

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2021 at 5.30 pm by Video conference.

Present: Councillor Jason Savage (Chairman); Councillors Albon, Ara, Ashbee, Bailey, Bambridge, J Bayford, R Bayford, Boyd, Coleman-Cooke, Crittenden, Currie, Dennis, Dexter, Duckworth, Cllr Everitt, Farrance, Fellows, Game, Garner, Green, Gregory, Hart, Hopkinson, Huxley, Keen, Kup, Pat Moore, Paul Moore, Ovenden, Parsons, Cllr Rev. S Piper, Potts, Pugh, Rattigan, Rawf, Rogers, Roper, Rusiecki, D Saunders, M Saunders, Scobie, Scott, Shrubbs, Tomlinson, Towing, Whitehead, Wing, Wright and Yates

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councilors Braidwood and L Piper.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by the Vice Chairman and agreed, that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 11 February 2021 be approved.

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman advised Members of the recent passing of Councillor Peter Campbell. Councillor Campbell first became a Thanet District Councillor in 2007 and served the Central Harbour Ward in Ramsgate for 14 years.

Members held a minute silence as a mark of their respect.

Tributes were then paid to Councillor Campbell's work, commitment and character.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. PETITIONS

(a) Park Avenue, Broadstairs Petition- Report Back to Council

The Leader provided Members with a brief update to advise that the Council would contest the appeal that had been lodged in response to the Council's action.

Members noted the report.

6. QUESTIONS FROM THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

(a) Question No.1 from a Members of the Public Regarding Grants and Developer Contributions

Ms Austin asked the Leader the following question:

“As Council budgets tighten, external funding and investment become increasingly important. What strategies is TDC adopting to maximise environmental & social investment from developers, monitor and access grant funding opportunities, and nurture mutually supportive partnerships with community groups who can often access specific funding streams that will benefit our communities?”

The Leader responded with the following points:

- It was a challenge to continue to provide services and retain aspiration to pursue opportunities for residents when budgets were repeatedly reduced. Completion of the annual survey by residents helped the Council prioritise the services provided.
- The question could be answered in three sections:
Developer contributions:
 - The Local Plan set out the strategic approach regarding contributions from building developers.
 - The Council had succeeded in achieving the following:
 - Affordable Housing - £49,000 (Section 106) Contributions utilised to bring forward homes for affordable housing.
 - Retort House/Pierremont Hall - £600,000 (Section 106) Grant awarded to Broadstairs and St Peter’s Council to bring forward Pierremont and Retort House refurbishment.
 - Broadstairs Playground Refurbishment - £136,000 (Section 106) Improvements to a number of playgrounds within Broadstairs.
 - The major road network bid with Kent County Council - £49,000,000.
 - Homes England grant funding for new build phases 1-3 - £860,000.
 - Local Growth Fund - £666,000 (SELEP) Monies utilised on the renovation of two properties within the intervention area.
 - Grant funded programmes for tackling rogue landlords and cold homes, and employment of a Home Energy Officer to advise residents about available grant funding.
 - The largest Disabled Facilities Grant programme in Kent around £3,000,000 annually.
 - RISE funding, - £1.350,000 for 2020/21. A range of initiatives for homeless people. It has been a co-design process involving TDC, MHCLG, the local voluntary sector and community groups.

Key Grant funded projects 2018/19 to 2020/21

- Ramsgate Flood and Coast Protection Scheme - £900,000 (Environment Agency).
- Dalby Square Town Heritage Initiative Scheme - £1.900,000 (Heritage Lottery Fund).
- Affordable Homes Programme - £1.378,000 (Homes England).
- Thanet Community Forest - £527,000 (Forestry Commission).
- Epple Bay Sea Wall - £324,000 (Environment Agency).
- Margate Town Deal Fund - £162,000 initially (MHCLG).
- Margate Town Deal Fund- £29,000,000 bid submitted.
- Margate Town Deal Fund - Refurbishment 51-57 High Street - £750,000 (MHCLG).
- Future High Street Fund offer of £2.700,000.
- Heritage Action Zone - a five year joint programme working with Historic England and key community groups, to engage with

communities and groups interested in Ramsgate Heritage, and identify how best heritage assets could support the economy.

