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MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

At the meeting of the Council for the District of Dover held at the Council Offices, Whitfield on Wednesday, 19 October 2022 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor M D Conolly

Councillors:

T J Bartlett	D G Cronk	D P Murphy
M Bates	D R Friend	M Rose
D G Beaney	D Hannent	C A Vinson
S H Beer	J P Haste	R S Walkden
E A Biggs	D A Hawkes	P Walker
T A Bond	M F Hibbert	H M Williams
P M Brivio	P D Jull	C F Woodgate
S S Chandler	L A Keen	
N J Collor	K Mills	

Officers: Chief Executive
Strategic Director (Corporate and Regulatory)
Strategic Director (Place and Environment)
Strategic Director (Finance and Housing)
Solicitor to the Council
Democratic and Corporate Services Manager
Democratic Services Officer
Democratic Services Officer

38 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J S Back, S J Jones, N S Kenton, S C Manion, O C de R Richardson and C D Zosseder.

39 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

40 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

41 ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman of the Council, Councillor M D Conolly, made the following announcements:

- (a) To congratulate Ruby Monger of Aylesham on winning the World Association of Kickboxing Organisations Junior World Championships in Italy. He advised that he had written to congratulate her on her success.
- (b) To congratulate Woodpecker Court School on being rated outstanding in all categories. He advised that the Department for Education was looking at it

as a model for other schools. He advised that he visited the school in the previous year.

- (c) To advise the Council of the sad news of the deaths of former district councillors Mick Smith (Buckland Ward, 2007 - 2015) and John Goodwin (Tower Hamlets Ward, 2007 - 2015). Members spoke of their fond memories of the two former councillors.

The Chairman asked Members to stand in silence as a mark of respect.

42 LEADER'S TIME

The Leader of the Council, Councillor T J Bartlett, included the following matters in his report:

- (a) To thank those Councillors who supported and voted for the Local Plan at the meeting of the full Council the previous week. The Local Plan established the general scale and distribution of new development which was required to meet Districts needs to 2040. The Local Plan was available for inspection from Friday 21 October to Friday 9 December 2022. He thanked the Policy and Projects Manager and her team for their hard work in getting the Local Plan to this stage.
- (b) To wish Alan Kemp the best for his retirement. Mr Kemp had been with the Council since 8 July 1974 in a variety of roles and had retired on 30 September 2022.
- (c) That he had attended the Dover Jobs and Skill Fair held jointly with the Department for Work and Pensions, Dover Harbour Board and East Kent College. The Fair had been attended by over 700 people with 800 jobs on offer from 60 exhibitors. He thanked Stagecoach for providing a free shuttle bus service from the town centre throughout the day and emphasised the importance of partnership working between the Council and other organisations.
- (d) To advise that Dover Port Health authority had needed to reduce its number of employees and was not be able to use the newly renovated building that it had been expected to move to. The Council had written in May to the Prime Minister and raised several urgent concerns. Although a response was received the Council was still waiting for a more detailed response to the issues raised.
- (e) To advise that earlier in October 2022 the Dover Port Health Authority had taken part in a multi-agency exercise at the Port of Dover and had seized 2 ½ tonnes of illegal pork products over a single weekend. The seizure was from only 22 vehicles as part of the work to mitigate the risk of African swine fever entering the UK. The local MP, Natalie Elphicke, raised this in Parliament and called for greater investment in border controls, highlighting three areas of concern - the illegal entry of people, preparation for new checks on legal travellers and preventing the importation of illegal dangerous food and goods.
- (f) To advise that the community team had been working with 30 different agencies in respect of the cost of living crisis. A number of independent local charities were holding 'Heat Eat and Meet' events encouraging residents to

save energy and money as well as providing an opportunity for people to interact with other people. Additionally, many church groups had set up Warm Banks to support people.

