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## SHEPWAY DISTRICT COUNCIL

### **Minutes for the meeting of the Council held at the Council Chamber - Civic Centre Folkestone on Wednesday, 20 December 2017**

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Miss Susan Carey, David Godfrey, Mrs Jennifer Hollingsbee, Mrs Claire Jeffrey, Philip Martin and Paul Peacock

#### 55. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

#### 56. **Minutes**

Councillor Govett advised that she had been included as present at the meeting, when she had in fact given apologies. She requested that the minutes be amended to reflect this.

Subject to this amendment, the minutes of 15 November 2017 were submitted, approved and signed by the Chairman.

#### 57. **Chairman's Communications**

The Chairman gave the following update:

“Following the extensive number of events that I reported last month largely on the theme of Remembrance, the past month has been somewhat different and between the Vice Chairman and myself we have attended nearly 20 local events in support of our local organisations and town mayors; many on the theme of Christmas.

Major events included the launch of this years Folkestone Book Festival at the Quarterhouse. We also attended the Hythe Late Night shopping event as well as the Prize Giving at the Marsh Academy. On this latter occasion I was able to see the facilities first hand for the first time. They are truly magnificent and a fine example of outside investment in education. I would commend anyone with the opportunity to visit the school.

Thanks to the Mayor of Hawkinge, I joined an organised tour of the Eurotunnel site. Having worked there for 5years but having left 10 years ago, it was an eye opener as to what has been achieved following the write off by the UK and French Governments of the original building debt. When I was there the debt was like a bag of concrete round the proverbial neck. Now they are planning positively post Brexit. There seems to have been something of a change of heart and the UK side at least are now more outward looking in their

relationships to local organisations. In conversation with the Director of Public Affairs I have been able to obtain an invitation for a party of Members to make a similar visit should you be interested. The plan would be for this to take place in the Spring but in the first instance expressions of interest to me would be appreciated.

May I conclude by wishing you all a very Happy Christmas and may we all be able to take our community forward to a prosperous New Year".

58. **Petitions**

There were no petitions.

59. **Questions from the Public**

The questions asked, including supplementary questions (if any), and the answers given are set out in Schedule 1, appended to these minutes.

60. **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.

61. **Announcements of the Leader of the Council**

The Leader of the Council gave the following announcements:

"Good evening to you all.

I am going to talk to you about an emerging problem, that of discarded needles. Due to recent publicity you might think that there is an increasing problem of substance misuse in the District, but this is not the case. Rather it is a result of our old friend "unforeseen consequences". There was running a comprehensive service for substance abusers which included a needle exchange service and the operators actively encouraged their clients to use it. The contract was then re-let and the comprehensive service is now located in Dover, and while there is still a needle exchange facility available in Folkestone, it is a public building and does not offer the intervention and counselling that the previous system did. The NHS are the commissioners for this service and our officers along with our partners in the Community Safety Unit are pressing them to resolve this problem.

As the year draws to a close we can look forward to an exciting 2018, especially on the implementation of some of our Corporate Plan aspirations with the Princes Parade scheme going before the Planning and Licensing committee in the New Year, and the Otterpool Park Masterplan by the summer.

We have just completed the purchase of the old Highview School site which will allow us to meet part of our commitment to build 200 council homes within 10 years and I expect to see significant progress on both the Biggins Wood and the Ship Street sites.

On the homeless front, we will have purchased accommodation so that we are not reliant on costly B&B placements which have cost us in excess of, an unbudgeted £500k.

In supporting the Districts tourism industry we will be considerably increasing our litter collection capacity so that our beautiful parks and beaches are not marred by overspill from our bins.

We have signed up for a peer review by the Local Government Association which will, again I hope, show that we are a well run and progressive council but will also give us an insight to the best practise from other councils as is the intention of the scheme. In saying that we are well run, you do not have to take my word for it. I quote from the Annual Audit Letter from Grant Thornton – “we gave an unqualified opinion of the council’s financial statements on 7 September 2017”. “We are satisfied that the council put in place proper arrangements to ensure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources during the year ended 31 March 2017”.

This years financial settlement from the Government on the whole has been a good one for us. The New Homes Bonus has not been altered and this will have a beneficial effect on our MTFs, there is also an option for slightly raising the level of Council Tax without having to hold a referendum. Staying with the good news on the financial front, Kent has been confirmed as one of the pilot areas for a one year 100% business rate retention which will give us a substantial one off windfall.

As you know we had to, once again, shut the Hythe pool this time because of severe leakage problems. These were remedied and the pool was due to reopen this Monday but not one but two pumps failed and so it could not. I am pleased to say that our staff have worked miracles in resourcing spare parts and that, fingers crossed, we will be open this Saturday in time for the Christmas holiday. The sooner the new pool is built, the better, as there is no doubt that the existing is way past its design life. As of this afternoon, the pool had been running for one hour.

I will finish by wishing you all a Happy Christmas and a healthy new year”.

Councillor Meyers, Leader of the Opposition, responded to the comments made by the Leader, stating that the substance would be in the detail. He then wished Peace and goodwill to all men, a Merry Christmas and a prosperous new year.

Proposed by Councillor Monk;  
Seconded by Councillor Love; and

**RESOLVED**

That the announcements of the Leader of the Council be noted.

62. **Opposition Business**

There was no opposition business.

63. **Motions on Notice**

There were no motions on notice.

