and facilities. This includes potential support for pitch improvements at Jackey Bakers for the 2024/25 football season.
- Plans are being developed around the use of the £50k funding for sports development, which will provide an opportunity to progress with the public consultation about Jackey Bakers.

Councillor Scobie followed up his question by asking whether there would be regular meetings with officers and the Jackey Bakers action group?

Councillor Albon responded that this could happen moving forth.

(b) **QUESTION NO. 2 FROM A COUNCILLOR REGARDING ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS ON BEACHES**

Councillor Munns asked Councillor Albon the following question:

“Last year we learned in answer to my question to Council that no FPNs were issued under the Council's PSPO – only interventions.

Despite TDC officers' assurances to me and fellow Councillors, we did not deploy warranted officers.

This season, how many enforcement officers will be patrolling Thanet beaches, and crucially, will they be warranted to issue penalty notices and will senior TDC officers direct them to do so?

TDC has a duty of care to visitors. Last year on Botany Bay beach a child suffered serious burns from a buried disposable BBQ. Issuing fines and publicising the fact would help deter breaches of the PSPO and protect visitors.

What level of operational cooperation will TDC enforcement officers have with local police? Please outline what, if any, formal process exists between senior TDC officers and Thanet police to ensure cooperation and operational effectiveness and how is this monitored?"

Councillor Albon responded with the following points:

- Last year the Council employed a team of new coastal enforcement officers who needed to undertake training in order to exercise their delegated authority to enforce. This training was completed in June, and from July onwards they could enforce. Records are made of interactions between our coastal enforcement officers and beach users. These records indicate that over 500 breaches were prevented last year due to educational interventions. Community Protection Warnings were also issued when required.
- This year the council would employ three full time permanent coastal enforcement officers. The level of resource will be supplemented over the summer season with a further four part time seasonal coastal enforcement officers to maximise coverage during busy periods. New coastal enforcement officers would be trained in May. Coastal enforcement officers will be directed to issue fixed penalty notices where appropriate. Coastal enforcement officers will however continue to take a balanced and proportionate approach to its work with a focus on interaction with members of the public and prevention of behaviour which would otherwise warrant the issuing of fixed penalty notices. The coastal enforcement team is part of an ongoing project with local police teams, working in close partnership with each other. The coastal enforcement team will share daily updates and meet weekly with the local police team to share logs, reports and information to aid partnership working.
- It is unacceptable when anyone is hurt on our beaches due to the irresponsible behaviour of a minority of beach users. The PSPO specifically references bonfires and disposable barbecues which are not allowed on our beaches at any time. The council's website provides guidance for the safe use and removal of barbecues after 6pm. This guidance will be promoted and highlighted via social media channels ahead of and during the 2024 season.

Councillor Munns followed up his question by asking whether the officers would be warranted from May, or would they need training before?

Councillor Albon responded that all officers would be trained. They would not carry warrant cards but could issue notices.

(c) **QUESTION NO. 3 FROM A COUNCILLOR REGARDING USABLE COMPOSTABLE MATERIAL**

Councillor Rogers asked Councillor Albon the following question:

“Since my question was put to the last full council meeting, I have received many written and verbal complaints regarding the huge waste of public money spent on removing green waste at the Dane Park Depot. I have since found out that officers were concerned about this issue three years ago but were ignored. A local farmer estimated that the cost of disposing 2,200 tonnes of usable compostable material could have cost the council £30,000 not £275,000. My question is are the council considering managing this waste to produce a profitable income stream?”

Councillor Albon responded with the following key points:

- The accumulated waste at Dane Park Depot was mixed waste, which included soil, green waste, wood and metal. For this reason it could not be removed as green waste only. The waste removal was carried out to ensure compliance with Environment Agency requirements and to protect the local environment.
- When this issue was brought to the attention of the council’s Corporate Management Team (CMT) by the Head of Coastal and Public Realm in November 2023, it was progressed with urgency, as described in the report to Cabinet on 25 January 2024. It makes sense that some officers may have been aware of the accumulation of waste earlier than this but the issue was not brought to the attention of CMT until the later part of 2023.
- Moving forward, the exemptions the Council have put in place allow for materials (including wood, metal, plastics, hardcore and green waste) to be separated into material types with different storage areas, and stored at the depot.
- The Council is aware of the value of recycling waste from moral, ethical and legislative obligations. The Council’s grass cuttings are ‘grasscycled’ and left to provide a natural fertiliser to grassed areas. Materials will be re-used where they can, such as wood chips being used for paths or borders. Materials that can not be re-used by the service, are recycled wherever possible and the segregation ensures this is maximised.
- The Council is looking at all avenues open to it to ensure waste is recycled in the most cost effective, legal and ethical way possible.