- (g) To highlight the work being undertaken by community services in respect of the Inspire Project which had helped over 2,000 individuals. He thanked everyone who had made the work of the Inspire Project possible.
- (h) That the community team had been recognised for its work at the Reconnect Awards evening where they were awarded a highly commended.
- (i) That he had been invited to attend St Andrew's Church, Buckland in September for a well-attended Community, Heritage and Fun Day. Bishop Rose had been present and made a dedication to the 1,000-year-old yew tree in the churchyard.
- (j) That there had been a significant increase in the footfall numbers for the Dover Town area. The footfall numbers were based on mobile phone data compiled by Hug Software and provided information on dwell time, density, hour and catchment area. There were similar monitoring arrangements in place for Deal and Sandwich and if Members would like further information this could be provided.
- (k) The footfall numbers for Dover Town benefited from the new Market Square which had been the venue for well attended local entertainment over the summer.
- (l) To congratulate Deal Market on its 323rd Birthday.
- (m) That Dover Town had been looking much smarter with shops being painted and it was encouraging to see the improvements to the town. There was funding to spend on the subway and a meeting had been held with officers and the Mayor of Dover. The Council was waiting to hear the outcome of the Levelling Up Bid that it had submitted. The Dover, Deal and Sandwich Town Centre Officer was credited with driving some of the improvements and the positive working relationships she had built with businesses and local residents.
- (n) To welcome the start of work on the Guildhall Forecourt Project in Sandwich.
- (o) To welcome the completed refurbishment of the female toilets in King Street, Deal by DDC's Asset Management team. The male toilets were currently in the process of being refurbished. The next project would be the Stembrook toilets in Dover. The Council's Asset Management team had also made improvements to the Walmer Bandstand, the Tram Shelter in Elms Vale and the Skate Park in Pencester Gardens.
- (p) That works were underway at the Maison Dieu thanks to the extra £1 million in funding from the National Lottery. Once the work was completed sometime in 2024, the Maison Dieu would be the premier heritage, cultural and community venue in Dover. The workshops being held during the works continued to be popular.

- (q) To announce that the Council had won an award for its business support during covid from the Federation of Small Businesses. He thanked the Strategic Place Tourism and Town Centre Manager and her team for their hard work in supporting businesses in the district.
- (r) That he had attended 'Skatefest' in Dover earlier in the month and was pleased to see so many people enjoying the skate park. There were competitions, demonstrations and live music.
- (s) That the Dover Fast Track project was progressing well with no major disruptions. There would be some road closures around Guston and the A2 over the next few months due to infrastructure and road widening works. The contractor Colas were continuing to communicate with residents and would be attending Guston Parish Council to meet with local councillors and residents.
- (t) That the Council continued to work with partners to 'Keep Dover Clear' and there had been no major problems since the summer. He was holding regular meetings with Doug Bannister and was encouraged by his appearance at the Transport Select Committee in respect of the biometric passport checks that were due to be implemented from May 2023. The Council continued to press the case for TAP to be moved away from Aycliffe.
- (u) That following the consultation held on Tides, there had been feedback received from residents which would assist the PAG in its work of exploring options for a new Leisure Centre.

The Leader of the Opposition Labour Group, Councillor K Mills, included the following matters in his report:

- (a) To emphasise that the Council's greatest asset was its staff. He wished Mr Kemp an enjoyable retirement.
- (b) To express concern over the significant reductions in staffing for the Port Health function and the costs incurred by the tax payer. He stressed the frontline role that Dover played in respect of the UK's borders. He criticised the silence from the local MP on the cuts to Port Health staffing.
- (c) That he hoped that Levelling-Up bid was successful.
- (d) To criticise the local MP for making no reference to the volume of illegal drugs entering the UK.
- (e) To express concern over the potential impact of biometric checks at the Port of Dover on keeping traffic flowing. To stress the importance of moving TAP away from Aycliffe and highlight the suffering it caused to local residents. He called for whoever was blocking this move to be named to residents.
- (f) To highlight concerns over how the long term housing needs of Ukrainians in the district would be addressed.
- (g) To raise concerns that the Department for Transport land at Guston could be used as a lorry park and to ask what assurances had been obtained that this would not happen.

