

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD AT THE MOTE HALL, MAIDSTONE LEISURE CENTRE, MOTE PARK, MAIDSTONE ON 14 JULY 2021

Present: Councillor Mrs Gooch (Mayor) and
Councillors Bartlett, Mrs Blackmore, Brice, Brindle,
Burton, Cannon, Clark, Coates, Cooke, Cooper,
Cuming, Daley, Eves, Fort, Garten, Mrs Grigg, Harper,
Hastie, Hinder, Holmes, Mrs Joy, Khadka, McKay,
McKenna, Mortimer, Naghi, Parfitt-Reid, Perry, Purle,
Mrs Ring, Mrs Robertson, M Rose, Round, Russell,
J Sams, T Sams, Spooner, Trzebinski and
de Wiggondene-Sheppard

27. PRAYERS

Prayers were said by the Reverend Andrew Royal of Maidstone and Staplehurst United Reformed Churches.

28. MINUTE'S SILENCE

The Council observed a minute's silence in memory of Mr Robert Stockell, a former Mayor's Consort, Mr Keith Rogers, former Borough Secretary, Mr Peter Grice, a former member of the Committee Services team, and Mr Don Bates, a former Member of the Council who had passed away recently.

29. RECORDING OF PROCEEDINGS

Councillor McKay reserved his right to record the proceedings.

30. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Bryant, Cox, English, Fissenden, Forecast, Harwood, Kimmance, Munford, Newton, Springett, R Webb, S Webb, Wilby and Young.

31. DISPENSATIONS

There were no applications for dispensations.

32. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no disclosures by Members or Officers.

33. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

Councillor Round disclosed that he had been lobbied on the questions to be asked of the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee regarding the decision not to list the former Methodist Church in Headcorn as a Community Asset.

34. EXEMPT ITEMS

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

35. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BOROUGH COUNCIL HELD ON 22 MAY 2021

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Borough Council held on 22 May 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed.

36. MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor updated Members on recent engagements, including the relaunch of Maidstone Market, the Armed Forces Flag Raising Event, the ground-breaking ceremony for the new Café in Mote Park, the Battle of Britain Weekend at Headcorn Aerodrome, and a performance of A Midsummer Night's Dream by the Changeling Theatre at Boughton Monchelsea Place. She thanked Members for their support.

The Mayor said that on 19 July 2021, England would move to the final stage of the Government's road map to exit lockdown and engagements that had been postponed or cancelled were beginning to reappear over the coming months. She very much looked forward to continuing to represent and promote the Borough.

Note: Councillor Hastie joined the meeting during the Mayor's announcements (6.40 p.m.).

37. PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

38. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Question from Mr Stuart Jeffery to the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee

Following the update to the Policy and Resources Committee on the Borough's climate action plan last month, can you tell me how much the carbon emissions across the Borough will fall by, and by when, as a result of the actions specified in the plan, i.e., what is the trajectory for carbon reduction?

The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee responded to the question.

Mr Jeffery asked the following supplementary question of the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee:

Given that the figures are not included in the plan that was published in the papers, will you be publishing the calculations alongside each of the items in that plan so that we can see exactly how you have derived the figures and where the pressures and the bonuses are?

The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee responded to the question.

Question from Headcorn Parish Council to the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee

The Mayor said that Headcorn Parish Council was unable to send a representative to the meeting as it had its own Council meeting that evening. In accordance with paragraph 14.7 of Part 3.1 of the Constitution, she had agreed to ask the question on the Parish Council's behalf:

Why has Maidstone Borough Council refused Community Asset status on a Church and its meeting Hall, when clearly there is a requirement for this facility in the centre of the village, as stated in The Heart of Headcorn's letter to our Ward Councillors Martin Round and Ziggy Trzebinski?

The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee responded to the question.

The Mayor said that she would ensure that a written response was provided for the Parish Council.

There was no supplementary question.

Question from Mr Tim Thomas to the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee

Has Maidstone Borough Council had the chance to review the Officer's decision to refuse to list the former Methodist Church in Headcorn as a Community Asset and can the Council confirm that we may submit a fresh application for the same building from our community group if necessary?

We believe that the Officer may not have been fully informed of the extent and nature of the community usage both recorded and proposed by the Heart of Headcorn community organisation. This is far from 'ancillary'. We believe that the Council may not be aware of the strength of local feeling for this community asset (as evidenced by the thousands of pounds raised by residents citing its role in their social well-being and interests) and its relevance to Policy SP18 Historic Environment in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2011-2031, specifically the Borough's

commitment to the protection of locally important and distinctive heritage sites.

The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee responded to the question.

Mr Thomas asked the following supplementary question of the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee:

Will you also give us every support in this application or a new application? We have a dossier of additional information including previous successful applications involving churches which we would like to share with you. This is a complex case and requires additional investigation following our new application.

The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee responded to the question.

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

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbd6BsIS_bk&t=2690s

39. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL TO THE CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES

Question from Councillor T Sams to the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee

At the Annual Meeting regarding the change in Constitution you stated that the change

"Allows the selection of Chairs and Vice-Chairs from the widest possible pool of available candidates and also I believe paves the way to addressing an unfairness in so much as only 2 political groups have direct access to briefings for agenda items at meetings and I believe there should be the facility to all to receive that briefing equally."

Since that time to date all Chairs and Vice-Chairs come from the same party.

How has this addressed the unfairness you spoke about?

The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee responded to the question.