**Council – 20 December 2017**

**Public questions and answers:**

**1. From Mr Southgate to Councillor Ewart-James, Cabinet Member for Housing**

With reference to the annual Shepway 'homelessness count', can the council please state which areas of Shepway will be (or have been) inspected? Furthermore, can the council disclose how this data is used? (For instance, informing funding for support services etc.)

**ANSWER:**

Throughout the year, Shepway Housing Officers and other agencies such as Porchlight, the Rainbow Centre etc keep in contact with rough sleepers and thus are aware of their location. Periodically Shepway Council undertakes a rough sleeper count. Sometimes this is an estimate however this year officers were out between 2.00 am – 5.00 am on the 20th November 2017 to determine a more accurate figure. Based upon information of where rough sleepers were known to be, the areas covered were Folkestone, Hythe and Cheriton, excluding the Marsh area, finding 16 verified rough sleepers in total. Of those 16, 4 were non UK passport holders and were EI nationals seeking work, and two had no connection with Shepway.

This information is reported back to the DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) who use the data to inform and shape legislation, and forms part of a complex calculation drawing information from multiple sources to determine the amount of targeted funding allocations for local authorities. This is administered through the allocation of specific grant funding, for example the New Burdens and the Funding Flexible Homeless Grant, both of which used this data in part to determine the final grant allocation to the Council.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

The Mayor of London had changed the severe weather policy meaning it would be implemented after 1 day at freezing temperatures rather than 3. Did Shepway have any intention of doing the same?

**ANSWER:**

Shepway were reviewing the SWEP policy, but it was not yet confirmed what the changes would be.

**2. From Mr Rylands to Councillor Dearden, Cabinet Member for Finance**

In Report Number AuG/17/11 which went before the Audit & Governance Committee on the 29/11/17 at page 10 of the Report

2.5 Special Projects review 2016/17 it states:

A previous audit of creditors showed retrospective orders for the Council as a whole was 20%. As a result an email was sent to Heads of Service and retrospective orders are now being monitored by the Finance department on a monthly basis. Figures for October 2016 to April 2017 show that retrospective orders, overall, have reduced to a range of 8% to 15%

What does 20% equal as a number eg 100, 1000 and what amount in £'s did it represent?

**ANSWER:**

The figures quoted in the report represented the first 6 months of the 2016/17 financial year. At that time, the average number of retrospective orders per month was 55 with an average value per month of £498,753. This included some significant areas of spending within the council and also includes the HRA with major spend on repairs to council stock. To put this into context, this compares with an average monthly number of Purchase Orders correctly prepared of 199 with an average value of £4,455,985. Therefore the financial value of those late PO's is approximately 10% of the total. I would emphasise of course that although the PO's are retrospective, invoices are not passed without a PO and therefore the risk of any fraud or misappropriation is very limited.

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

Please provide the figure for retrospective PO's and the value for the Strategic Development Team.

**ANSWER:**

This answer would be provided separately, after the meeting.

**Council – 20 December 2017**

## **Councillors Questions and answers**

### **1. From Councillor Ian Meyers to Councillor Mrs Berry, Cabinet Member for Transport and Commercial**

How much of the surplus (profit) from on street and off street parking has Shepway used for highway improvement in the district.

#### **ANSWER:**

The council has made a small surplus for on street parking in the last year. Previous years accounts demonstrate considerable losses. In accordance with the legislation, we will use the surplus to repay deficits that have occurred in the last five years. KCC are responsible for highway improvements within the District. When and if the Council makes a surplus for on-street parking above £100,000, once deficits have been paid, then SDC and KCC together will decide upon what schemes will benefit from the surplus.

Off street parking surpluses support the Council's General Fund, there is no requirement to spend these surpluses in any particular way and they are therefore not directed at highway improvements.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

When will Shepway produce a report detailing what the surplus from parking has been spent on as the council is required to do under Section 55 of the RTR Act 1984. After almost 10 months, since the end of the last financial year, the public has a right to see a report on how this money has or is to be spent.

#### **ANSWER:**

A response to this question would be provided after the meeting.

### **2. From Councillor Mrs Lawes to Councillor Mrs Berry, Cabinet Member for Transport and Commercial**

Does this Council support KCC Road safety Drink Drive Campaign and Kent Police Christmas drink drug drive campaign?

#### **ANSWER:**

Yes, we are fully supportive of the KCC Road safety Drink Drive Campaign and Kent Police Christmas drink drug drive campaign and will continue to use social media to make people aware of campaign messages.”

**3. From Councillor Mrs Lawes to Councillor Ewart-James, Cabinet Member for Housing**

How many homeless people does the district have at the present time?

**ANSWER:**

At this time (19th December 2017) the council has 16 verified rough sleeping homeless people. In addition we have 23 households residing in bed and breakfast style short term accommodation, a further 6 residing in East Kent Housing Temporary Accommodation, and 30 in other forms of what is termed nightly let accommodation giving a total of 59 + 16.”

Of those 59, cases in temporary accommodation 33 have been accepted as statutorily homeless, leaving 26 who we have yet to decide if they are homeless or not and if so what if any statutory duty may be owed to provide rehousing assistance”

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION:**

£900,000 had been spent on B&B accommodation, and £1 million for six flats to be built for temporary accommodation. Should more funds be spent on providing permanent housing?

**ANSWER:**

There was always a transitional period for housing needs to be assessed, and temporary accommodation was needed for this, which is why the council was investing in this.