Councillor Rogers followed up the question by asking whether the council would look at suitable sites for green waste, would officers involve councillors and the relevant portfolio holders.

Councillor Albon responded that he would discuss this further with the director and head of service.

(d) **QUESTION NO. 4 FROM A COUNCILLOR REGARDING THE WINTER GARDENS**

Councillor Rattigan asked Councillor Duckworth the following question:

Can I please have an update on the winter gardens, how many expression of interests have there been, are any of these expressions being taken forward to further discussion, if so do we have any target dates. ”

Councillor Duckworth responded with the following key points:

- A detailed update on the Margate Regeneration Programme was considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 29 February 2024 and subsequently by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.
- A further report about the programme was considered by Cabinet on 14 March 2024, when it was agreed that £4m of the Margate Town Deal funding would be allocated to the Winter Gardens project.
- The report provided an update on the marketing campaign and expressions of interest. In particular, the report stated that: ‘The deadline for expressions of interest (EoI) was on 22 February, 2024. By the deadline there was only one EoI, that at this stage had limited information about the finances for the refurbishment of the building, but identified that there would be a need to work closely with the council to help deal with a potential funding gap.’
- A second expression of interest has subsequently been received, also recognising the funding gap in the project, linked to its heritage deficit.
- The agents, Colliers, also provided further information on other interested parties that had engaged with the marketing process but not submitted an EoI. A financial gap was a recurring theme through their feedback about the Winter Gardens.
- Now that the council has agreed to allocate £4m of Town Deal funding to the project, we will be proceeding with stage two of the marketing campaign, and will be seeking more detailed submissions in relation to the proposed refurbishment of the building and the operational arrangements for the venue. As part of stage 2, the data room will be updated with information about the £4m funding and further open days will be arranged. We expect this stage 2 process to start in April and be completed during May 2024.

Councillor Rattigan followed up the question by asking whether the new funding would be put out to re-tender.

Councillor Duckworth confirmed the funding would be put out to re-tender.

(e) **QUESTION NO. 5 FROM A COUNCILLOR REGARDING COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE COUNCIL AND TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS**

Councillor Fellows asked Councillor Everitt the following question:

“Following cabinets full agreement to the recommendations in the Review from Overview and Scrutiny on ‘Collaboration between TDC and Town/Parish councils’;

Can Cllr Everett confirm when the first Full Parish Forum will take place?”

Councillor Everitt responded with the following key points:

- Council Officers are currently preparing terms of reference for a new Parish Forum and will be in a position to contact Town and Parish Councils during April 2024, with a view to agreeing a date for an initial meeting in May 2024.
- There were eight recommendations in total from the review, all of which Cabinet agreed last autumn. I believe that one of the roles of the new forum should be to oversee and monitor their implementation, but of course that is something for the forum to agree.

Councillor Fellows followed up his question by asking for Councillor Everitt to confirm that the council would look closely at all reviews by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor Everitt noted that there was a lot of value in scrutiny and the reviews were looked at.

(f) **QUESTION NO. 6 FROM A COUNCILLOR REGARDING LITTERING**

Councillor Bambridge asked Councillor Albon the following question:

“Labour promised to clean the streets but I see litter everywhere. Can you please confirm how many fines have been issued for littering in the past 12 months?”

Councillor Albon responded with the following key points:

- In order to continue to tackle the problem of litter on our streets the 2024/25 budget includes a growth item enabling the recruitment of six permanent Street Cleansing Operatives. This will complement the core service including the electric ‘walk behind’ sweepers deployed in Margate, Broadstairs, Ramsgate and Cliftonville. The council is also in the process of purchasing two large 7.5 tonne mechanical sweepers which will double the current large sweeper provision.
- In recent years the Environmental Education Officer has led some successful campaigns and interventions to educate people on the impacts of littering. This post is currently vacant but recruitment is being undertaken.
- Enforcement teams investigated 2,881 fly tipping complaints in 2022 and issued 82 penalty notices. The team works hard to tackle waste issues.

