

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2013 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor Mrs Kay A Dark (Chairman); Councillors Aldred, Bayford, Binks, Bruce, Campbell, Cohen, Coleman-Cooke, Edwards, Everitt, Fenner, Gibson, Gideon, D Green, E Green, I Gregory, K Gregory, Grove, Harrison, C Hart, S Hart, Hayton, Hibbert, Hornus, Huxley, Johnston, King, Kirby, Lodge-Pritchard, Marson, Matterface, Moore, Moores, Nicholson, Poole, Roberts, D Saunders, M Saunders, Savage, H Scobie, W Scobie, Sullivan, M Tomlinson, S Tomlinson, Watkins, Wiltshire, Wise, Worrow and Wright

In Attendance: Mr Hills, Independent Member and Chairman of the Standards Committee

VICE-CHAIRMAN IN THE CHAIR

Councillor Dark, Vice-Chairman of Council, announced that the Chairman was unable to attend, whereupon she took the chair.

85. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Alexandrou, Clark, Day, Driver & Wells.

86. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

87. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

On the proposal of the Chairman, seconded by the Leader, the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 7 February 2013 were approved by Council and signed by the Chairman.

88. ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Death of former Councillor Ewen Cameron

The Chairman announced that Mr Ewen Cameron, who had served as a Thanet District Councillor from 2007 to 2010, had recently passed away. She expressed, on behalf of the Council, deepest sympathy to Mr Cameron's family.

Tributes were paid to Mr Cameron's abilities and service to the community.

All Members present stood for a minute's silence as a mark of respect.

(b) Change of date of the next meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel

The Chairman announced that the date of the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel had been moved from Tuesday, 30 April 2013 to Tuesday, 23 April 2013, in view of the close proximity of the former date to the county elections.

89. PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

It was NOTED that no petitions had been received in accordance with the Council's Petitions Scheme.

90. QUESTIONS FROM THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was NOTED that no questions had been received from the press or public in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 14.

91. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**(a) Margate Caves and Ramsgate Tunnels**

Councillor Moores asked Councillor Johnson, as Cabinet Member for Community Services, the following question:

"Please explain how the £20,000 earmarked for groups supporting the Margate Caves and Ramsgate tunnels projects will be spent, what near-term benefits tax-payers or the tourism industry will see and how the prohibitively expensive sums previously estimated by officers to restore the caves and tunnels have changed since this administration took control."

Councillor Johnston responded as follows:

In the 2013/14 budget, the Council resolved to pay a contribution of £10,000 to the Margate caves, and £20,000 to the Ramsgate tunnel project. Both sums are intended to provide assistance to these community-based projects to allow the necessary work to develop robust business cases. We are expecting the Margate caves business case by the end of March.

Our Corporate Plan states very clearly that we would work with organisations and voluntary groups for the betterment of this area.

We decided, this year, to put the £50,000 that was earmarked for the Big Event into reviving a certain part of tourism that has cross-party support. It certainly has the support of Sir Roger Gale MP, who recently wrote to a member of the public to say, at last, somebody is doing something about the tunnels and the caves.

It also has the support of Councillor Bruce who said in a press release in July 2011 from the excellent Friends of Margate Caves:

'The efforts to rescue the Margate caves are a worthy project, one which has the potential to offer a valuable contribution to the tourism experience of Margate. The budgetary constraints imposed on the Council do not allow us to contribute financially to this project; however, other avenues of funding exist.'

The excellent Friends of Margate Caves have had a considerable amount of pro bono support from experts, far in excess of any money the Council could have found.

In 2004/2005, the caves were about to be closed, on the advice of the HSE (*Health & Safety Executive*). Of the various figures suggested at that time, there were estimates of £48,000 to keep them open and £26,000 to keep them closed. £26,000 was spent to keep them closed, but even more in officer and Member time in trying to ensure that they are not vandalised.

We have two excellent groups - one in Ramsgate, one in Margate - working with this Council, supporting our Corporate Plan. The Ramsgate tunnels have had the Jubilee

Money - £53,000 - and everything that we do together is working towards supporting tourism.

Laura Sandys MP, very much sees, like all of us here, the importance to tourism of keeping our heritage and supporting it.

The £50,000 from the Big Event has gone to a regeneration budget. Rob Hetherington will work with us, all the officers and the public to make sure it is wisely spent.

Although the specific requirements in each project are a bit different, the work involves seeking professional advice through structural surveys, archaeological studies, health and safety studies etc.