- High Street Heritage Action Zone – to finalise the agreement with Historic England around Harbour Street and a programme of cultural engagement to animate the high street.
- Dreamland - £18,000,000 worth of public investment including £5,000,000 Heritage Lottery Fund grant.
- Thanet Parkway Station – substantial Local Enterprise Partnership funding.

Community Groups

- Ellington Park - £1.643,000 (Heritage Lottery Fund) A new community café and toilets, playground, works to conserve the Victorian terrace, new signage, and critical repairs to the pathways.
- Other Community projects
 - Recent work with Rise Up Clean Up on a project to tackle litter on the beaches. This could be expanded to other beaches around the District.
 - The Council was looking to work more closely with coastal businesses this summer, to support them, but also have their assistance in spreading messages to our coastal visitors.
 - The Climate Change Officer was looking to access external grant funding to help achieve our targets, and deliver the climate action plan. A number of funding bids have been submitted already.
 - The Open Spaces team and Climate Change Officer were working with local communities and groups on projects that would improve our tree canopy cover and biodiversity across the District.
 - Over the years the Council has worked with a number of community groups to try to find solutions to ongoing problems related to waste, recycling and other public realm issues. The team works with developers to try to ensure that these common problems are designed out in the future.
 - The Council has worked with a variety of community groups across the District to support beach clean/litter picking activities by providing equipment and health and safety advice.
 - The Council was exploring the possibility of delivering chargeable AQA accredited training courses for a variety of environmental issues to support local projects.

7. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

(a) Question No. 1 from a Member Regarding Hedgerow Cutting

Councillor Wing asked Councillor Albon the following question:

“Can we ensure that pre-planning is undertaken to ensure none of our hedgerows, bushes and trees are cut in any way during the nesting season for birds and other wildlife, that is applying Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981?”

Councillor Albon responded with the following points:

- The breeding season for birds was not definitive, however RSPB guidance states that the nesting season was generally between the 1 March and the 31 August. During this period the Council would not cut the hedgerows or trees unless; there was an urgent public health and safety concern; or the Council was served a notice from Kent County Council, to carry out urgent works on the highway.
- The open spaces team had a procedure for cutting of trees and hedges that respected bird life at all times of the year. This involved the use of infrared cameras over a period of time to ensure no disturbance of nests would take place.
- The team also undertook visual checks and would avoid areas where nests were present when it was safe to do so, even if carrying out urgent works.

Councillor Wing followed up her question by offering her thanks to the teams who managed the hedgerows and trees, for their efforts.

(b) **Question No. 2 from a Member Regarding Housing**

Councillor Garner asked the Leader the following question:

“As the Housing Delivery Test has not been met in Thanet and there is now a presumption in favour of sustainable development when deciding planning applications, what action is being taken to improve this situation to ensure it is met as soon as possible?”

The Leader responded with the following points:

- Outside of its own house building programme, the Council could not control the rate of house building. This was primarily a matter for the market, however the Council sought to create the right environment to support new house building.
- The Housing Delivery Test Action Plan set out a wide range of actions and commitments to support house building, and the Council had taken most of the actions recommended. These actions included:
 - To refine the development monitoring processes to better understand any delays in development on site;
 - To support ,including financially, the delivery of Thanet Parkway Station. Improved travel times from Ashford International Station would improve market perception of the District for both housing and economic development;
 - To explore the establishment of a Council-owned housing company;
 - To support infrastructure-based funding bids to the Government to improve viability and deliver key infrastructure. This also included participation in a joint Kent & Medway proposal to the Government, known as the “Kent Deal”, for infrastructure provision in Kent to help support good growth.
- The Action Plan was based on significant research into the local housing market, and had been commended by the Planning Advisory Service. It was currently being updated.
- The Council employed two Housing Strategy Officers, who supported local developers and house builders to bring their sites forward. In addition, the Cabinet has established a Cabinet Advisory Group for housing issues and would be discussing housing supply in detail at its next meeting.

