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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, 16 October 2024 at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Chairman: Councillor G Cowan

Councillors:

J S Back	M F Hibbert	M J Nee
T J Bartlett	S Hill	D J Parks
M Bates	N S Kenton	M P Porter
D G Beaney	R M Knight	O C de R Richardson
S H Beer	J P Loffman	M W Rose
E A Biggs	S M S Mamjan	C A Vinson
S B Blair	S C Manion	H M Williams
P M Brivio	K Mills	C F Woodgate
D G Cronk	M W Moorhouse	L M Wright
D R Friend	D P Murphy	C D Zosseder

Officers:

- Chief Executive
- Strategic Director (Corporate and Regulatory)
- Strategic Director (Finance and Housing)
- Strategic Director (Place and Environment)
- Solicitor to the Council
- Head of Licensing and Legal Services
- Planning Policy Team Leader
- Head of Planning and Development
- Planning Policy and Projects Manager
- Head of Corporate Services and Democracy
- Democratic Services Officer
- Democratic Services Officer

31 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J L Pout.

32 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

33 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Monitoring Officer advised Members in respect of the item on the Adoption of Dover District Local Plan 2020-40 (Minute No. 40) and potential for a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or an Other Significant Interest in land included in respect of site allocations.

The Monitoring Officer also advised Members that in respect of the item on the Motion (Minute No. 42), he had consulted with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Governance Committee and following that had granted the dispensations requested by Members in respect of it.

The dispensation granted relieved those Members from both of the restrictions in paragraph 5 of the Code (participation in discussions and voting) on the grounds that without the dispensation, the number of persons prohibited from participating in the particular business would be so great a proportion of the Council as to impede the transaction of the business and/or the representation of different political groups on the Council would be so upset as to alter the likely outcome of any vote relating to the motion. The dispensation applied for the duration of the Council meeting on 16 October 2024.

Members were advised that where they had been granted a dispensation, they were still required to declare the interest.

Councillor T J Bartlett declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Minute No. 40 (Adoption of Dover District Local Plan 2020-40) by reason of his family having land identified in the Local Plan.

Councillor N S Kenton declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in Minute No. 40 (Adoption of Dover District Local Plan 2020-40) by reason of his having land identified in the Local Plan as a commercial site.

Councillor D R Friend declared a Voluntary Announcement of Other Interests (VAOI) in Minute No. 40 (Adoption of Dover District Local Plan 2020-40). Although he had previously made public comments on a site in the Local Plan he had not predetermined his decision on the matter and was approaching it with an open mind and would determine it on its merits.

Councillor D G Beaney declared a Voluntary Announcement of Other Interest (VAOI) in Minute No. 40 (Adoption of Dover District Local Plan 2020-40) due to his involvement in the Local Plan.

Councillor D P Murphy declared an Other Significant Interest by reason of his position as a Cabinet Member at Kent County Council he had made comments on all of the district's local plans.

Councillor S B Blair stated that she did not have any interests to declare.

The following Members declared an Other Significant Interest in Minute No. 42 (Motions) and advised that they had been granted a dispensation in respect of it to relieve the restrictions of paragraph 5 of the Code (participation in discussions and voting).

Councillor J S Back
Councillor T J Bartlett
Councillor M Bates
Councillor D G Beaney
Councillor S H Beer
Councillor E A Biggs
Councillor P M Brivio
Councillor G Cowan
Councillor D G Cronk
Councillor D R Friend
Councillor M F Hibbert
Councillor S Hill
Councillor N S Kenton

Councillor R M Knight
Councillor J P Loffman
Councillor K Mills
Councillor M W Moorhouse
Councillor D P Murphy
Councillor M J Nee
Councillor D J Parks
Councillor M P Porter
Councillor O C de R Richardson
Councillor M Rose
Councillor C A Vinson
Councillor H M Williams
Councillor C D Zosseder

34 ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

35 LEADER'S TIME

The Leader of the Council, Councillor K Mills, included the following matters in his report:

The Leader invited the Portfolio Holder for Community and Corporate Property Councillor C D Zossedder to speak on the following matters:

- (a) To congratulate all involved in getting the Roman Painted House open for the public to visit. There had been 1,534 visitors in the six days it had been open and the feedback received from the public had been very positive.
- (b) To inform Members that the tennis court at Connaught Park would be open for half-term.
- (c) The launch of safe spaces initiative by community services.
- (d) The tenders for play parks in Marke Wood, Bulwarks and Travers would be looked at next month. She was really pleased to see these progressing.