Both projects require significant sums of external funding to be sought to deliver the final schemes. Part of this funding will relate to basic works to secure and stabilise the sites as well as undertake health and safety work. It is the professional assessments being undertaken that will help us with this.

Additionally, we are working with East Kent Councillors, representing all political sides, because we are putting a bid in for a Capital of Culture for East Kent.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Moores asked Councillor Johnston a supplementary question, as follows:

It was a very simple question: 'how much over time'? How much have things changed? It has been two years since the first discussions regarding the caves and the tunnels took place. Councillor Green, who approached me regarding the tunnels, will recall the feasibility study which I supported.

In relation to both projects, again, all we simply wish to know is, 'How much'. I think everybody here supports the idea of both the caves and the tunnels being brought back into operation. We have talked of business cases, which rely on, for example, Heritage Lottery funding commitment. Is it going to be in the tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands pounds? Who pays and when does the Council stop? It's great we have made the contribution, but the question is, 'how much to restore the caves and the tunnels has changed since the previous officer estimates?'

Councillor Johnston replied:

We have to work with the two excellent groups that are already proving that they can get funding in.

As Councillor Bruce said in July 2011, *'If we can't do it as a Council, we can work with others to do it'*.

We will work with others and try to find money from other sources; for example, through '106 agreements'. The Big Event will take place at Manston at a cost of £10,000 to this Council, instead of the £50,000 plus that was previously spent. I do not want to be the Cabinet Member responsible for tourism and our heritage assets and continue to keep these things closed.

(b) **Repairs to War Memorials**

Councillor Bruce asked Councillor Johnston the following question:

"TDC (*Thanet District Council*), I understand, has allocated £10,000 in its budget to meet costs of repairs to war memorials. Please confirm that TDC spent its allocation in the last

financial year, will spend its full allocation in this financial year and has made provision in the 2013/14 budget for the same sum.”

Councillor Johnston replied:

Under the War Memorials (Local Authorities' Powers) Act 1923, councils do not have a duty to repair war memorials; there are Outside Bodies who own the memorials. However, we do feel that we are the custodians.

A budget allocation of £7,100 is made each year for the care of war memorials, and the same allocation is included for 2013/14. However, this budget is not managed on a merely annual basis as this does not present the best way of caring for them.

The war memorials are not owned by the council, but we try and care for them on behalf of the community.

The main maintenance work is undertaking cleaning of algal growth on the memorials, and providing a sacrificial 'shelter coating' on appropriate stone surfaces. This work does not have to be done every year, but can be done from time to time.

Louise Dandy (*our Conservation Area Appraisal Officer*) tries to find match funding from other organisations and I tried with '106' and the Charter Trustees.

For this financial year, we can keep some monies from previous years to make up the amount that we need to do the work. Officers inform me that, in addition, we also undertake more significant repairs as a result of vandalism. At present, we are awaiting the specialist stone in relation to a significant repair to the Korean Memorial. This has been delayed so the expenditure on this site will now occur in 2013/14. The stone alone is costing £4,000 so the budget for 2012/13 is to be carried forward for this work. The total sum of this work will be approaching £14,000 overall.

In relation to spending the £9,521 that was used in 2011/12, this did require an agreed transfer from contingencies to make up the shortfall.

We have to work very hard on this. We feel we are custodians. We do not have to repair them, but it is vital that we do.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Bruce then asked the following supplementary question:

“Given the growing number of resident groups and community groups taking on care of cemeteries and flower beds etc, I hope that the Cabinet Member would support such an initiative to help look after these cherished memorials to those who gave us the ultimate sacrifice.

Councillor Johnston's reply was:

We did actually have such a working party and Councillor Brian Sullivan and I had similar meetings in the Mayor's Parlour. I absolutely support reviving that, as war memorials are a number of things; they can be a statue, a building, a monument, or any other edifice. Even the Railway Station in Ramsgate has a plaque to the men who worked in the railway who died in the last war. I would support that and I would be very happy to have your expertise on that committee and, perhaps, Councillor Sullivan might want to join again.

92. NOTICE OF MOTION

It was NOTED that no motions on notice had been received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.

93. LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader reported on progress made in relation to Priority No. 10 of the Corporate Plan:

“we will influence the work of other agencies to ensure the best outcomes for Thanet”.