In response the Leader of the Council advised:

- (a) To agree with Councillor K Mills that the Council was fortunate to have such good staff.
- (b) That he would find out the costs of the job cuts at the border facility. He advised Members that he had met two Port Health staff members at the job fair.
- (c) To advise that he would raise the issues of biometric checks and drug smuggling with the local MP.
- (d) To advise that he was not aware of problems with housing Ukrainian families locally.
- (e) To agree that it was important to do something to help Aycliffe residents in respect of TAP.
- (f) That he would try and find out what was happening with the future use of the border facility at Guston.

43 SEAT ALLOCATION AND GROUP APPOINTMENTS

There were no changes made to seat allocations or group appointments.

44 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

- (1) In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, a question from Sarah Waite-Gleave was put to the Leader of the Council, Councillor T J Bartlett:

“DDC cllrs unanimously in Jan 2020 agreed to make the whole district zero carbon by 2050 and the DDC estate zero carbon by 2030 to limit the extent of the climate crisis. And this was wholly in line with the recommendations of our late much-loved Queen at the start of the UN Climate summit on 1st Nov 2021. In line with those commitments, Will the council now a) Oppose as a matter of council policy any initiatives to develop fracking for shale gas as this will perpetuate our reliance on fossil fuels whilst failing to provide relief to those struggling with fuel bills (as the tiny contribution such activity would make to the world market would not effect prices), and b) Endorse the call for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, a global initiative to phase out fossil fuels and support a just transition, and write to ministers and our local MPs to urge the UK government to support this initiative?”

In response, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Governance, Digital and Climate Change, Councillor C A Vinson stated:

“This Council has a longstanding commitment to protect our natural environment, and we are proud of our record in doing so. In January 2020 we committed to support the district to reduce its emissions, and for the Council to become a net zero carbon emitter by 2030. We have nearly halved our carbon emissions over the past 10 years and through the work of our Climate Change Project Advisory Group we continue to make progress towards our target.

The Council's policy on any proposals to develop fracking for shale gas in our District was agreed at a Full Council meeting in November 2013 following detailed work undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee. The Council noted that any such plans would be a matter for KCC to determine, not DDC, but agreed that it would expect proposals to include an independent assessment of the impact on issues such as groundwater, noise, air pollution and traffic.

The points raised reflect the concerns of many local residents, and the decision taken by the Council still stands. Indeed, the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan agreed by this Council last week links to the adopted Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan, under which such proposals would be considered. That being said, I think it's important to note that there are currently no such proposals anywhere in the Dover district, and the British Geological Survey indicates that there are no shale gas reserves, licences or study areas within our District boundaries.

On the question of endorsing the initiative calling for a Fossil Fuel Non-proliferation Treaty, I agree that this is an important issue worthy of consideration and I will ask the Climate Change Policy Advisory Group to review the detail at their next meeting and advise on the approach they believe the Council should take."

A supplementary question was asked in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.8.

(2) In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, a question from Peter Findley was put to the Leader of the Council, Councillor T J Bartlett:

"The public wants to support the work to reverse wildlife declines as evidence provided to the Wildlife Trusts and our own Kent Wildlife Trust shows. (ref. <https://kentnature.org.uk/state-of-nature/>) The trusts warn that parts of the government's agenda, such as weakening habitat regulations that protect wildlife and weakening planning rules, threaten to undermine work to restore nature that is urgently needed. The UK Parliament alongside many Unitary and District authorities have declared climate and nature crises – recent government announcements around policy changes, including getting rid of the Habitats Directive demonstrably conflict with the need to address these crises. The pandemic showed how much free access to a flourishing wildlife-friendly Dover district brings benefits to all ages in our district. As the Dover District Council (DDC) new Local Plan goes for public consultation will DDC councillors and planners commit to heeding the many East Kent voices calling for extra protection and restoration of wildlife habitats in the final text of new Local Plan, and amend the DDC plan accordingly?"

In response the Leader of the Council stated:

"I am not sure how closely you have been following the progression of the Local Plan. I can inform you that the Regulation 19 Submission Plan was agreed to be published and submitted by Council last Wednesday evening (12th October).

