

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, HIGH STREET, MAIDSTONE ON 19 APRIL 2023

**Present: Councillor Mortimer (Mayor), and
Councillors Bartlett, Mrs Blackmore, Brice, Brindle,
Burton, Cannon, Clark, Cleator, Coates, Conyard,
Cooke, Cooper, Cox, English, Forecast, Garten,
Mrs Gooch, Mrs Grigg, Harper, Hastie, Hinder,
Holmes, Jeffery, Joy, Kimmance, Knatchbull, Munford,
Naghi, Newton, Parfitt-Reid, Perry, Mrs Robertson,
Round, Russell, J Sams, T Sams, Spooner, Springett,
Trzebinski, R Webb, S Webb, D Wilkinson and Young**

107. MINUTE'S SILENCE

The Council observed a minute's silence in memory of Dan Daley, a former Member of the Borough Council and Mayor of the Borough of Maidstone, who passed away in March 2023.

108. PRAYERS

Prayers were said by Captain Jonathan Rouffet of Maidstone Salvation Army.

Note: Councillors Cannon and Hastie entered the meeting after the prayers (6.35 p.m.).

109. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Bryant, Fort, Harwood, Khadka, Mrs Ring, Rose, de Wiggondene-Sheppard and Wilby.

110. DISPENSATIONS

There were no applications for dispensations.

111. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

112. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillor Cooper stated that he had been lobbied on agenda item 14 (Report of the Democracy and General Purposes Committee held on 29 March 2023 – Review of the Constitution).

113. EXEMPT ITEMS

RESOLVED: That the items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

114. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD ON 22 FEBRUARY 2023

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Borough Council held on 22 February 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed.

115. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor updated Members on recent and forthcoming engagements and thanked them for their support.

The Mayor took the opportunity to:

- Thank those Members who would be standing down in the forthcoming Borough Council elections for their services over the years:

Louise Brice – Staplehurst Ward

Robert Eves – North Ward

Richard Webb – Coxheath and Hunton Ward

Nick de Wiggondene-Sheppard – Detling and Thurnham Ward

Marion Ring – Shepway North Ward for twenty years and former Mayor

- Wish the best of luck to all those who would be standing for election on 4 May 2023.

The Mayor, representatives of the four political groups, and Councillor Mrs Robertson, a friend and former colleague, paid tribute to Dan Daley who passed away in March.

116. PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

117. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS

There were no questions from local residents.

118. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Question from Councillor Hinder to the Lead Member for Environmental Services

All political parties of this Borough Council are united in working toward achieving net zero carbon emissions. It is therefore regretful that decisions are being taken by other authorities that will seriously undermine our own efforts to achieve this target for our residents.

A decision between Medway Unitary Authority and Kent County Council has led to a decision to close the recycling facilities at Capstone Valley to all non-residents of Medway. This will mean all the residents living in Walderslade, Lordswood, Bredhurst and North wards of Tonbridge and Malling Council will have to travel a total distance of up to eight miles to dispose of their waste at the new facility at Allington. This will increase the carbon footprint which we feel could be wholly avoidable if a negotiated settlement of this matter could be achieved.

Would the Lead Member for Environmental Services contact both Councils on behalf of our residents to try and facilitate a satisfactory resolution?

The Lead Member for Environmental Services responded to the question.

Councillor Hinder asked the following supplementary question of the Lead Member for Environmental Services:

Unfortunately, we are only too aware that the removal of this facility will inevitably lead to a big increase in fly-tipping adding further costs to Maidstone Borough Council's budget. Can I seek assurances that you will do whatever is necessary to stop Boxley ward becoming the centre for fly-tipping in this Borough?

The Lead Member for Environmental Services responded to the question.

Question from Councillor Mrs Grigg to the Leader of the Council

Since the new governance arrangements have been in place, I have become increasingly concerned about the number of scheduled Lead Member meetings that have been cancelled due to 'lack of business'. Could the Leader please explain why this is happening so often and is it affecting the overall decision-making of the Council?

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

Councillor Mrs Grigg asked the following supplementary question of the Leader of the Council:

During our discussions on the governance change, Members were assured that the majority of decisions would be made in open session to show transparency. Can I now ask that you please advise all Councillors how many determinations have been made at Cabinet with yellow papers since May 2022 and the percentage that figure represents against the total decisions made?

The Leader of the Council responded to the question.

