

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2023 at 7.00 pm in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Cecil Street, Margate, Kent.

Present: Councillor Jason Savage (Chair); Councillors Albon, Ashbee, Austin, Bailey, Bambridge, J Bayford, R Bayford, Boyd, Coleman-Cooke, Crittenden, Currie, Dennis, Dexter, Duckworth, Everitt, Fellows, Garner, Gregory, Hart, Huxley, Kup, Leys, Pat Moore, Paul Moore, Ovenden, Rev. S Piper, Potts, Pugh, Rattigan, Rawf, Rogers, D Saunders, M Saunders, Scobie, Scott, Shrubb, Smith, Tomlinson, Towing, Wallin, Whitehead, Wing, Wright and Yates

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Ara, Braidwood, Farrance, Hopkinson, Keen, Nixey, Parsons, L. Piper and Rusiecki.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Chair proposed, the Vice Chair seconded and Members agreed the minutes of the Council meeting held on 23 February 2023.

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. PETITIONS

(a) Response to Ramsgate Market Petition

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

Members commented that they were pleased with the progress towards reinstating the Ramsgate Market. It was asked whether the communications team could publish more information on the Council website regarding the progress to keep residents informed.

6. QUESTIONS FROM THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

(a) Question no.1 from a member of the public regarding Southern Water and housing developments

Ms McCourt asked Councillor Ashbee the following question:

'Following the meeting on Tuesday, 14.3.23 Tim McMahon from Southern Water explained that, whilst they cannot reject developments, he said that what they... "could do, need to do and try to do is work with Local Planning Authorities to identify where constraints are so that they can be put into their conditions as part of the developments." How do you know that this occurs for ALL housing developments in Thanet? Whilst they cannot say no to developers, what is the Planning Committee at TDC doing to ENSURE that Southern Water is able to identify any constraints, and advise planning committees BEFORE developments reach the approval stage?'

Councillor Ashbee responded with the following points:

- Utility providers, including Southern Water are consulted on all applications proposing new dwellings so that they can comment on the capacity of drainage and sewerage provision and so that they can recommend any required mitigation actions.
- Required mitigation actions would be covered in any planning consent issued by way of condition.

(b) **Question no.2 from a member of the public regarding listed buildings**

Mr Knibb asked Councillor Pugh the following question:

'Is the Grade Two listed Cinema Organ at Dreamland in good condition? What records do the Council hold concerning recent inspections? Are the current owners being held responsible for its renovation? Is there an officer in charge whose remit is the preservation of listed buildings in Thanet?'

Councillor Pugh responded with the following points:

- Building and site owners are legally required to protect and maintain listed structures in their ownership and it was an offence not to do so.
- The council was able to investigate alleged breaches of listed building control and require specific works or prosecute offences where these are identified.
- However, the council did not have the resources to inspect all listed buildings and structures in the district on a routine basis. The council would investigate any complaints that are raised with the planning enforcement team.
- There had been no complaints received concerning the cinema organ at dreamland.

(c) **Question no.3 from a member of the public regarding community use of future planning developments**

Ms Brown asked Councillor Ashbee the following question:

'What measures are Thanet District Council taking to ensure that conditions are in place with developers as part of planning permission being granted, to secure any school, health centres, playgrounds, roads etc. are included in future developments and that they are up and running for community use?'

Councillor Ashbee responded with the following points:

- As well as consulting with the council's statutory partners about the infrastructure needs resulting from development, both through the local plan process and through individual planning applications, the council also negotiated contributions from developers towards the costs of these requirements.
- This included contributions for health, education, transport, play and leisure provision.
- During development, the council collected these contributions and passed them on to the relevant agency, such as KCC or NHS England, so that they can be spent on the delivery of school, transport, health or other infrastructure.
- The council would be recruiting an additional officer specifically to manage the collection and monitoring of planning contributions to ensure that funding is collected and released when it is due. This would also be reported on through the annual Infrastructure Statement.

7. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

(a) Question no.1 from a member regarding the refurbishment of public toilets

Councillor Bailey asked Councillor Kup the following question:

'I note that a work tender has gone out to refurbish the Margate Harbour Arm toilets, which is really good news and not before time.
Are there any plans to have any of the other public toilets in the District refurbished in a similar way?

I'm thinking in particular, although not exclusively, of the exterior of the Broadstairs Harbour toilets, which are an eyesore in a conservation area.
I know the Community Payback Team are willing to paint them but they need the rendering made good first.'

Councillor Kup responded with the following points:

- A detailed stock condition survey of public toilet facilities had been undertaken over the winter period. The findings from this survey work are due back in final form in April 2023, and would help to inform the new public toilet strategy. Details of the strategy including proposed actions, routes to funding and timescales would be shared after the local elections.
- Timescales had not been set, but it had been confirmed that the toilets at Broadstairs Harbour will be re-rendered and painted in 2023.