Councillor Bambridge followed up her question by asking whether the council would make an easy to find calendar with all litter picking events.

Councillor Albon responded and noted this was a good idea. This would be discussed further with officers.

(g) **QUESTION NO. 7 FROM A COUNCILLOR REGARDING MANSTON AIRPORT**

Councillor Pugh asked Councillor Everitt the following question:

“Can the Leader provide an update to councillors on any meetings he has had with Riveroak Strategic Partners in relation to the reopening of Manston Airport?”

Councillor Everitt responded with the following key points:

- A meeting with Tony Freudmann from RSP happened on 20 December 2023, and RSP provided an update on the site. A note of that meeting was provided to all councillors. I also attended a site visit, at the invitation of RSP, on 16 December 2023, along with other councillors and a council officer to talk about RSP’s plans for the site.
- It was agreed on 20 December that Mr Freudmann would attend a members’ briefing in the late spring or summer, when the situation had moved on.
- There remain a large number of detailed matters that are still to be determined in relation to the necessary development at the airport.
- Tony Freudmann has submitted a document to the council, listing all of the matters that are still to be determined in accordance with the Development Control Order issued by the Government, and officers have already provided some feedback on these issues.
- The courts are still working through the legal process in relation to the DCO. The most recent Judicial Review application was initially refused, however the Court of Appeal has now granted permission to appeal on the sole ground of need and we await the outcome of that appeal.

Councillor Pugh followed up his question by asking the leader whether he viewed the airport as viable for opening.

Councillor Everitt responded that he believed it was not viable for opening. However, if it was viable for opening, the jobs that the opening would bring would be welcomed.

(h) **QUESTION NO. 8 FROM A COUNCILLOR REGARDING PARKING ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS**

Councillor Towing asked Councillor Keen the following question:

“Can you confirm how many full time parking enforcement officers are currently employed by the council?”

Councillor Keen responded with the following key points:

- There are 11 full time equivalent Civil Enforcement Officer posts in the current establishment, with 3 posts currently filled, the council had four cv’s submitted for process in the coming weeks and an ongoing recruitment open with a local agency.

- It is common knowledge that these roles are extremely difficult to recruit to and this is a problem faced by local authorities across the country with a number of Kent authorities currently running recruitment campaigns.
- We have an ongoing recruitment campaign and have included a market supplement to encourage applicants.
- We have recruited a number of officers over the last 6 months since my last update regarding this situation, however there remains a high level of staff turnover in this area.

Councillor Towning followed up his question by asking how many enforcement officers would be employed by summer 2024.

Councillor Keen responded that this figure could not be given. It was a difficult position to fill, but the council was working on filling these positions ready for the summer months.

(i) **QUESTION NO.9 FROM A COUNCILLOR REGARDING THE GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITES**

Councillor K. Bright asked Councillor Everitt the following question:

“I welcome the forthcoming public consultation on the provision of a site and facilities for the Gypsy & Traveller community. This is the right thing to do for some of the most vulnerable members of our community.

However – at January’s O&S Panel and subsequent cabinet meeting, the history of the decision making process for choosing this site was unclear.

Can the leader confirm:

Whether any work was done to explore the suitability of land at Shottendane Road for use as a potential Gypsy and Traveller site between June 2021 and May 2023?

Whether officers and cabinet members visited the site and if so – when?

Whether the site was then discounted for such use or whether it was considered thereafter as a viable option?”

Councillor Everitt responded with the following key points:

- Work to find a suitable site began in 2019, when a cross-party sub-group of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered five possible site options.
- In July 2020, Cabinet considered a list of 14 different sites in the district, each of which was scored by officers according to ten different criteria. Shottendane Road was rated the most suitable, against these criteria. This information is publicly available.
- It should be noted that the former Ramsgate Hoverport was included in this process and not deemed a viable location. It was ranked fifth out of five sites considered by a cross-party sub-group of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel in November 2019 and, 14th out of 14 sites considered

in the officer report to Cabinet in July 2020. It was therefore taken out of consideration.

