

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday, 1st November, 2016

At the meeting of the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council held at Civic Suite, Gibson Building, Kings Hill, West Malling on Tuesday, 1st November, 2016

Present: His Worship the Mayor (Councillor M R Rhodes), the Deputy Mayor (Councillor R W Dalton), Cllr Mrs J A Anderson, Cllr O C Baldock, Cllr M A C Balfour, Cllr Mrs S M Barker, Cllr M C Base, Cllr Mrs S Bell, Cllr R P Betts, Cllr T Bishop, Cllr P F Bolt, Cllr J L Botten, Cllr V M C Branson, Cllr Mrs B A Brown, Cllr T I B Cannon, Cllr M A Coffin, Cllr D J Cure, Cllr D A S Davis, Cllr M O Davis, Cllr Mrs T Dean, Cllr T Edmondston-Low, Cllr B T M Elks, Cllr Mrs S M Hall, Cllr Mrs M F Heslop, Cllr N J Heslop, Cllr D Keeley, Cllr Mrs F A Kemp, Cllr R D Lancaster, Cllr D Lettington, Cllr Mrs S L Luck, Cllr B J Luker, Cllr P J Montague, Cllr Mrs A S Oakley, Cllr L J O'Toole, Cllr M Parry-Waller, Cllr S C Perry, Cllr H S Rogers, Cllr R V Roud, Cllr Miss J L Sergison, Cllr T B Shaw, Cllr Miss S O Shrubsole, Cllr C P Smith, Cllr Ms S V Spence, Cllr A K Sullivan, Cllr M Taylor, Cllr F G Tombolis, Cllr B W Walker and Cllr T C Walker

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs P A Bates, S M Hammond, S R J Jessel and S M King

PART 1 - PUBLIC

C 16/62 MINUTE SILENCE

The Council observed a minute's silence in memory of Councillor Jean Atkinson and Honorary Alderman Anne Moloney who had died earlier in October.

C 16/63 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

C 16/64 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Council held on 12 July 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

C 16/65 MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor was presented with a copy of the Bible by Mr Peter Turner of Gideons International.

The Council was advised of a range of events attended by the Mayor since the last meeting. Particular reference was made to the Tigers Acrobatic Gymnastics Display at Hillview School and the team's subsequent winning of the national competition; Kings Hill Rotary Club's Ciderfest and visit to the Air Station Control Tower; the Heart of Kent Hospice's opening of the new Monckton Education Centre; and the Young Cricket Leaders presentation at Lords Cricket Ground. The Mayor had also visited Royal British Legion Industries, attended charity concerts and judged competitions. He referred to his Garden Party, Civic Service, tour of Tonbridge Castle and afternoon tea at the Bakehouse and successful Quiz. He indicated that some further events for his charities were being organised.

C 16/66 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 5.6

No questions were received from members of the public pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 5.6.

C 16/67 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE NO 5.5

No questions were received from Members pursuant to Council Procedure Rule No 5.5.

C 16/68 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader began by paying tribute to Jean Atkinson and Anne Moloney who had died within the space of two days earlier in October having fought long term illness. He said that both were great friends of many Members past and present including himself. Both were real champions for the communities they served, hardworking and dedicated to helping all who sought their assistance. They would be sorely missed by all.

The Leader referred to the Savings and Transformation Strategy which sat alongside the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Its purpose was to provide structure, focus and direction in addressing the significant financial challenge lying ahead and, in so doing, recognised that there was no one simple solution and the Council would need to adopt a number of ways to deliver the savings within an agreed timetable. Members were reminded that when the budget was set in February 2016 the projected funding gap was £1.825m with a savings target in 2016/17 of £625,000. The Leader indicated that the Council was making good progress towards meeting the savings target for this year. He was also pleased to advise that the latest audit letter from Grant Thornton was

extremely complimentary about the financial approach of the authority. Two key passages worthy of note were:

In respect of value for money, as they had in many previous years, the auditors were “satisfied that the Council put in place proper arrangements to ensure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources”; and commenting on the savings challenge, they observed “the Council continues to address this gap in a structured way.”

Maintaining the financial theme, the Leader said that the Chancellor’s Autumn Statement on 23 November promised to be a significant one for the future of public finances. It would also confirm the outcome of the bids made to the Local Growth Fund from across the country. Significant for the authority and its communities were two bids, one for improvements to the Leigh Flood Storage Area and a second at East Malling Research. Working closely with the Environment Agency and Kent County Council, the Borough Council had taken the lead in developing a strong bid for the Leigh Flood Storage Area (including Hildenborough) and an East Peckham Flood Alleviation Scheme. Just over £4.5m had been requested from this fund to increase the capacity of the flood defences, not only protecting existing homes and businesses, but also unlocking new sites for new homes and jobs.

The Council had also supported NIAB East Malling Research in a £6m submission for the creation of a biotech hub at East Malling. The Leader commented that the need for R&D and new product development continued to accelerate. Downward pressure on margins from retailers, increased costs of labour, withdrawal of chemical defences and international competition all required improved productivity together with an increased focus on food security and health. The potential for fresh fruit, bio-tech and engineering products to contribute to GVA and export growth represented a very real opportunity. In all these areas NIAB East Malling Research was the key catalyst and provided capability for the industry to seize the opportunity for significant economic growth through product and market innovation. The Leader expressed pride in having such innovation in the Borough.