The Leader spoke to the following matters:

- (a) That the Government was keen to progress with devolution, although the form was not yet clear. He expected to learn more at the LGA conference the following week. There had been discussions at Kent Leaders and East Kent Leaders on it and it was important district leaders had an input into it. There needed to be funding to support devolution.
- (b) The Cabinet had agreed the Council Motion considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He recognised the importance of the Council reflecting society but also noted that this was something that the political parties were vital to in selecting their candidates.
- (c) He had met with the two local Members of Parliament, Mike Tapp and Roger Gale. It had been a very positive meeting and there would be regular meetings going forward.
- (d) He had visited Woodpecker Court awards ceremony. He praised the good work being done there and the difference it was making to the students. The school was happy for Members to visit by appointment.
- (e) The Crosslinks Centre, Buckland frontages had been completed. It had tidied up the area and it was hoped it would instil pride locally.
- (f) The Beacon Project was progressing well. Archaeology had found the remains of an ancient pub but nothing in the archaeology would cause a significant delay to the works. There had been good cross-party working on this.
- (g) The feedback on the Roman Painted House had overwhelmingly positive. While the work of Dr Brian Philp and the KARU couldn't be underestimated, people were very happy to see it open. A lot had been done in a very short timescale and while more needed to be done, it was vital for the public to be able to visit it. Dover needed to be a destination and had a heritage spanning from the bronze age to the cold war.
- (h) The Local Plan was a fantastic example of cross-party working and there had been very few changes required at the end of the process. The work done by the officers and the members of the Local Plan PAG was excellent.

- (i) The public consultation on Tides was underway and he encouraged everyone to be involved in it. No final decision had been made but he was committed to having two leisure centres in the district. He had been told in 2022 that Tides was unaffordable, but he was committed to trying to deliver it for the people of the district.
- (j) The works at Maison Dieu were amazing but it needs to have some form of 'wow' factor. It was a costly project and needed to be somewhere that would attract the public. He thanked the Landmark Trust for their work with the accommodation.
- (k) Deal Pier should be working on very quickly.
- (l) To congratulate Priority Freight for receiving the King's Award for Industry.
- (m) To state that he was pleased that the implementation of the European Entry/Exit (EES) arrangements had been delayed as the road network and infrastructure was not ready to accommodate it. There were no authorities in place to deal with the removal of cars on the highway and nowhere to accommodate coaches. There had been predictions by the Department for Transport of fourteen-hour delays at the Port. There was a responsibility on all parties to work to resolve these issues.
- (n) The impact on local businesses, schools and commuters needed to be considered as it was not acceptable for the town of Dover to be gridlocked. He urged the Department for Transport to speak to the Council.
- (o) It was important for live testing and the installation of new technology.

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

- (a) To thank officers for their work on the Roman Painted House and to welcome the high visitor numbers which demonstrated its popularity as an attraction. He expressed his disappointment that Dr Philp had not engaged with him when he was Leader.
- (b) There needed to be more publicity for the tennis courts and play parks works so that the public knew about them.
- (c) To ask the Leader of the Council what his preferred devolution model would be.
- (d) To emphasise that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendations had been about diversity in a wider context than just gender balance. He had wanted it to go further than the final recommendation was at the end with more outreach direct to the local community.
- (e) To welcome the Leader engaging with Roger Gale MP, who represented the district wards of Little Stour and Ashstone and Sandwich. He advised that Councillor M F Hibbert had been trying to engage with Mike Tapp MP in respect of TAP.
- (f) He would like to see officers and the local MPs could keep ward members updated on activities relating to their wards.
- (g) To agree with the Leader on the great work of Woodpecker Court.
- (h) To suggest that the cost-of-living grant scheme needed to be rebranded. He was concerned that there were not enough applications for the grant and suggested that rebranding it to be more community focussed would encourage applications.
- (i) To thank everyone involved in the Local Plan and Dover Beacon project and welcome the cross-party nature of it.