To listen to the answers to these questions, please follow this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aT2H6EDoUao&t=5119s>

119. CURRENT ISSUES - REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL,
RESPONSE OF THE GROUP LEADERS AND QUESTIONS FROM COUNCIL
MEMBERS

Councillor Burton, the Leader of the Council, submitted his report on current issues. In submitting his report, Councillor Burton wished to thank all those Members who had served on the Council but would not be returning after the elections on 4 May 2023, with specific reference to Councillor Mrs Marion Ring who was committed to serving her community. He also wished to pay tribute to the late Dan Daley who was so willing to share his wisdom.

After Councillor Burton had submitted his report, Councillor English, the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor Munford, the Leader of the Independent Group, and Councillor Cleator, the Leader of the Labour Group, responded to the issues raised.

Councillor Burton then responded to questions on matters relevant to his role as the Leader.

120. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2022/23

Councillor English, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, presented the Committee's Annual Report 2022-23. In presenting the report, Councillor English wished to thank all Members of the Committee for their involvement and also Oliviya Parfitt, Democratic Services Officer, who had contributed significantly to the success of the work of the Committee over the year.

It was moved by Councillor English, seconded by Councillor Brice, and

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2022-23 be noted.

121. REPORT OF THE DEMOCRACY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD ON 29 MARCH 2023 - REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION

It was moved by Councillor Cooper, seconded by Councillor Mrs Joy, that the changes proposed to the Constitution set out at Appendix A to the report of the Democracy and General Purposes Committee be approved, together with the other proposed changes referenced in the table on pages 25 and 26 of the agenda and the table circulated separately.

Amendment moved by Councillor Jeffery, seconded by Councillor Cleator, that the following words be added to the motion:

'except the proposed element of change from Chair to Chairman.'

AMENDMENT LOST

The original motion was then put to the vote and carried.

RESOLVED: That the changes proposed to the Constitution set out at Appendix A to the report of the Democracy and General Purposes Committee be approved, together with the other proposed changes referenced in the table on pages 25 and 26 of the agenda and the table circulated separately.

122. REPORT OF THE DEMOCRACY AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON 29 MARCH 2023 - MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES REVIEW 2023, IRP COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE APPOINTMENT

It was moved by Councillor Cooper, seconded by Councillor Cooke, that the recommendation of the Democracy and General Purposes Committee relating to the appointment of a Community representative to the Independent Remuneration Panel be approved.

RESOLVED: That Mr Derek Butler be appointed as the Community representative on the Independent Remuneration Panel for the Members' Allowances Review 2023.

123. NOTICE OF MOTION - TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

The following motion was moved by Councillor Harper, seconded by Councillor Jeffery:

Town Centre Strategy

The Council is currently preparing a new Town Centre Strategy to guide the development of Maidstone for the next 10/30 years. As the report of 4 April 2023 to the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee stated, all party consensus is essential to this project as it will clearly span multiple administrations over that time. Whilst a number of subject stakeholder Groups have been established there is one key group missing. There is no formal stakeholder consultation group set up for the representatives of the residents most closely affected, those in the current wards of Bridge, East, Fant, High Street and North. This can be addressed by establishing a formal stakeholder consultation group of the Councillors for these areas. The needs of residents close to the Town Centre are of a different nature to those who only visit it periodically, it is where local residents go for local shopping needs as well as their local pubs and restaurants and for local leisure and sports needs. It is a Town Centre for where they live on a daily basis rather than visit as a destination.

It is therefore resolved that:

1. The Council continues with the Town Centre Strategy on the basis of obtaining all party support; and
2. A Consultation Stakeholder Group of Town Centre Councillors for the current wards of Bridge, East, Fant, High Street and North be established so they can represent the needs of the local communities in and adjacent to the Town Centre area.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.9.3, at the conclusion of the debate, there being no proposal to refer the matter directly to the Executive, the Mayor referred the matter to the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Policy Advisory Committee.

124. APPOINTMENT OF MONITORING OFFICER

It was moved by Councillor Burton, seconded by Councillor Mrs Gooch, and

RESOLVED: That Russell Fitzpatrick be appointed as the Monitoring Officer for Maidstone Borough Council with effect from and including 25 April 2023.

125. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2023/24

It was moved by Councillor Burton, seconded by Councillor Hastie, and

RESOLVED: That the Calendar of meetings for 2023/24, attached as Appendix A to the report, be approved.

126. REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL - URGENT DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE EXECUTIVE BETWEEN 23 FEBRUARY TO 19 APRIL 2023.

It was moved by Councillor Burton, seconded by Councillor English, and

RESOLVED: That the report setting out details of urgent decisions taken by the Executive between 23 February - 19 April 2023 be noted.

127. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 8.15 p.m.