- This was on the basis of it being in an obvious flood risk, located next to a nationally protected area of high environmental sensitivity, and consists of hardstanding, unsuitable for children's play. It also offers limited access to services.
- Following a further report to Cabinet in September 2020 it was decided to bring the matter forward as part of the planned review of the Thanet Local Plan, which has statutory consultation processes, is subject to government inspection, and has the advantage of considering future land use across the district in the round.
- A subsequent public "call for sites" in 2021 as part of the Local Plan review process, produced no submissions from landowners for sites for the Gypsy and Traveller community. The Local Plan review has also been delayed, first by uncertainty around the future of Manston airport and then by government changes to national planning policy.
- Work continued between 2021 and 2023, under the previous administration, and that the previous cabinet visited a number of sites on 23 May 2022, including both the land at Shottendane Road and a site off of Highfield Road. The previous Cabinet subsequently removed the land at Highfield Road from consideration, when it took a formal decision on 2 March 2023 to transfer this land into the council's Housing Revenue Account for the delivery of new affordable homes.

Councillor Bright followed up his question by asking whether the council would work with current tenants to ensure that the majority of land remaining would remain viable to agricultural land.

Councillor Everitt responded, noting that this was the Council's plan.

(j) **QUESTION NO.10 FROM A COUNCILLOR REGARDING THE WINTER GARDENS**

Councillor Packman asked Councillor Everitt the following question:

"I welcome the change made earlier this month by the Cabinet to reallocate £4m to invest in the Winter Gardens and Labour's commitment to reopening this iconic Margate venue, but I am concerned about a public comment on social media from a Conservative Councillor for Cliftonville that they think the Winter Gardens should be demolished. Would the Leader please reiterate to all members the importance of the Winter Gardens for Thanet and the folly of any calls to demolish it?"

Councillor Everitt responded with the following key points:

- First constructed in 1911, the Winter Gardens was a significant heritage asset and Grade II listed building. It is specifically referenced in a published statement from English Heritage about Margate's Seaside Heritage.

- With much of the original 1911 architecture still intact, the Margate Winter Gardens was one of the finest examples of a seaside concert hall in the UK. Owned by the Council, it was a vital part of Margate's year round offer, providing space for concerts, events and community gatherings. It was a valuable asset to the council and the community.
- Cabinet had confirmed its commitment to the project to restore and reopen this much loved venue, with the recent decision to allocate £4m of Town Deal funding to the Winter Gardens.
- Demolition was not an option.

Councillor Packman did not have a follow up question.

(k) **QUESTION NO.11 FROM A COUNCILLOR REGARDING THE 75th ANNIVERSARY OF THE VIKING SHIP HUGIN**

Councillor Davis asked Councillor Everitt the following question:

"This year is the 75th Anniversary of the Danish government's gift of the Viking ship Hugin to mark 1500 years following the arrival of Hengist and Horsa at Ebbsfleet. Is Thanet District Council planning to celebrate this in any way, and if not, will it give positive support to Cliffsend Parish Council's plans to do so?"

Councillor Everitt responded with the following key point:

- Cliffsend Parish Council was being supported by the Technical Support Team in how to put their event on. The Parish Council was working on their event plans and the Safety Advisory Group will provide feedback when these are received.

Councillor Davis did not have a follow up question.

8. **NOTICE OF MOTION**

(a) **Abuse of Councillors and Officers Motion**

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

"The intimidation and abuse of Councillors and Officers, in person or otherwise, undermines democracy, preventing elected members from representing the communities they serve, deterring individuals from standing for elections, and undermines public life, democratic processes and working representation.

This Council notes that increasing levels of toxicity in public and political discourse is having a detrimental impact on local democracy and that prevention, support and responses to abuse and intimidation of local politicians and Officers must improve to ensure Councillors and employees feel safe and able to continue representing their residents.

We therefore commit to challenge the normalisation of abuse against Councillors and Officers and uphold exemplary standards of public life and political debate in all we do. The Local Government Association's Debate Not Hate campaign aims to raise public awareness of the role of Councillors in local communities, encourage healthy debate and improve the response to and support those in public life facing abuse and intimidation.

To tackle these issues effectively, we agree:

1. That the Council signs up to the Local Government Association's Debate Not Hate campaign.
2. That the Leader of the Council writes to the local Members of Parliament to ask them to support the Debate Not Hate campaign;
3. That the Leader of the Council writes to the Government to ask them to work with the Local Government Association to develop and implement a plan to address abuse and intimidation of politicians;
4. That we collectively and individually support Councillors and Officers facing harassment and abuse, and model positive behaviour and positive politics in our political lives;
5. That we make support and relevant training available to Councillors in relation to abuse and intimidation and that Councillor safety related to this is explicitly included as part of our Member Induction Programme."