He was also pleased to report that from the 41 projects put forward by SELEP for Local Growth Fund 3 funding across Kent, Essex and East Sussex, the Leigh Flood Storage Area improvements were ranked 9th. Whilst investment in NIAB/EMR had been ranked 33rd, lobbying of Ministers via the local MPs was continuing in recognition that the economic benefits of further investment at East Malling would be felt both within Kent and well beyond.

The Leader referred to the Council becoming the first authority in Kent, and only the second in the country, to launch an online lottery for good causes in September. This innovative project (operating under the name of Hive Lotto) allowed supporters of charities and other community organisations to play the lottery in support of their favourite good causes with 50 pence of every £1 ticket going directly to their chosen cause.

The Leader was delighted with the response to the launch of Hive, with over 25 good causes now approved as members of the Hive community. These included a number of sporting clubs, schools and organisations providing mental health, disability and homelessness support services. He encouraged all good causes to join in this exciting new venture.

Referring to the Council's current public consultation on the new Local Plan, which would influence important decisions to be made about planning across the Borough for the next 15 years and beyond, the Leader indicated that it was not surprising that this had caused many communities to be concerned. It was inevitable that with the pressures on the Council in addressing the need for new homes and jobs and the challenges of securing new infrastructure, the choices would be difficult ones.

The Council's approach to its Local Plan sought to find a way through this situation and in so doing the Leader was pleased that it had been possible to include many in the consultation process which had been promoted widely in all forms of media, through local exhibitions and with the assistance of Parish Councils. The closing date for comment was 25 November and local residents and business were encouraged to make known their views. The Leader complimented Ian Bailey, Planning Policy Manager, and his team for the effort and skill they had shown in their work and in their endeavours to explain what could be a complicated process.

The Leader drew attention to the Quest quality scheme for the sport and leisure industry. Over 650 UK leisure facilities were currently registered with the scheme which was owned and endorsed by Sport England. He indicated that the facilities owned by TMBC had been engaged in Quest since the late 1990s and had a proud record of recognition and 'Excellent' ratings under the scheme. A relatively new product, Quest Stretch, offered facilities already deemed Excellent the opportunity to be rated 'Outstanding' and the Leader was delighted to announce that the team at Larkfield Leisure Centre had been successful in securing the rating of Outstanding. In the context of the 650 plus sites registered, only 12 had achieved this accolade and Larkfield Leisure Centre joined Tonbridge Swimming Pool as part of this small group of Outstanding ranked sites in the UK. This success was validation of the commitment of the Council, and leadership of the Cabinet Member for Community Services and senior officers, to leisure and the ongoing partnership with the Tonbridge & Malling Leisure Trust.

Members were advised that for the fifth year running, the Borough Council had been awarded the Community Animal Welfare Footprints Gold Award for Stray Dog Services from the Royal Society for the Protection of Animals. The Gold Award placed the Council in the top 15% of local authorities nationally for achieving high standards when dealing with stray dogs. The award not only reflected the Council's commitment to dog welfare over and above the statutory requirements,

but also recognised the personal and professional commitment and dedication of the dog Warden, Lorraine Baseden, and the Leader offered congratulations and thanks to her.

As Remembrance Sunday approached, the Leader indicated that the Borough Council would be represented at a number of Remembrance services throughout the Borough, the Mayor attending those at Tonbridge and West Malling, the Deputy Mayor at Kings Hill and Councillor Lettington at Snodland. The Chief Executive and Leader would be at Tonbridge and both were attending a service at the Garden of Honour at the RBLI Village in the afternoon and also on Armistice Day itself.

C 16/69 CONSULTATIONS: FAIRER CHARGING IN TONBRIDGE AND MALLING; AND CESSATION OF COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME GRANT TO PARISH COUNCILS

Item CB 16/60 referred from extraordinary Cabinet minutes of 28 July 2016

RESOLVED: That the recommendations at Minute CB 16/60 be approved.

[In accordance with Council and Committee Procedure Rule 8.6, Councillors J Botten and B Elks requested that their vote against the motion be recorded.]

C 16/70 FLOODING UPDATE: TONBRIDGE, HILDENBOROUGH AND EAST PECKHAM

Item CB 16/64 referred from extraordinary Cabinet minutes of 6 September 2016

RESOLVED: That the recommendations at Minute CB 16/64 be approved.

C 16/71 CORPORATE STRATEGY

Item CB 16/74 referred from Cabinet minutes of 12 October 2016

RESOLVED: That the recommendations at Minute CB 16/74 be approved.

C 16/72 SPECIAL EXPENSES SCHEME POLICY ('FAIRER CHARGING') AND UPDATED FINANCIAL DATA

Item CB 16/75 referred from Cabinet minutes of 12 October 2016

RESOLVED: That the recommendations at Minute CB 16/75 be approved.

C 16/73 REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

Item CB 16/76 referred from Cabinet minutes of 12 October 2016

Copies of the full Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Exceptional Hardship Policy were circulated in advance of the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations at Minute CB 16/76, the full Council Tax Reduction Scheme and Exceptional Hardship Policy be approved.

C 16/74 TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE AND MID-YEAR REVIEW 2016/17

Item CB 16/77 referred from Cabinet minutes of 12 October 2016

RESOLVED: That the recommendations at Minute CB 16/77 be approved.

C 16/75 REVIEW OF HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY

Item CB 16/78 referred from Cabinet minutes of 12 October 2016

RESOLVED: That the recommendations at Minute CB 16/78 be approved.

C 16/76 SEALING OF DOCUMENTS

RESOLVED: That authority be given for the Common Seal of the Council to be affixed to any instrument to give effect to a decision of the Council incorporated into these Minutes and proceedings.

The meeting ended at 7.56 pm