Councillor T Sams asked the following supplementary question of the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee:

We believe that years of experience and leadership has been lost to these committees from the exclusion of Councillors across the political spectrum. Do you think that this is favourable to residents?

The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee responded to the question.

Question from Councillor T Sams to the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee

We recognise that the Government guidelines will change, however we feel that this Council needs to make a stand to promote the wearing of masks.

England's Chief Medical Officer Chris Whitty has suggested 3 situations which are particularly important at a time when the epidemic is significant and rising. He states:

"The first is in any situation indoors and crowded or indoors with close proximity to other people. And that is because masks help protect other people.

The second situation is if I was required to by any competent authority.

And the third reason is if someone else was uncomfortable if I did not wear a mask – as a point of common courtesy."

The Chief Scientist, Sir Patrick Vallance, endorsed the approach. He added: "Masks are most effective at preventing somebody else catching the disease from you, and they have some effect to prevent you catching it."

This Borough has an opportunity and can take responsibility to give a lead to safeguard all our community.

Do you agree that this Council should positively promote the wearing of masks in all retail outlets, on all public transport and inside crowded areas where there may be close proximity to other people?

The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee responded to the question.

Councillor T Sams asked the following supplementary question of the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee:

Even "double vaxers" can catch COVID, and many are doing so. On the back of more than 1,200 doctors and scientists opposed to the Government strategy, do you feel this Council should be saying "Get the jab and continue to act responsibly, wearing a mask in shops, on public transport and in crowded areas to protect us all"?

The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee responded to the question.

Question from Councillor J Sams to the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee

Having seen what we were told was the Heathlands third iteration on July 6th, we were dismayed and surprised that this contained little substance with no mention of discussions with Homes England, KCC, Ashford Borough Council or Network Rail.

Can we ask whether this is in fact the third iteration or whether there is another document that we as Ward Councillors have not been shown, that Policy and Resources Members are working to?

The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee responded to the question.

Councillor J Sams asked the following supplementary question of the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee:

Please can you let us know the three locations that have been discussed for the proposed new railway station and whether the closure of Lenham station has also been discussed?

The Mayor said that she was not prepared to accept the supplementary question as she did not consider that it arose out of the original question or the reply.

Question from Councillor J Sams to the Chairman of the Planning Committee

Following the planning approval at Loder Close, Lenham application no. 18/506657 for 53 dwellings, the Officer used delegated powers to allow a fundamental change without Councillors' knowledge.

This change resulted in a loss of all CIL monies totalling £469,000 including

*Primary education £159,000
Secondary £197,000
Community learning £16,000
Youth service £450
Libraries £7,800
Social services £3,400*

Please can you review this delegated authority at the next Planning Committee so this loss of funding for infrastructure cannot happen across the Borough?

The Chairman of the Planning Committee responded to the question.

Councillor J Sams asked the following supplementary question of the Chairman of the Planning Committee:

Please can you set up a Planning Sub-Group meeting with the developer and Lenham Parish Council to put in place S106 agreements to mitigate some of this £469,000 loss? The community is aiming to build a new nursery facility and S106 funding would be a significant way to ensure its success.

The Chairman of the Planning Committee responded to the question.

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

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbd6BsIS_bk&t=2690s

40. 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.

After the Leader of the Council had submitted his report, Councillor Mrs Joy, on behalf of the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor J Sams, on behalf of the Leader of the Independent Group, and Councillor Harper, the Leader of the Labour Group, responded to the issues raised.

Several Members then asked questions of the Leader of the Council on the issues raised in his speech.

41. REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE HELD ON 8 JUNE 2021 - BOUGHTON MONCHELSEA NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (REGULATION 19)

It was moved by Councillor Cooper, seconded by Councillor Burton, that the recommendation of the Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee relating to the Boughton Monchelsea Neighbourhood Plan be approved.

RESOLVED: That the Boughton Monchelsea Neighbourhood Plan be 'made' (adopted).

Note: Councillor Brice was not present during consideration of this item.

42. REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE HELD ON 8 JUNE 2021 - LENHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (REGULATION 19)

It was moved by Councillor Cooper, seconded by Councillor Perry, that the recommendation of the Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Committee relating to the Lenham Neighbourhood Plan be approved.

RESOLVED: That the Lenham Neighbourhood Plan be 'made' (adopted).

Note: Councillor Brice was not present during consideration of this item.

43. REPORT OF THE COMMUNITIES, HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE ACTING AS THE CRIME AND DISORDER COMMITTEE HELD ON 29 JUNE 2021 - 2021/2022 STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT AND REVISED COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN

It was moved by Councillor Purle, seconded by Councillor Burton, that the recommendation of the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee acting as the Crime and Disorder Committee relating to the revised Maidstone Community Safety Partnership Plan 2019-2022 be approved.

RESOLVED: That the June 2021 update of the Maidstone Community Safety Partnership Plan 2019-2022, attached as an Appendix to the report of the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee acting as the Crime and Disorder Committee, be adopted.

Note: Councillor Brice was not present during consideration of this item.

44. ORAL REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE HELD ON 6 JULY 2021 - LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME 2021-2023

It was moved by Councillor Cooper, seconded by Councillor Burton, that the Local Development Scheme 2021-2023, attached as an Appendix to the Council agenda, be approved.

RESOLVED: That the Local Development Scheme 2021-2023, attached as an Appendix to the Council agenda, be approved.

Note: Councillor Parfitt-Reid was not present during consideration of this item.

45. DURATION OF MEETING

6.30 p.m. to 7.35 p.m.