- (j) To ask what the plans were following the announced retirement of the Strategic Director (Place and Environment) and to request that he be kept informed.
- (k) To ask about the £1 million pound underspend on staffing last year and the future management arrangements for the Community Services team.
- (l) That he missed the interaction between Members that happened when there was catering provided for meetings. He asked if with Kearsney Abbey potentially having facilities at the council offices there was an opportunity for them to provide catering for meetings.
- (m) To praise the work of the former PA to the Leader and Civic Officer and express his sadness at her departure from the Council.
- (n) To welcome the consultation on Tides.
- (o) To agree with the Leader on the works at Maison Dieu.
- (p) To also agree with the Leader in welcoming the delay in implementing EES.

In response the Leader of the Council advised:

- (a) That longer term he wanted to see the baths under the Roman Lawn excavated to make it a national visitor focal point.
- (b) The importance of the Council communicating better to its residents and the need to tackle rumours.
- (c) That in respect of devolution, he personally did not support the mayoral model as he did not think they would represent the whole county. He also wasn't sure about the benefits of another layer of local government. He also did not want to see the costs of devolution passed onto the taxpayer. However, he wasn't sure that there would be a choice on it from government.
- (d) That he felt more people needed to be involved in local politics and welcomed recent petitions as a way of local communities engaging with the council.
- (e) The pressures on temporary accommodation were significant for the Council.
- (f) That he would speak to Mike Tapp MP about getting him to contact Councillor M F Hibbert. He welcomed the positive working relationship with Roger Gale MP.
- (g) Councillor C D Zosseder advised that the grants had been delayed as councillors were not available to meet to consider them. She was also looking at options for a community-based grant.
- (h) That staffing was regularly reviewed. There was pressure on all Councils and that the budget savings were a positive. The structure going forward was being reviewed and no final decision had been made at this time. However, he expressed the view that the officers were the Council's greatest asset and that the Council was lucky to have good officers.
- (i) In respect of catering for committee meetings, he felt that it wasn't right for taxpayers to pay thousands of pounds on catering when people were making choices between heating and eating. Members were paid an allowance anyway.

36 SEAT ALLOCATION AND GROUP APPOINTMENTS

There were none.

37 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

QUESTION 1

In the absence of the member of the public who had submitted the question, the Chairman advised that in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.11 a written answer would be provided.

QUESTION 2

In the absence of the member of the public who had submitted the question, the Chairman advised that in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.11 a written answer would be provided.

QUESTION 3

RAISED BY GRAHAM WANSTALL, A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC, UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 11:

“It is good to see the Roman Painted House open again. However the past 50 years of its important work has been air brushed out. All books and guides written by the founder Mr Brian Philp have been removed and other important national awards including the following have gone from display. 1977 award for outstanding tourist enterprise, 1978 best presentation of an archaeological site, also 1978 team showing the gratish initiative. 1979 museum of the year. 2013 the queens award for voluntary service. 1981 outstanding contribution to British archaeology. All are competitive national awards. In addition several plaques and memorials for example the opening by Lord Astor in 1977. Several photos removed for example the visit by the late Queen Mother and a presentation by the then Prince Charles of an award. Do you think it is appropriate to display these important items and if so will you have them returned to the lobby area so visitors have all the relevant history of the Roman Painted House?”

RESPONSE FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, COUNCILLOR K MILLS:

“Since the Dover Roman Painted House Trust took the decision in October 2023 to surrender the lease to the Council, the Council has worked tirelessly to open this nationally important heritage attraction to the public for the benefit of all, at substantial Council expense.

The work that we have carried out has ensured that the building is now safe, maintained and open once again to the public, which is great news for Dover.

The work needed to make this happen has been challenging.

Works were unable to start until the building was cleared and the high levels of mould addressed.

Items that could potentially be reused and that were not beyond recovery have been removed from site, and stored in the short term, whilst we focused on the repairs to the building.

Such items do include various plaques and photos, which once cleaned, we will consider how these can best be displayed within the building.

Regarding your mention of Dr Brian Philp, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my praise for his and his teams work, as well as that of the Trust, and the new interpretation, created in collaboration with the Trust, does highlight his importance and involvement.

We would like to see the various books and guides published by Brian and his team back on sale within the Roman Painted House but this will require the consent of the author which we have not yet received.”

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

38 AMENDMENT TO THE CALENDAR OF ORDINARY MEETINGS 2024-25

Members were advised that the report, with the support of the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, sought to make changes in respect of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings for the remainder of 2024-25.