(b) Question no.2 from a member regarding essential maintenance of the Boundary Park playground

Councillor Crittenden asked Councillor Kup the following question:

'The safety matting under the swings in the children's playground in the highly popular Boundary Park has become worn to the point of dangerous, and the swings have been removed. With less than three months to the start of summer, can the cabinet member please advise when essential maintenance will be carried out to the playground in Boundary Park?'

Councillor Kup responded with the following points:

- The safety matting was regularly inspected as part of the routine in-house play area inspections and annual external inspection by RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents). Whilst it was agreed that the matting was nearing the end of its useful life it was not considered to be dangerous.
- It remained the plan to undertake a substantial refurbishment project at the play area upon receipt of funding from Section 106 planning agreements which had been put in place for this purpose. Part of the funding contribution from Boundary Park had already been received with a further funding receipt expected later in 2023.
- It had been agreed that the decommissioned swings and matting should be replaced ahead of the summer season and it had therefore been planned to be carry out this work during April and May 2023 using part of the Section 106 funding which has already been received.

Councillor Crittenden followed up her question by asking if there was any suggestion or idea when the rest of the money was to be received for this project. Also asking whether the ward councillors be consulted on the improvements to Boundary Park?

Councillor Kup responded that he would discuss with officers regarding when the money would be received, and let Councillor Crittenden know when this money was to be expected. It was agreed that it was important to consult with ward councillors on the improvements.

(c) **Question no.3 from a member regarding the funding timetable for the Margate Town Deal**

Councillor Currie asked Councillor Pugh the following question:

‘As the accountable body for the Margate Town Deal, Would the council give members an update on the funding timetable for the selected projects in the investment plan, particularly the Coastal Wellbeing project in my ward Cliftonville West which not only would develop health benefits to the local community but also create new business and commercial opportunities for the area.’

Councillor Pugh responded with the following points:

- All Town Deal projects are to be delivered by the end of March 2026, with timelines for some projects still in the development phase. In terms of the Coastal Wellbeing intervention, the council had engaged external Project Managers and Cost Consultants for RIBA stages 1-3 in relation to the new facilities at Walpole Bay, and were set to procure an architect team for designs.
- Recently there had been the recruitment of a new Coastal Wellbeing Participation and Skills Coordinator who, as well as carrying out stakeholder mapping, engagement and benchmarking, would develop a Participation and Skills Programme around testing new uses to promote health and wellbeing.
- Details of the Town Deal projects including progress and next steps are kept up to date on the Council's website.

Councillor Currie followed up his question by asking that given the original fund had been put into place for areas like Cliftonville, which had not yet benefited from the growth experienced by other more affluent areas, did Councillor Pugh agree that all the projects planned for Cliftonville should be a priority?

Councillor Pugh responded that all the projects in the Town Deal should be a priority. Cliftonville had seen a significant boost in Northdown Road.

(d) **Question no.4 from a member regarding sustainability assessments for developments in Thanet**

Councillor Smith asked the following question:

“Given that TDC published the Call for Sites before Christmas to include the site, yet another recent development application for 95 more homes, was described to me by a Minster resident as” a cynical attempt to buck the Local Plan process”.

This development is proposed just as public transport services, especially in the Villages, are rapidly diminishing. At the same time soaring rents, food and fuel costs are eroding the autonomy of our communities’ most vulnerable members.

Developments like this will add to the number of unsustainable, car-dependent population ‘hubs’, which will further transform the surrounding villages, whose local amenities and services are already under strain.

Will TDC undertake a detailed sustainability appraisal of all such sites in Thanet, to consider access to local services, access to health care, education, employment, health care and leisure facilities, alongside practical transport connections that can counteract this trend?"

Councillor Ashbee responded with the following key points:

- The council completed and published a sustainability appraisal for the sites allocated in the adopted local plan.
- In addition, an assessment of the impact for development on unallocated sites occurs within the determination of individual planning applications.
- As the review of the local plan, extending the plan period forward from 2031 to 2040, a wholly new sustainability appraisal will be completed for the draft proposals, including new development sites proposed.

Councillor Smith followed up by asking a supplementary question, asking how this could be described as sustainable. Given that housing developers are in the business of constructing profitably, in light of recent headlines and media discussion of the housing crisis, what pressure could TDC place on central government to re-establish and develop sustainable plans for the social housing which was needed?

Councillor Ashbee responded that she would love for the council to build all the housing that was needed for all those in the district that needed housing, however this needed land, which was the issue. There had been adjustments to the NPPF, which had not yet been released.