The Leader of the opposition party, Councillor Pugh, responded to the motion.

During debate Councillors made the following comments:

- Discussion around the conduct on social media was noted. Councillors should also abide by the code of conduct on social media platforms.
- There was a zero tolerance policy regarding abuse.
- Support for the motion was largely given verbally by Councillors.

Councillors debated the motion, Councillors agreed and the motion was carried.

(b) **Fair Tax Declaration Motion**

During the last meeting of Council, Thursday 22 February 2024, Councillors agreed to debate the motion regarding fair tax.

Councillor Austin advised the council that she had changed her the motion as per Council Procedure Rule 3.6 as followed:

"The Green Group is proposing this motion to highlight the positive role that tax plays in our society. Tax should not be seen as a burden, as it is characterised by some politicians and certain media. If we all pay our fair share, it is a means of funding essential public services and ensuring all our communities are properly supported.

As a responsible public body, we want to lead by example, to stand up for better standards and campaign to change public procurement rules. Between 2014 and 2019, 17.5% of public procurement contracts were won by businesses with a connection to a tax haven. We find this unacceptable - and so do the majority of the public. Polls show over 60% of people believe public bodies should be able to consider company ethics and responsible tax conduct when awarding contracts to suppliers - but at present we are not permitted to do so.

We are therefore asking Council to support the following motion:

This Council resolves to:

Approve the Councils for Fair Tax Declaration.

Lead by example and demonstrate good practice in our tax conduct, right across our activities.

Ensure IR35 is implemented robustly and contract workers pay a fair share of employment taxes.

Not use offshore vehicles for the purchase of land and property, especially where this leads to reduced payments of stamp duty.

The Council commits to not using not-for-profit structures inappropriately as an artificial device to reduce the payment of tax and business rates.

Demand clarity on the ultimate beneficial ownership of suppliers UK and overseas and their consolidated profit & loss position, given lack of clarity could be strong indicators of poor financial probity and weak financial standing.

Promote Fair Tax Mark certification especially for any business in which we have a significant stake and where corporation tax is due.

Support Fair Tax Week events in the area, and celebrate the tax contribution made by responsible businesses are proud to promote responsible tax conduct and pay their fair share of corporation tax.

Support calls for urgent reform of UK procurement law to enable local authorities to better penalise poor tax conduct and reward good tax conduct through their procurement policies.”

During debate Councillors made the following comments:

- Tax was considered an investment in the future.
- It was important that the council made it clear where they stood regarding the fair tax. This motion, if adopted, would have no additional costs for the council.

Councillors debated the motion, Councillors agreed and the motion was carried.

9. **LEADERS REPORT**

The Leader, Councillor Everitt, gave his report making the following key points:

- Ramsgate had been awarded an additional £20m as part of the extension of the long term plan for towns.
- Thanks to officers working on Ramsgate regeneration programme were given. This was considered an exciting opportunity.
- The Home Office had halted plans to build a secure removals centre at Manston.
- It had been reported that rising numbers of migrants had been crossing the channel in 2024. The Home Office planned to upgrade the standard of its migrant reception facility at Manston, creating permanent structures to replace temporary ones. The council would continue to liaise with them about planning issues, although this council will not be the decision maker.
- The marketing exercise for the Winter Gardens was being relaunched with the £4m town deal fund now attached.
- The council had success regarding the push to expand the council's affordable housing stock.

- The home energy team had been doing great work which included helping residents access grants and learn about opportunities to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.
- The council had been awarded £675,000 from the Swimming Pool Support Fund, which would be used to pay for solar panels and variable speed filter pumps at Ramsgate Leisure Centre.
- £200,000 in grants from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund had been granted to the council. Approximately, £194,000 of this went to 26 community, voluntary and social enterprise groups across the most deprived communities in the district, focused on Cliftonville West, Dane Valley and Margate Central, in Margate; and Newington and Northwood, and Central Harbour and Eastcliff, in Ramsgate.
- It was pleasing that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England supported the council's recommendation that the council should move to 42 councillors in 2027.

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

- The £4m funding for the Winter Gardens was welcomed.
- Thanks to the home energy team was shared.
- Levelling up deadlines were fast approaching, many aspects of the project should have been finalised by this point in time. It was questioned whether the council would commit to doing all the current open projects in Ramsgate and Margate.
- The shared prosperity fund news was welcomed.

