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FOLKESTONE AND HYTHE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes for the meeting of the Council held at the Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone on Wednesday, 19 December 2018

Present: Councillors Mrs Ann Berry, Miss Susan Carey, John Collier, Malcolm Dearden, Alan Ewart-James, Peter Gane, Clive Goddard, David Godfrey, Miss Susie Govett, Ms Janet Holben, Mrs Jennifer Hollingsbee, Len Laws, Rory Love, Michael Lyons (Vice-Chair), Philip Martin, Ian Meyers, David Monk, David Owen (Chairman), Dick Pascoe, Paul Peacock, Stuart Peall, Damon Robinson, Mrs Carol Sacre, Russell Tillson, Mrs Susan Wallace, Mrs Rodica Wheeler and Roger Wilkins

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Mrs Claire Jeffrey, Mrs Mary Lawes and Frank McKenna

57. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

58. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2018 were submitted, approved and signed by the Chairman.

59. Chairman's Communications

The Chairman gave the following update:

“In the past fortnight, it has been my privilege – and I do mean a privilege, to attend 2 of our local school prize givings. Firstly at the Marsh Academy which is a fine example of a relatively new initiative within the UK education system and secondly the Folkestone School for Girls, a Grammar school which consistently produces excellent results. Both schools prepare their pupils for future life within the Community and enable their students to achieve their best whether it be to enter further education or University and subsequently build careers of which anyone could be proud. Both schools have relatively young and vibrant principals supported by extremely enthusiastic senior support staff that it has been my pleasure to meet. We can justifiably be proud to have such schools within our District.

Tonight, we say farewell to a very well-known member of our Civic staff. Martin Spence is retiring at the end of this month, and this evening is therefore his final Council Meeting as Civic Attendant. From 1978 until 1994, Martin served our country in the Army as a member of the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Irish Rangers and he became an infantry Section Commander. Upon leaving the Army, Martin joined Dover District Council and his duties included being the Chairman's Chauffeur. In 2001 he joined this Council as a Civic Warden, a jack of all trades including security work, manning the Reception Desk as well as supporting our customers when using the self service computers. Until recently he was also the Chairman's Chauffeur, a role now taken over by Dave Turner. He has however until this evening retained his other responsibilities including those for or Civic arrangements. Past colleagues will agree with me that Chairmen come and

Chairmen go, but it is invaluable that there is a continuity in the background to guide us and provide stability. Martin, you have certainly provided that. May I wish you on behalf of all present, our thanks for your service and our best wishes for a long and happy retirement. I am pleased to announce that Dave Turner will assume Martin's Civic Role, and we welcome Mike Smith, who will support Dave as required.

It only remains for me to wish all Members, Officers, visiting dignitaries and Members of the Public both here tonight, but also watching on the webcast, a very Happy and peaceful Christmas”.

60. **Petitions**

There were no petitions to be submitted.

61. **Questions from the Public**

There were no public questions submitted for the meeting.

62. **Questions from Councillors**

The questions asked, including supplementary questions (if any), and the answers given are set out in Schedule 2, appended to these minutes.

63. **Announcements of the Leader of the Council**

The Leader of the Council made the following announcements:

“Thank you Chairman. Good evening to you all.

I have not got a lot to say tonight as this meeting follows so quickly on from the last. I am just going to have a brief look forward to the New Year.

The first thing will be that we will set a balanced budget, no mean feat in these straitened times. Cabinet will consider the case for the Princes Parade development once the planning permission has been granted. Then I expect outline planning permission for the Otterpool Park green town to be applied for at the same time as our revised Core Strategy comes on time. Then a trial of modular house building should be undertaken at our Biggins Wood site.

On the Marsh at the Mountfield Hub site, we will continue the building of small start up/commercial premises to be available for rent. And finally we are establishing a Folkestone Town Centre regeneration board headed up by our MP Damian Collins.

I will now wish you all a Happy Christmas and a Healthy New Year”.

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Meyers, responded and stated that as always, there was nothing in the Leaders announcements that he could disagree with. He applauded the move towards a balanced budget.

With regard to Otterpool and Princes Parade, he stated that there had been significant achievements on bringing the projects to where they were now.

The trial of modular housing was particularly of interest to him and he noted that Legal and General had gone into the manufacture of modular housing in this country, producing British jobs, which he stated was very good indeed.

He wished Members and Officers a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New year, from himself and his party. He then extended a heartfelt thanks to those working over the festive period, especially those in the Medical profession and service industries.

Proposed by Councillor Monk,
Seconded by Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee; and

RESOLVED:

That the announcements of the Leader be noted.

(voting figures: 27 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions).

64. Opposition Business

The UKIP group had brought the following Opposition Business:

“ The UKIP Group would wish to bring our concern to the attention of the Council in the matter of Councillors Questions and the restrictions attached to them.“

Councillor Laws, on behalf of the opposition, outlined the reasons for bringing the business, raising concerns that some of the questions asked at recent meetings of the Council had not been answered fully, or misleading responses had been given. The rules of the constitution prevented the questions from being brought again for a six month period. He added that some of the answers given in recent months had been frivolous and condescending. The constitution did not allow questions to be frivolous, and the same rules should be applied to answers given.