Its publication provides the opportunity for members of the public and other bodies to make comments on the Plan. I therefore strongly encourage you to respond to the consultation to enable the points you raise in your question to be considered by the Council and the Planning Inspectorate.

The Regulation 19 Local Plan includes two strategic policies to ensure the protection and enhancement of the District's natural environment, as well as specific development management policies - including biodiversity net gain, mitigation for disturbance of birds in the Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA, and the protection and enhancement of the River Dour. The inclusion of these policies reflects the importance of Dover's biodiversity for Dover District Council.

Within the Local Plan, (and in summary) Strategic Policy 13 will ensure that statutory and non-statutory biodiversity sites, irreplaceable habitats and priority habitats and species are protected from the effects of development.

Strategic Policy 14 will ensure that our ecological networks are protected, and opportunities are taken to strengthen and enhance the connectivity of these networks.

Our Green Infrastructure Strategy, alongside the Kent Local Nature Recovery Strategy, currently in development, will further guide the restoration of biodiversity across the District."

A supplementary question was asked in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.8.

(3) In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, a question from Graham Wanstall was put to the Leader of the Council, Councillor T J Bartlett:

"Now that Her Majesty the Queen has passed away I ask that DDC commemorate her long reign with vision and seriousness.

As an example I ask you to consider naming the path through Connaught Park from the Park Avenue entrance to the top near the castle "QUEEN ELIZABETH II Way". This would help in promoting an alternative walk to and from the town to the castle and would mark forever her late majesty's historic reign as our Elizabeth the great. Do you support this proposal?"

In response the Leader of the Council stated:

"This Council of course recognises the enormous debt the whole country owes to Her Late Majesty the Queen for her service to the nation.

Whilst I am grateful to you for your proposal, and aware of the long history of that Connaught Park it has no direct connection, that I'm aware of, with Her Majesty the Queen.

I'm therefore not convinced that your suggestion of naming a path within Connaught Park in her memory would be a fitting tribute and so cannot support your proposal.

However, I do support the principle of looking to mark her late majesty's historic reign with a permanent reminder of some sort within our District and would welcome ideas as to how we might best do this."

45 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

In accordance with Rule 12(1) of the Council Procedure Rules, Members of the Cabinet responded to the following questions:

- (1) Councillor H M Williams asked the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Licensing and Regulatory Services, Councillor M Bates:

"What can the DDC licensing department do to ensure that Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (W.A.V) taxis are available in the Deal area?"

In response the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Licensing and Regulatory Services stated:

"Dover District Council does not currently mandate vehicles to be a wheelchair accessible design. However, such vehicles are encouraged by offering a reduced licence fee.

The Council maintains a list of Designated Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles in accordance with S167 of the Equality Act 2010. A designated wheelchair accessible vehicle is a licensed hackney carriage or private hire vehicle which can carry a passenger whilst they remain in their wheelchair. This list is published on the council website. It is updated when information becomes available following issue of licences.

There are currently 7 such vehicles licensed within the Dover District. The Council will continue to review the need and demand in the district in order to properly inform its policy and views. The Council will also continue to offer financial incentives, by way of a discount on the licence fee, for applicants wishing to licence wheelchair accessible vehicles as hackney carriage and/or private hire vehicles.

The Council commissions an Unmet Demand Survey every 3 years to establish whether there is any unmet demand within the Dover District with regards to the use of hackney carriage vehicles. The survey is currently being undertaken, and views have been sought from town and parish councils, members of the council, the general public via social media and the council's website, the taxi and private hire trade, local community groups, local disability groups, Social Services, age concern groups and care homes, etc. Although the survey has yet to be finalised, the feedback from the consultants is that there have been no concerns raised with regards to the availability of wheelchair accessible vehicles. However, it is appreciated that the private hire trade serves the market better as those with mobility issues and additional assistance needs would tend to pre-plan and pre-book their journeys.

Dover District Council is committed to ensuring that the needs of the public are met by the hackney carriage/private hire licensing trade, so anyone who is experiencing issues is encouraged to let the Licensing Team know so that we are aware of any ongoing issues, and can take appropriate action as necessary.”