8. NOTICE OF MOTION

(a) **Motion Regarding Universal Credit Uplift Payments**

It was proposed by the Leader and seconded by Councillor Albon that:

“Thanet has the highest number of universal credit claimants in Kent - more than 18,000, nearly a quarter of the eligible population and an increase of almost two-thirds over the last year due to the impacts of COVID-19 on our local economy. A third of these residents are in work, but recorded unemployment is up 80% since March 2020 and now afflicts one in ten of the working age population. One in eight Thanet households is in fuel poverty.

Last March, the chancellor announced a £20 per week uplift to universal credit and working tax credit for 2020/21. This has been a vital lifeline to thousands of families in Thanet and provided an eight-figure cash injection to their collective spending power, helping them feed their children, heat their homes and support local business. It has helped contain the severe pressure on the voluntary sector, including local food banks.

The estimated cost of the uplift is around 2% of the extra government spending nationally triggered by COVID-19, and even after it is taken into account UK benefit payments are among the lowest in Europe.

No part of Kent will suffer more detriment than Thanet if this uplift is taken away. Nowhere in Kent will more children suffer, more families go cold and hungry, and more local businesses lose out. The lives of residents already struggling to manage will be made harder.

This council will speak up for those in urgent need. It calls on both Thanet’s MPs to do the same.

Council urges the chancellor to retain the £20 uplift in his budget next week and not turn his back on the poorest members of our community. It instructs the leader to write to him tomorrow to express its deep concern about the consequences of removing or reducing this essential support.”

Councillor Wing proposed, Councillor Ara seconded and Members agreed to debate the motion.

Following the debate, the motion was put to the vote and declared carried.

9. LEADERS REPORT

The Leader’s report had been circulated to Members and was published on the Council’s website before the meeting. The report has been attached as an annex to these minutes.

Councillor Ashbee as Leader of the Conservative Party made the following points:

- She gave her condolences and expressed sadness at the passing of Councillor Peter Campbell.
- Thanks were offered to Councillor Taylor for his contribution before his retirement.
- She offered her gratitude to care staff and NHS workers, but also noted that the work of other front line staff should not be forgotten, including those working at the Council.
- The Council’s finance team had worked hard to provide grant funding to businesses in the District.
- It was a shame that use of the Manston airport site had escalated from a contingency site into a key component of the Country’s import and export strategy.
- The sale of Dreamland was the best solution for the Council and for the future of the Park. She asked the Leader if the time taken for an additional valuation had impacted negatively upon the value of the sale.

- It was sensible to use the Margate Town Deal project model following the provisional award of £2.700,000 of Future High Street Fund funding for Ramsgate. It was important to engage with all local groups.
- There was concern that a shift to online meetings would mean that the public would become less involved in the democratic process. However virtual meetings may be practical for training and member briefing sessions. Committee meetings should be hybrid, and some Members should be allowed back into the Council Chamber for the next Council meeting.
- Residents should not be charged an admin fee if they choose to submit comments on planning matters by paper or email rather than by using the online consultation portal.

The Leader replied to Councillor Ashbee's comments with the following points:

- The sale of Dreamland was an exceptionally complicated matter, the two valuations did not have an impact on the sale.
- The law did not allow virtual council meetings to take place after 2 May, however this was likely to change. There was a need to make best use of the technology, the future should involve a mixture of virtual and physical meetings.
- The proposed administration charge for submission of planning comments outside of the online consultation portal was currently out for consultation. The conservative group could have raised its concerns at the Cabinet meeting that recently considered the proposal.