It was moved by Councillor T J Bartlett, duly seconded by Councillor L M Wright, and

RESOLVED: That the Council approve the amended Calendar of Ordinary Meetings for 2024-25.

39 TREASURY MANAGEMENT YEAR END REPORT 2023/24

The Strategic Director (Finance and Housing) presented the Treasury Management Year End Report 2023/24.

Members considered the report and discussed the use of inter-authority borrowing arrangements.

It was moved by Councillor S B Blair, duly seconded by Councillor S H Beer, and

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

40 ADOPTION OF DOVER DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN 2020-40

The Planning Policy and Projects Manager presented the report on the Adoption of Dover District Local Plan 2020-40.

Members thanked officers for their hard work in producing the Local Plan.

Members discussed the impact of the government’s proposed changes to National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and new housing targets on the Local Plan. They were advised that the Local Plan would be reviewed in response to any changes and that it was believed that in the short term (5 years), the Local Plan would not require any changes as a result of the proposed new housing target.

Councillor M W Moorhouse read out a statement on behalf of Sandwich Town Council outlining their concerns in respect of the Local Plan.

It was moved by Councillor E A Biggs, duly seconded by Councillor J S Back, and

- (a) That the Inspectors' Final Report into the examination of the Dover District Local Plan be noted (Appendix 1).
- (b) That the Dover District Local Plan to 2040, including Policies Map, as amended by the main modifications set out in Inspectors' Final Report and the Council's additional (minor) modifications, be adopted as part of the Development Plan for the district (Appendix 2).
- (c) That the current adopted Development Plan documents consisting of Saved Policies from the Local Plan 2002, the Core Strategy 2010 and the Land Allocations Local Plan 2015, be superseded by the Dover District Local Plan 2020 to 2040 in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 Regulation 8(5).
- (d) That authority is delegated to the Head of Planning and Development to make further additional modifications to the Dover District Local Plan to 2040, and supporting documentation, that relate exclusively to factual updates and grammatical and formatting corrections, prior to making the documents available for inspection.

41 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

QUESTION 1

RAISED BY COUNCILLOR D G BEANEY UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12:

"Can the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Built Environment tell me how many planning applications are waiting to come forward to planning committee, and from the date of submission how long it has taken on average for those applications heard at Committee to be determined in the past year?"

REPLY BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PLANNING AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT, COUNCILLOR E A BIGGS:

"There are 18 applications that are currently intended to go to Planning Committee. Many of these are still currently under advertisement, awaiting consultee comments or being negotiated before they'll be ready to be taken to Planning Committee.

Of the 46 applications that went to Planning Committee and have been determined this year, the average length of time for their determination is ten months."

There was no supplementary question.

QUESTION 2

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RAISED BY COUNCILLOR D R FRIEND UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE
RULE 12:

“Can the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Skills & Education provide an update on how many “environmentally sound Council houses” were built by Dover District Council between May 2023 and September 2024?”

REPLY BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING, SKILLS AND
EDUCATION, COUNCILLOR P M BRIVIO:

“Between May 2023-September 2024, the Council added 61 properties to its affordable housing stock. These were all purchases of existing properties, with varying levels of environmental performance. However, all have been refurbished to ensure they meet the required standard for the Council’s stock.

There were no completions of new build affordable housing during this time, although 48 new build homes were added to the stock in September 2024. These properties exceed building regulations requirements, and have an SAP rating of B, with A being most energy efficient and G least efficient.”

A supplementary question was asked in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.6.

QUESTION 3

RAISED BY COUNCILLOR N S KENTON UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE
RULE 12:

“Does the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Built Environment support Angela Rayner’s plans set out in her letter – ‘Playing your part in building the homes we need’ - sent to local authority leaders on 30th July 2024?”

REPLY BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PLANNING AND BULT
ENVIRONMENT, COUNCILLOR E A BIGGS:

“Angela Rayner’s letter spans 8 pages in summarising the principal elements of the government’s plan that she set out to the House of Commons to build homes.

As a council, we are very supportive of the overall ambition for this country to be delivering more homes.

The intended goal for universal coverage of ambitious local plans as quickly as possible is therefore strongly supported, as this is the best way of ensuring that new homes are built in the right places with the needed facilities and infrastructure.

And of course, with our item on the Local Plan adoption tonight, we are in a very strong position to ensure this with our new strategy, policies and land allocations.