(e) **Question no.5 from a member regarding the cultural investment fund**

Councillor Yates asked the following question:

"It was recently announced that Morecambe Winter Gardens will receive £2.8m from the £60m Cultural Investment Fund to restore their 125-year-old theatre, this was part of an announcement that 70 venues, museums and libraries will receive monies from this fund. Did Thanet District Council make an application for this fund and if they did, have they received any feedback as to why we were not successful, and if they didn't make an application, why not?"

Councillor Pugh responded:

- The Council submitted an application to the Cultural Development Fund for the Theatre Royal, which had unfortunately been unsuccessful.
- Arts Council England did not provide any formal feedback on applications that were unsuccessful.

Councillor Yates asked a supplementary question as followed:

According to the council website TDC will host an open day in April for prospective commercial partners to run the Margate Winter Gardens, was this still the plan and would TDC see potential operators in April 2023?

Councillor Pugh responded that this was the intention of TDC. The programme that had been set out for the Winter Gardens was still on time.

(f) **Question no.6 from a member regarding the progress of the Ramsgate Market**

Councillor Wing asked the following question:

“Could I please have an update on the progress to bring back the Market to Ramsgate Town Centre and could this update also be sent as an email to Ramsgate Town Council, so that key stakeholders are updated on exactly where we are at with this very important matter, for our town and Thanet?”

Councillor David Saunders responded with the following key points:

- Thanet District Council had met with Ramsgate Town Council and kept them updated on a regular basis on the progress towards relaunching the market.
- In mid-February 2023, TDC’s Case Officer met with Councillor Steve Albon on site to discuss how the market could work going forward and potential stall locations and layout.
- Regarding consents, TDC had established that an updated / amended planning consent was not required.
- However, an amendment to the Traffic Regulation Order issued by KCC which governs access to the High Street, King Street and Queen Street may be required, specifically in relation to access times.
- TDC were in the process of drafting a specification for discussion and agreement with our Procurement team with a view to inviting Expressions of Interest (EoI).
- A response regarding the petition submitted to TDC for the reinstatement of the market has been sent to the petitioner, and a report outlining the response had been submitted to the full Council meeting to be held on 30 March 2023.

Councillor Wing followed up with a supplementary question asking whether there was a guarantee that the market would arrive in 2023?

Councillor David Saunders responded that he would make sure everything was done in order to get the procurement team up and running and looking for an operator at the earliest possible opportunity.

8. NOTICE OF MOTION

There were no notices of motion that were considered at the meeting.

9. LEADERS REPORT

The Leader, Councillor Ashbee, presented her report to Council, covering the following key points:

- The Leader noted that it had been a great privilege to have been elected as Leader in June 2021.
- Numerous goals had been achieved since June 2021, and there was a feeling that the council was in a much better place than beforehand.
- Personal thanks were given to Chris Blundell during this period. Colin Carmichael was also thanked for joining the council as the Chief Executive, aiding the council into a calmer and more productive state.
- Thanks were also given to group leaders, cabinet members, councillors and officers for their efforts.
- The ferry service in the port of Ramsgate was closer, this was considered of huge potential, and should be utilised to its full potential.
- The Southern Water payment of £100,000 would be utilised for improvements some of the coastal assets.
- Warm and welcome packs had been given out to households in fuel poverty in partnership with Social Enterprise Kent. Each pack contained an electric blanket, an air fryer, draft excluders and other cold weather kit.

- Earlier in 2022, a defendant has been found guilty of fly tipping bagged waste and household goods in Chatham passage, Ramsgate. It was important to send out the message that TDC had zero tolerance for fly tipping offenders.
- Thanet's 'tentastic' had begun and ran until Sunday 2nd April. This was to encourage people to shop in local town centres with events and activities being organised by local businesses as well as promoting £10 offers.

Councillor Everitt as the Leader of the Labour Group made the following points:

- It was agreed that the council was in a better place than it was in June 2021, there was acknowledgment to the leader in the part she had played in this. However, this wouldn't have been achieved without the previous Labour council administration.
- The choices in 2022 around the senior management had only been available because of the culmination of a long and difficult internal process which established the core facts. This resulted directly in one statutory officer leaving.
- All parties had faced the common challenges of the pandemic.
- The revival of the Ramsgate Port was something that the Labour administration had set in progress, with the Conservative Group bringing this forth and was a good example of cross-party working.
- It was positive that some good came out of the shameful performance of Southern Water. However, this should not distract from the point that the company had failed.
- The warm and well pack were welcomed, however this was noted as a sticking plaster against the gaping wounds caused by the cost of living crisis and austerity.

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

- Thanks were given to Councillor Everitt for his comments.
- It was agreed that the parties worked well together, this was essential due to the challenging and difficult times which had occurred.
- The council was stronger for going through these challenging times.