He referred particularly to:

- steps taken, in collaboration with Kent County Council, to set up a Thanet Health & Wellbeing Board;
- working with the new Thanet Clinical Commissioning Group to develop a shared understanding of the health and wellbeing needs of the community;
- close liaison with community development at Cornwall Council, culminating in the rolling out of a resident-led, “C2 Connecting Communities” programme in the Newington and Cliftonville West wards;
- discussions between Thanet Cabinet Members and Kent County Council regarding future education provision across Thanet *[in a forum which, the Leader said, had a similar political composition to the proposed Thanet locality board]*..
- the “Grow for it East Kent” publicity campaign;
- the new East Kent Strategy for Growth, set up to deliver project priorities across East Kent;
- working closely with neighbouring councils and Kent County Council on a joint bid for “City of Culture” status.

Councillor Bayford, who welcomed the establishment of a Health & Wellbeing Board in Thanet, referred to the political make-up of some of the other locality boards in Kent.

Councillor King asked for clarification on the objectives of the Health & Wellbeing strategy and East Kent Strategy for Growth.

In response to Councillor King’s question, the Leader stated that East Kent Strategy for Growth had 12 priorities, three of which related to Thanet - *the Ramsgate Port and Marina; Margate and Cliftonville West wards and Central Island business park* - and pointed out that it would be for the new Health & Wellbeing Board to create its own strategies once it had been set up.

94. COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION 2013/14

It was proposed by Councillor Everitt, seconded by the Leader and RESOLVED that recommendations set out at paragraphs 5.1, 5.2 & 5.3 of the report be adopted, namely:

1. That Members approve the calculations at paragraph 1 of the report;
2. That Members approve the Council Tax annual charges as set out below for the listed property bands:

COUNCIL TAX PER PROPERTY BAND FOR 2013/14								
BAND	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Proportion of Band D	6/9	7/9	8/9	1	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9

Annual Charge	£139.98	£163.31	£186.64	£209.97	£256.63	£303.29	£349.95	£419.94
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3. That Members note that the reduction in discount for working age claimants under the new Council Tax Reduction Scheme will be 5.5%.

95. HOUSING STRATEGY

Officers were congratulated on their achievements in relation to the Housing Strategy.

It was proposed by Councillor Green, seconded by the Leader and RESOLVED:

“That the Council adopts the Housing Strategy 2012-2016 which includes the accompanying action plan”.

96. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE OPTIONS

It was NOTED that this item had been withdrawn from the agenda and would be presented to the meeting of Council in April 2013.

97. REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES (NON-EXECUTIVE) - REVIEW

The Chairman advised that “Thanet Archaeological Trust” had changed its name to, “Trust for Thanet Archaeology”.

It was proposed by the Leader, seconded by Councillor Campbell and RESOLVED that the recommendations outlined at paragraphs 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3 of the report be adopted, namely:

1. To remove the Yacht Harbours Association and the Theatre Royal Management Committee from the list of Non-Executive outside bodies and to reduce the number of representatives on “Age UK: Thanet” from two to one from the Annual Meeting of Council;
2. To appoint a new nominee to be the Council’s representative on the East Kent Housing Area Board;
3. To note that feedback had been received on the activities undertaken by the representatives on outside bodies.

The Leader nominated Councillor D Green to the East Kent Housing Area Board, and the Council NOTED this nomination.

98. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2013/14 AND REPORT BACK FROM EAST KENT JOINT INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL ON 2012/13 AMENDMENTS

A revised Schedule 1 to Annex 1 to the report was tabled at the meeting (*now published on the website*).

It was NOTED from the Chairman, in relation to paragraph 2.2 of the report, that, although the recommendations concerning special responsibility allowances of Independent Members had been agreed in full, EKJIRP (*East Kent Joint Independent Remuneration Panel*) had advised that, as the position of Independent Person had not existed for long enough to accurately gauge the workload involved, the special responsibility allowance could be reviewed at some point in the future.

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by the Leader and RESOLVED that the recommendation at paragraph 8.1 (a) of the report be adopted, namely:

“To adopt the draft 2013/14 Members’ Allowances Scheme as set out at Annex 1 to the report and to refer the scheme to EKJIRP in advance of it being adopted and implemented from 1 April 2013”.

99. PUBLICATION OF PAY POLICY STATEMENT - FINANCIAL YEAR 2013/14

The Chief Executive, Head of EK Human Resources and Unions were thanked for their work in reaching agreement on the new pay structure.

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by the Leader, and RESOLVED:

“The Council approves the Pay Policy Statement for 2013/14 as set out in Annex 1 to the Report.”

It was NOTED that, as a result of recent changes to the Council’s pay structure, the Council would be eligible to claim Living Wage employer status.

Meeting concluded : 8.21 pm