Given our Local Plan position and based on what was set out in the recent consultation document for the National Planning Policy Framework, the changes being proposed to calculating a district’s housing targets are not applicable to Dover and won’t be for the next few years.

The inspectors have set out in their Local Plan report that our own housing requirement (611 homes a year) is viable and deliverable through the Local Plan.”

A supplementary question was asked in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.6.

QUESTION 4

RAISED BY COUNCILLOR M BATES UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12:

“Can the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Built Environment tell me please how many enforcement investigations have been opened and closed within the past twelve months, where a breach of conditions has been identified and a decision has been taken by the officer to take no further action?”

REPLY BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PLANNING AND BULT ENVIRONMENT, COUNCILLOR E A BIGGS:

“There have been 62 Breach of Condition cases opened in the last twelve months and 42 cases closed. 16 of these did not involve a breach. There were 9 cases where a breach was identified and no further action was taken.”

A supplementary question was asked in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.6.

QUESTION 5

RAISED BY COUNCILLOR D G BEANEY UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12:

“Can the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Built Environment say whether the number of applications for small housing developments (of 5 units or less) has changed in the last year, and if there has been a reduction, whether it is related to the introduction of new biodiversity net gain requirements?”

REPLY BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PLANNING AND BULT ENVIRONMENT, COUNCILLOR E A BIGGS:

“The Planning Service’s system can only provide a search for all ‘minor’ applications for residential – which is for 9 dwellings or less (rather than 5 dwellings or less).

The department has received 142 applications in 2022-2023 and 105 applications for the same period in 2023-2024.

Biodiversity Net Gain requirements could be attributed to the lower figure this year, but we don’t hold data that can confirm this.”

A supplementary question was asked in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.6.

QUESTION 6

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RAISED BY COUNCILLOR O C DE R RICHARDSON UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12:

“Does the Portfolio Holder recognise that her proposal to replace Tides Leisure Centre with a 5-lane pool, removing all flumes and shallow water areas for younger children, is deeply unpopular with families in Deal and Walmer?”

REPLY BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE PROPERTY, COUNCILLOR C D ZOSEDER:

“Thank you, Cllr Richardson, for your question.

The New Deal Leisure Centre has been an ongoing project since 2018 but has been hampered since the pandemic by escalating project costs affecting its financial viability.

Sadly, many leisure centres across the country have closed during this time with Folkestone Leisure Centre being a more recent casualty and we have been working hard to avoid this in Deal.

The current proposals for Deal include a range of facilities that are underpinned by assessment of need across the district to help ensure that this substantial investment meets strategic need now and in the future.

Over the past year, we have significantly reduced project costs and improved the financial viability thus providing a more deliverable and sustainable solution.

Following on from the Cabinet meeting in July, the project team is looking at the feasibility of adding a sixth lane to the swimming pool and also how we might provide the facilities needed to allow family inflatable fun sessions to take place within the pool.

They are also looking at how we can incorporate a shallow water ‘splash pad’ to cater for younger children.

As you would expect, the cost implications for all possible additions will be fully considered by both the Project Advisory Group and Cabinet.

You will I am sure be aware that we have been undertaking extensive public engagement on the proposals across Deal and beyond to capture and review public feedback.

To date the council has received some **897** online surveys and undertaken **849** face-to-face discussions with early indications showing that the majority of survey respondents support the plans for a new leisure centre in Deal.”

A supplementary question was asked in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.6.

QUESTION 7

RAISED BY COUNCILLOR C A VINSON UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12:

“Will the Portfolio Holder provide an assessment as to the potential environmental hazard presented by the damaged, open containers of waste engine oil present by neglected boat plots in Walmer, and explain why the Council hasn’t taken immediate action to address this risk?”

REPLY BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE PROPERTY, COUNCILLOR C D ZOSEDER:

“Thank you for your question Cllr Vinson.

The Council has been working on addressing this matter for a number of months.

I am pleased to say that the area was cleared of significant waste and rubbish on Sunday 5th October.

At present no waste liquids have been removed from site as these require specialist waste disposal. The recent clearance has given better access to plots which will facilitate the waste liquid removal.

On initial inspection, it appears that containers were largely intact and not leaking any oil or substances.

We are not able to properly assess any leakage that might have occurred until the containers of waste oil are removed from site.

We will continue working with the boat plot owners to tidy the boat plots and aim to remove waste oil from site over the next few months.