Councillor Rev. Piper as Leader of the Thanet Independents made the following points:

- The council had done well distributing money to the right people during the pandemic, but also beyond this period.
- Fly tipping was distressing, and it was agreed that the council should continue with a zero tolerance policy in regards to this.
- The new online booking system for the household waste recycling centre in the district was not good for digital restricted residents.
- Thanks were given to all councillors which had served during the term.

The Leader replied to Councillor Rev. Piper's comments with the following points:

- The distribution of funds was down to councils. Central government did not give enough respect to these councils for the work that was carried out in the work of distribution.
- The accounts team had done tremendous work, with the local authorities being noted as the foot soldiers to central government.
- The household waste recycling centre's website was run by Kent County Council.

Councillor Garner as Leader of the Green and Independent Groups made the following points:

- Thanks were given to the Leader for her hard work.

- It was agreed that the Leader took over during a difficult time, the council was now in a better place than it was.
- Thanks were offered to Chris Blundell, Colin Carmichael and all officers.
- There was still work to do, as seen through the recent reviews of the Berth 4 / 5 and IMO recommendations. It was important to process the lessons learnt, going forth it was necessary to remain vigilant, open and transparent.
- Southern Water had got off lightly from the devastation which had been caused.
- All councillors and candidates running for the upcoming election were wished luck.
- It was of upmost importance for the next administration to look at issues such as safe streets, environmental strategies, support for those communities most affected by the cost of living crisis.

The Leader replied to Councillor Garners comments with the following points:

- The points were taken noted regarding Southern Water, however this was also considered and infrastructure problem.
- Thanks were given to all officers and councillors for all of their hard work.

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

Councillor Reverend Piper, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, presented the report. It was noted that a number of projects had been reviewed, most of these being completed. Projects included the coastal review.

The memorial plaques and monuments project had not produced a final report at the time of the meeting. The delay was due to the waiting for specific guidelines from central government.

Councillor Reverend Piper thanked the members 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. He noted that from March 2022 – March 2023 no standards complaints had been referred to the investigation stages. Thanks were given to democratic services, officers involved in the standards committee and members on the committee.

Members noted the report

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

Councillor Boyd, Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee, presented the report. She noted that the Committee continued to offer independent assurance on the adequacy of the Council's risk management framework, the associated control environment and provided robust scrutiny. The Committee had been engaged in external and internal audits.

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

Members noted the report.

13. INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF THE BERTH 4/5 PROJECT

Councillor Ashbee, the Leader of the Council, presented the report and the following points were noted:

- A review had been undertaken by the East Kent audit partnership.
- Thanks were given to Christine Parker, the head of internal audit, for the thorough review of this project.
- The detailed management response was yet to be formed, however the corporate management team had accepted all nine recommendations in the report.
- There was confidence that the council would learn from the review, and successfully deliver the projects which were upcoming over the following years.

Members commented and made the following points:

- Thanks were given to officers, in particular Mike Humber for their work in the project.
- The matter had not been concluded, it was important to keep up the momentum for the project.
- Information should be shared with both councillors and residents as much as possible.

Councillor Ashbee proposed, Councillor Bob Bayford seconded and members noted the report.

14. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXTERNAL AUDITOR AND THE INDEPENDENT MONITORING OFFICER

Councillor Ashbee, the Leader of the Council, presented the report and the following points were noted:

- The fundamental recommendation from the Auditors was to commission a report from an independent monitoring officer from another Council who would look into these issues. Quinton Baker from Hertfordshire County Council was appointed.
- Quinton Baker's produced this report in May 2022, and since then this report had been considered by council, with the recommendations being approved.
- The conclusions reached by the IMO in 2021 were not comfortable for the council, highlighting significant disruption in Council/Officer relations as well as relations between senior officers and the need to thoroughly review staffing procedures.
- The previous statutory officers had left the council, and new officers had been appointed to these positions.

Members commented and made the following points:

- It was encouraging to see progress within the report.
- Questioning was raised around whether new and old officers would have similar training in regards to officer and member relations.

The Leader proposed, Councillor Bob Bayford seconded and Members noted the report.

15. CHANGES TO COMMITTEES, PANELS AND BOARDS - 2022/23

POLITICAL PROPORTIONALITY

The Leader proposed option 2 in the report, Councillor Bob Bayford seconded and Members agreed.

NOMINATION OF MEMBERS TO SERVE ON COMMITTEES

Councillor Ashbee confirmed that there were no new nominations for the Conservative Group.

Councillor Everitt confirmed that there were no new nominations for the Labour Group.

Councillor Reverend Piper confirmed that there were no new nominations for the Thanet Independent Group.

Councillor Garner confirmed that there were no new nominations for the Green and Independent Group.

Meeting concluded: 8.29 pm