Councillor Everitt responded with the following points:

- Levelling up deadlines were being work towards.

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

- All new money that the council was granted was considered a positive. Smaller communities would benefit from the funding.
- The expansion of the council's housing stock was positive. However, there was a need for more council properties.
- Thanks to officers in the home energy team were given.
- Keeping the districts streets cleaned was a hot topic, and increased spending was crucial.

Councillor Everitt responded with the following points:

- The right to buy was a large part of the reason why there was a major housing crisis.
- Tribute to Councillor Whitehead was paid for her contributions on the housing work.

Councillor Worrow was not present at the meeting.

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

Councillor Fellows, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, presented the report. It was noted that several extraordinary meetings had been scheduled. It was a busy period for the panel, with some lively scrutinising.

Councillor Fellows thanked the Councillors of the Committee and the council officers involved in the Committee.

Members noted the report.

11. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Mr Tucker, the Chair of the Standards Committee, presented his report. It was noted that the social media policy was being reviewed.

Members noted the report.

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

Councillor W.Scobie, Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee, presented the report. It was noted that the Committee's membership in future should be balanced, with an equal amount of both experienced and new councillors.

It was recommended that the Constitutional Review Committee look at the rule of debate within the constitution and how this was applied to all committees. The committee wanted to foster debate and questioning.

Thanks were given to members that served on the Committee and council officers.

Councillors noted the report.

13. BUDGET MONITORING REPORT NO.3, 2023/24

Councillor Yates proposed, Councillor Albon seconded, Councillors agreed the recommendations as set out in the report be adopted namely:

"That Council approve the supplementary budgets for:

- 1) The £275k requirement for the removal of waste at the Dane Park Depot is funded from the risk reserve as set out in section 2.2 of this report
- 2) That Council approves the supplementary capital budgets, numbered i to ii inclusive, as set out in section 3 to this report.
- 3) That Council approves the supplementary HRA capital budgets as set out in section 4 to this report."

14. CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES

The Chair proposed, the Vice-Chair seconded and Councillors agreed the recommendations as set out in the report be adopted namely:

"Council is asked to approve the revised content of CSOs."

15. COUNCILLOR / OFFICER PROTOCOL

The Chair proposed, the Vice-Chair seconded and Councillors agreed the recommendations as set out in the report be adopted namely:

“It is recommended that Councillors carefully consider the detail of the revised Councillor/Officer protocol and approve its incorporation into the Constitution in place of the protocol at Annex 2.”

16. REVISED CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE PROCESS

The Chair proposed, the Vice-Chair seconded and Councillors agreed the recommendations as set out in the report be adopted namely:

“Members are asked to agree the recommendations from the Standards Committee regarding the Council’s constitutional change process, namely:

1. the Council’s constitutional change process changes from a three stage process (CRWP>Standards>Council) to a two stage process (CRWP>Council)
2. That the CRWP membership be expanded in line with other Committees
3. That the CRWP have an annual meeting to consider the future years work programme.
4. That the CRWP changes its name to Constitutional Review Committee.
5. Democratic Services to schedule (4) regular meetings in line with the appropriate council meeting.”

17. CHANGES TO COMMITTEES

The Leader had informed Democratic Services that he wished to add Councillor J. Bright as a substitute on the Governance and Audit Committee.

Councillor Garner informed Democratic Services that Councillor Austin would be removed from the Standards Committee, and would be replaced by Councillor Garner.

Councillor Pugh had no new nomination changes.

Councillor Worrow had no new nomination changes.

18. AMENDMENT TO THE CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2024-27

The Chair proposed, the Vice-Chair seconded and Councillors agreed the recommendations as set out in the report be adopted namely:

“That Council agrees to move the date of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting from the 18 April to 16 April.”

19. APPOINTMENT OF THE INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

Councillor Everitt proposed, Councillor Pugh seconded and Councillors agreed the recommendations in the report:

- “1. Consider the recommendations from the General Purposes Committee and agree to extend the appointment of Colin Carmichael as Interim Chief Executive, Head of Paid Service and Returning Officer for a further year, until 31 July 2025;
2. Note that the Appointment Panel has the responsibility of determining the timing and process of the appointment of a permanent Chief Executive.”

Meeting concluded : 9.26 pm