Any spillages that become apparent during this process will be cleaned as appropriate.

I am pleased to tell you that the boat plots will soon be inspected on a monthly basis to ensure they remain clean and tidy, and that boat plot owners continue to adhere to their lease conditions, ensuring any oil is stored correctly.”

A supplementary question was asked in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.6.

QUESTION 8

RAISED BY COUNCILLOR C A VINSON UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12:

“Does the Leader agree with me that Corporate Peer Challenges (CPC) delivered by the Local Government Association (LGA) provide valuable, robust and credible challenge to support Councils to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their service delivery, and will he commit to working with the LGA to organise a CPC for Dover District Council by the end of 2025?”

REPLY BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL:

“We are aware of the value that corporate peer challenges can provide and have recently been engaging with the LGA about arranging one for Dover. We are also

very pleased to confirm that the Council has now appointed a Continuous Improvement Manager who is due to start in November. They will be responsible for programming and leading a series of service reviews to drive efficiency and productivity Council services. I fully expect a peer review to be programmed to take place before the end of 2025.”

There was no supplementary question.

QUESTION 9

RAISED BY COUNCILLOR M BATES UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12:

“Can the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Licensing and Environmental Services please provide an update on the current position with Bastion Point and provide a schedule for when Port Health will commence physical checks of suspect vehicles at the juxtaposed controls in Coquelles?”

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Transport, Licensing and Environmental Services the Chairman advised that a written response would be provided.

42 MOTIONS

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 13, Councillor T J Bartlett moved the following Motion:

Changes to the Winter Fuel Allowance and Protecting Pensioners from Fuel Poverty

Council Notes:

- The Labour Government’s recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of means-tested benefits like Pension Credit, as announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves.
- The estimated impact of this decision, which Age UK says will mean 2 million pensioners who badly need the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it, including 24,503 pensioners in Dover District.
- The significant role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping older residents of Dover District and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health.
- The criticism from Age UK, the Countryside Alliance and other charities, highlighting the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this sudden policy change.
- The additional strain this decision will place on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible, further exacerbating their financial hardship.

Council believes:

- That the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship.
- While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many thousands across Dover District sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance.
- The decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures, is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our poorest older residents.
- The government's approach fails to consider the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.

Council resolves to:

- Bring forward a Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit which in some respects will help access to the Winter Fuel Payment for those most in need.
- Request that the Council Leader write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty.
- This Council calls upon the Cabinet to commit the Council to signing the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK and write to all members offering them the opportunity to sign the petition themselves.
- Encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Dover District are supported in claiming their entitlement.

It was duly seconded by Councillor O C de R Richardson.

Councillor K Mills moved an AMENDMENT, duly seconded by Councillor M J Nee, as followed:

- (a) To remove the words "urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and" from the second bullet point under 'council resolves to' so that it reads:

"Request that the Council Leader write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty."

(b) To delete the third bullet point under 'council resolves to' which was as follows:

“This Council calls upon the Cabinet to commit the Council to signing the ‘Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners’ petition being run by Age UK and write to all members offering them the opportunity to sign the petition themselves.”

Councillor C A Vinson raised a Point of Order to question if the amendment resulted in a negation. The Chairman’s ruling was that it did not.

On being put to the vote, the AMENDMENT was CARRIED.

On being put to the vote the Substantive Motion was CARRIED and it was

RESOLVED:

Council Notes:

- The Labour Government’s recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of means-tested benefits like Pension Credit, as announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves.
- The estimated impact of this decision, which Age UK says will mean 2 million pensioners who badly need the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it, including 24,503 pensioners in Dover District.
- The significant role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping older residents of Dover District and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health.
- The criticism from Age UK, the Countryside Alliance and other charities, highlighting the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this sudden policy change.
- The additional strain this decision will place on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible, further exacerbating their financial hardship.

Council believes:

- That the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship.
- While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many thousands across Dover District sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance.
- The decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures, is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our poorest older residents.

- The government's approach fails to consider the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.

Council resolves to:

- Bring forward a Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit which in some respects will help access to the Winter Fuel Payment for those most in need.
- Request that the Council Leader write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty.
- Encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Dover District are supported in claiming their entitlement.

43 URGENT BUSINESS TIME

There were no items of urgent business for consideration.

The meeting ended at 8.19 pm