Councillor Reverend Piper as leader of the Thanet Independents Party made the following points:

- Council Officers deserved continued full support, it was good for the public to know that Officers were supported by Members.
- Broadly speaking the lock down and vaccinations seem to have worked, but there was a need to continue to encourage people to abide by the rules.
- The Council's communication with the public had improved over recent months, hopefully this would continue.
- The Thanet Independent Group would like to endorse everything said about Councillor Campbell.

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

- He welcomed the comments about staff, all the Officers were working admirably.

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

- He wished to join the Leader and Members in expressing his sadness at the news of Cllr Campbell's passing.
- It was also sad that Councillor Taylor decided to retire, his contribution would also be missed.
- Thanks were offered to all front line workers across the District including Council staff.
- He welcomed the engagement with Members regarding the new Public Space Protection Orders. Enforcement and communication would be essential to their success. There should be a provision to protect wildlife from the impact of jet skis.
- There did not appear to be a clear path to end the use of Manston Airport for testing and as a lorry park. Regarding the DCO, the Secretary of State should accept that there was no case to reopen the airport.
- He welcomed news about the £2.700,000 High Street Fund, and hoped that interested groups would be fully engaged throughout the process.

- The Ramsgate Port consultation now seemed to have been incorporated into a wider Ramsgate consultation, there was potential at the Port, however it was losing money so a plan was needed.
- He welcomed the Leader's commitment for better communication with the people of Thanet. The best way to tackle miss-information was to engage with the community in public forums and issue as many facts as possible.

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

- He felt there was a lot more that could be shared with residents online. He wished to improve public accessibility in order to show residents who the Members were.
- Issues around jet ski usage was discussed at a recent Members Briefing. The intention of the PSPO was to better manage jet skis. The proposed PSPO's would be discussed at the next Cabinet meeting on 18 March.

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

Councillor Bayford, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, used his report to pay tribute to the late Councillor Peter Campbell. He noted that Councillor Campbell had been an active scrutiny member since his election in 2007, until his passing. Over the last six years, Councillor Campbell had been elected either the Chair or Vice Chair of the Panel and he would be irreplaceable. It had been a privilege to work with him.

Members noted the report.

11. 2021-22 COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION

It was noted that in accordance with council procedure rule 17.6, a recorded vote would be taken on the motion or any amendments and substantive motions.

It was proposed by Councillor Yates and seconded by Councillor Albon that the recommendations set out in the report be agreed, namely:

1. That Members approve the Thanet District Council element of Council Tax charges as set out below for the listed property bands:

COUNCIL TAX PER PROPERTY BAND FOR 2020-21								
BAND	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Proportion of band D	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9
Annual Charge	162.09	189.10	216.12	243.13	297.16	351.19	405.22	486.26

2. That Members approve the determinations at Section 1 of this report.

The Deputy Monitoring Officer conducted a recorded vote on the motion as follows:

50 Members voted in favour the motion: Councillors Albon, Ara, Ashbee, Bailey, Bambridge, J Bayford, R Bayford, Boyd, Coleman-Cooke, Crittenden, Currie, Dennis, Dexter, Duckworth, Everitt, Farrance, Fellows, Game, Garner, Green, Gregory, Hart, Hopkinson, Huxley, Keen, Kup, Pat Moore, Paul Moore, Ovenden, Parsons, S Piper, Potts Pugh, Rattigan, Rawf, Rogers, Roper, Rusiecki, D Saunders, M Saunders,

Savage, Scobie, Scott, Shrubbs, Tomlinson, Towing, Whitehead, Wing, Wright, Yates.

No Members voted against the motion.

No Members abstained from voting on the motion.

The motion was carried.

12. CHANGES TO REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by the Vice-Chairman and Members agreed the recommendations detailed in the report, namely that:

“1. That Councillor Boyd replaces Councillor Kup on the Young People’s Partnership Conversation.

2. That Councillor Ovenden replaces Councillor Huxley on the Sandwich and Pegwell Bay National Nature Reserve Steering Group.”

Meeting concluded: 7.30pm