The Leader responded on behalf of the administration, stating that should a Member feel their question was not fully answered, or answered frivolously, they should raise this with the Head of Paid Service to investigate further.

Proposed by Councillor Monk,
Seconded by Councillor Mrs Hollingsbee; and

RESOLVED:

That the issue raised be noted, with no further action taken.

(Voting figures: 22 For; 5 Against; 0 Abstentions).

65. **Motions on Notice**

There were no motions on notice.

66. **Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2019/20**

The report recommended the adoption of a replacement Council Tax Reduction scheme for 2019/2020, which was to be implemented with effect from 1 April 2019.

Proposed by Councillor Dearden,
Seconded by Councillor Ewart-James; and

RESOLVED:

1. **That report A/18/16 be received and noted.**
2. **That Non Dependant charges be maintained within the new scheme.**
3. **That the new Council Tax Reduction scheme be adopted from the 2019/20 financial year as required by S13A and Schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended.**

(Voting figures: 25 for, 2 against, 0 abstentions).

67. **Councillors Access to Information**

The report considered the recommendation of cabinet on the issue relating to a Members right to access Council documents and information, and in particular to access legal advice and commercially sensitive information. It outlined the findings of the Task Group (established by the Leader) who were instructed to discuss and investigate the above issue.

Proposed by Councillor Tillson,
Seconded by Councillor Owen; and

RESOLVED:

1. **That report A/18/17 be received and noted.**
2. **That the Assistant Director – Governance, Law and Regulatory Services be instructed to prepare a guidance note on this issue for the benefit of Councillors**

(Voting figures: 23 for, 4 against, 0 abstentions).

Full Council – 19 December 2019

Councillor questions:

1. From Councillor Mrs Sacre to Councillor Hollingsbee, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Communities

We are all well aware of the sad lack of pride in Folkestone, rubbish is scattered without thought and fly tipping is widespread, on the premise of prevention is better than cure I should like to give something back to our community to propel them into a state of well-being to regain awareness of themselves and others.

Outdoor gym equipment has been seen to have a very positive effect on communities if it is sited in the right place. How could you help me with this project?

ANSWER:

Thank you Cllr Mrs Sacre for your question.

I firstly need to say that I cannot agree with your comment about there being a lack of community pride in Folkestone. The community is at the forefront of our efforts to combat fly tipping and rubbish generally. It is due to the combined efforts of the community, the council and its contractors that the streets remain clean particularly over what was a brilliant summer in terms of visitors to the district. It is often due to information from the community that leads to successful prosecutions for fly tipping.

The Council has recently introduced a new Area Officer scheme to build community relationships and help tackle issues right across the District. In two months the team has undertaken over 2000 jobs including removing over 1000 pieces of graffiti, dealing with 24 separate fly tips and organised 19 community litter clearing events.

In turning to the main part of the question. Positive policies are set out in the Local Plan which seek to ensure that the provision of open space and play equipment are provided as part of larger developments, or existing sites are improved through commuted payments. The Open Space and Play Spaces Studies that were commissioned by the Council have identified the level of provision across the district for a range of facilities - from local provision to the larger destination style provision. This will help decide where to focus any future investment.

Other Strategies could also help with improving pride in the district as well as improving health and wellbeing. The emerging Heritage Strategy, for example has looked at how engagement with heritage activities can help with health and wellbeing of local residents through activities such as archaeological excavation, community heritage projects and conservation management. In addition, Kent County Council is currently discussing possible schemes with the public health commissioning stakeholders, which may provide opportunities in this district.

We are always keen to improve the play, sports and health and well-being facilities within the District working with all Councillors, Town and Parish Councils and community groups to achieve these aims. Often the Town and Parish Councils are best placed to recognise the needs and ensure provision within their local areas. Great examples of this are where the District has transferred open space land on long lease arrangements to the Town Councils who have then been able to decide how they best manage and operate the open spaces. Arrangements like this have been put in place with Hawkinge Town Council and Sandgate Parish Council. Both HTC and SPC have installed outdoor gym equipment in their open spaces.

Officers at the District Council are keen to work with any Town or Parish Council and local groups who are motivated to raise funds for facilities in their local area.

A fantastic recent example of this is where the Council worked with the community and other stakeholders including East Kent College, Folkestone Town Council and many others to completely renovate Radnor Park, converting the derelict lodge into a community tea room, renovating the historic St Eanswythe's drinking fountain and designing and building an amazing new play area surrounded by landscaping and gardens. The park has now been awarded the much coveted Green Flag Award.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:

Would you assist me in putting gym equipment in Radnor Park?

ANSWER:

I would reiterate what I have already said in my answer. The Council is willing to work with any community group or organisation wishing to install new equipment in Radnor Park.