There was no supplementary question asked.

- (2) Councillor P M Brivio asked the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Licensing and Regulatory Services, Councillor M Bates:

“Can an update on the proposals for a crematorium at Guston be provided?”

In response the Leader of the Council, Councillor T J Bartlett, stated:

“I have no further progress to report at this time. I understand that a report on the next steps will be submitted to Cabinet for consideration in the coming months.

Just for clarity only, the proposed site is only partially in Guston with the majority situated in Whitfield.”

There was no supplementary question asked.

- (3) Councillor P M Brivio asked the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Licensing and Regulatory Services, Councillor M Bates:

“Is the Fastrack project on schedule to come within the budget that was awarded for the scheme?”

In response the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Licensing and Regulatory Services stated:

“As it stands the project is projected to come in at £300k over the budget of £24.9m. The Council is working with project partners to achieve value engineered savings that will bring the project back within the budget envelope.”

There was no supplementary question asked.

46 MOTIONS

- (1) In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13.2 (Motions on Notice) in the absence of Councillor C D Zosseder her Motion was treated as withdrawn.

- (2) Councillor H M Williams gave notice under Rule 13 of the Council Procedure Rules of her intention to move the following motion:

“DDC councillors completely oppose fracking in any land within our council area, and will oppose any planning application for this.”

The Motion was seconded by Councillor K Mills.

Members discussed the following points:

- The importance of planning applications being considered on their own merit without pre-determination.
- The Council's currently adopted position on fracking.
- That Kent County Council not Dover District Council would be responsible for considering such applications.
- The importance of setting out Dover District Council's position on fracking.
- That the government had indicated the importance of local public support for fracking and that this Motion would set out the Council's position in respect of it.

On being put to the meeting, the Motion was LOST.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 18.4 six Members present requested a recorded vote. The manner of voting was as follows:

FOR (10)	AGAINST (13)	ABSTAIN (4)
S H Beer	T J Bartlett	T A Bond
E A Biggs	M Bates	S S Chandler
P M Brivio	D G Beaney	N J Collor
D G Cronk	S S Chandler	D Hannent
J P Haste	M D Conolly	
L A Keen	D R Friend	
K Mills	D A Hawkes	
P Walker	M F Hibbert	
H M Williams	P D Jull	
C F Woodgate	D P Murphy	
	M Rose	
	C A Vinson	
	R S Walkden	

47 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was moved by Councillor D P Murphy, duly seconded by Councillor P D Jull and

RESOLVED: That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the remainder of the business on the grounds that the items to be considered involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

48 APPOINTMENT OF STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

The Chief Executive presented the report on the Appointment of a Strategic Director.

RESOLVED: (a) That subject to the Executive Leader raising no objection to the proposed appointment on behalf of the executive, pursuant to Prescribed Standing Orders (Executive Arrangements), that the recommendation of the General

Purposes Committee be accepted and Louise May be appointed as Strategic Director.

- (b) That the appointment be effective on the earlier of:
 - (i) The receipt of notification from the executive leader within the period specified in the notice referred to in paragraph 2.15 that neither he nor any member of the executive has any objection to the proposed appointment or,
 - (ii) The period specified in the notice referred to in paragraph 2.15 expiring with no objections having been received.

49 RE-ADMITTANCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was moved by Councillor M F Hibbert, duly seconded by Councillor R S Walkden and

RESOLVED: That the press and public be readmitted to the meeting for the remaining items of business.

50 CHANGES TO THE CHIEF OFFICER STRUCTURE

The Chief Executive presented the report on Changes to the Chief Officer Structure.

It was moved by Councillor C A Vinson, duly seconded by Councillor P D Jull and

- RESOLVED:
- (a) That the re-distribution of functions between the Chief Officers who form the Council's Corporate Management Team be approved.
 - (b) That the resultant changes to Article 12 and the Scheme of Officer Delegations (Council Functions) as outlined in the Appendices of the report be approved.

51 URGENT BUSINESS TIME

There were no items of urgent business for consideration.

The meeting ended at 7.25 pm