

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of a meeting of the County Council held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 18 July 2024.

PRESENT: Mr B J Sweetland (Chairman), Mr A M Ridgers (Vice-Chairman), Mr N Baker, Mr M Baldock, Mr P V Barrington-King, Mr P Bartlett, Mr D Beaney, Mrs C Bell, Mrs R Binks, Mr T Bond, Mr A Brady, Mr D L Brazier, Mr S R Campkin, Miss S J Carey, Sir Paul Carter, CBE, Mrs S Chandler, Mr N J D Chard, Mr I S Chittenden, Mrs P T Cole, Mr P Cole, Mr N J Collor, Ms K Constantine, Mr G Cooke, Mr D Crow-Brown, Mr M C Dance, Ms M Dawkins, Mr M Dendor, Mr R W Gough, Ms S Hamilton, Peter Harman, Ms J Hawkins, Mr P M Hill, OBE, Mr A R Hills, Mr S Holden, Mr M A J Hood, Mr D Jeffrey, Mr A Kennedy, Mr J A Kite, MBE, Rich Lehmann, Mr B H Lewis, Mr R C Love, OBE, Mr R A Marsh, Mrs M McArthur, Mr J P McInroy, Ms J Meade, Mr J Meade, Mr D Murphy, Mr P J Oakford, Mr J M Ozog, Mrs L Parfitt-Reid, Mr C Passmore, Mrs S Prendergast, Mr H Rayner, Mr D Robey, Mr A Sandhu, MBE, Mr T L Shonk, Mr C Simkins, Mr M J Sole, Mr P Stepto, Mr R G Streatfeild, MBE, Mr R J Thomas, Mr D Watkins, Mr S Webb, Mr M Whiting, Mr J Wright and Ms L Wright

IN ATTENDANCE VIRTUALLY: Ms K Grehan and Mr A J Hook

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr B Watts (General Counsel) and Mr J Cook (Democratic Services Manager)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

233. Apologies for Absence
(Item 1)

The Democratic Services Manager reported apologies from Mr Broadley, Mr Cooper, Mrs Dean, Mrs Game, Mrs Hohler, Mrs Hudson, Mr Manion and Dr Sullivan.

The Democratic Services Manager said Ms Grehan and Mr Hook had sent formal apologies but were in attendance virtually.

234. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests in items on the agenda
(Item 2)

Mr Bartlett declared an interest, in relation to Item 9 – *Integrated Care Partnership Terms of Reference* - that he was the East Kent Representative on the Integrated Care Partnership.

235. Minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2024 and, if in order, to be approved as a correct record
(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 23 May 2024 be approved as a correct record.

236. Corporate Parenting Panel - April Minutes for noting
(Item 4)

The Chairman clarified that the minutes under consideration were from the February meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel, and not the April meeting as indicated on the agenda.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel held on 27 February 2024 be noted.

237. Chairman's Announcements
(Item 5)

Birthday Honours List

The Chairman congratulated all the people in Kent who had received an Honour in the King's first Birthday Honours List which was announced in June.

The Chairman sent his warmest congratulations to Christine Grosskopf, who had worked for Kent County Council for nearly twenty years and who had received the Award of Member of the Order of the British Empire for her service to Refugee Resettlement.

General Election

The Chairman congratulated the newly elected MPs, following the recent general election, who would be representing the county in parliament including Dr Lauren Sullivan who was the newly elected MP for Gravesham.

The Chairman thanked the former Kent MPs for their service and commitment over many years, and congratulated Mr Craig Mackinlay, the former MP for South Thanet, who had been given a life peerage.

Leader of the Opposition item

The Chairman advised Members that following the change of Group Leader of the Labour Group, it was necessary for the Council to Appoint the Leader of the Opposition and a late agenda item had been added.

238. County Council Questions

(Item 6)

In accordance with Sections 14.15 to 14.22 of the Constitution, 11 questions were submitted by the deadline and 9 questions were put to the Executive as two questioners had given apologies. 9 questions were asked and replies given. A record of all questions put and answers given at the meeting is available [online](#) with the papers for this meeting.

239. Report by Leader of the Council (Oral)

(Item 7)

1. The Leader spoke about the recent general election and highlighted the areas where clarity would be sought from the new government, including in relation to house building, infrastructure, and multiyear financial settlements.
2. Mr Gough referred to the anticipated introduction of the Entry/Exit System in October 2024 and said that the Kent and Medway Resilience Forum had prepared for a difficult summer due to increased pressures of the Paris Olympics, in addition to the usual summer getaway. He confirmed that Operation Brock had been in operation since 10 July and would continue throughout the summer. In addition, the Leader confirmed that the Kent and Medway Resilience Forum had also worked to mitigate pressures which included the introduction of a permit system to prevent queue jumping from HGV lorries.
3. The Leader turned to unaccompanied minors and asylum and commented that high levels of arrivals continued. He highlighted that he had written to the new Home Secretary and Education Secretary setting out that structural and systemic change was required, rather than crisis management, and invited them to see the work being carried out in the county to demonstrate how the issue was being addressed.
4. The Leader confirmed the intention to bring the Financial Hardship Programme into the Council's mainstream of activity and he awaited the new administration's intention regarding the Household Support Fund.
5. The Leader referenced the work being carried out in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) within the County Council Network and Local Government Association that aimed to set out a reform programme to the new administration.
6. The Leader referred to the King's Speech and the Deputy Prime Minister's letter which focused on devolution, new powers over transport, skills, housing, planning and employment support and commented that processes were in many respects a continuation of the previous administration.

7. Lastly, the Leader highlighted specific aspects of the King's Speech including the proposed Children's Wellbeing Bill and the Better Buses Bill in relation to the impacts on the county.
8. The Leader of the Labour Group, Mr Brady, thanked and paid tribute to the previous Leader of the Labour Group, Dr Sullivan.
9. Mr Brady commented that his party supported the Financial Hardship Programme as an initiative which benefitted Kent's residents and businesses.
10. Mr Brady referred to the topic of housing and stated that his party awaited the deliverance of Framing Kent's Future first pledges in relation to infrastructure and welcomed the new Labour government taking the lead on Infrastructure First.
11. Mr Brady acknowledged the results of the general election and welcomed the 11 Labour MPs throughout Kent.
12. In reference to the King's Speech, Mr Brady highlighted and endorsed the new government's proposed bills including those related to budget responsibility, support for Kent workers, new powers to deal with anti-social behaviour, public transport and railway reform, water quality, education and apprenticeships, mental health support, child poverty and wellbeing, and trade and investment with the EU.
13. Mr Lehmann, Leader of the Green and Independents Group, acknowledged the results of the recent general election and confirmed that the Green Party had received over 1.8 million votes nationally and the 4 MPs would represent nearly half a million voters each in the House of Commons.
14. Mr Lehmann explained that the global increase in temperature had made May and June 2024 the hottest ever recorded. The past 13 consecutive months were the hottest recorded for the respective time of year, with an estimated 95% chance 2024 would be the hottest year on record. He suggested that the climate crisis had not been given enough prominence during previous Full Council meetings. He said that multiyear settlements were a good start and hoped the new government would be able to provide both financial and policy support in relation to the growing climate crisis.
15. In relation to the King's speech, he referred to several proposals including bringing rail services back into public ownership and the bill to ban conversion therapy.
16. In relation to the devolution of powers, Mr Lehmann confirmed that his group opposed the idea of concentrated decision-making power into a single representative and noted with concern that Labour adopted the outgoing government's position in relation to directly elected mayors.

17. Mr Lehmann voiced some concerns relating to the proposed planning reforms but confirmed that he was in support of the rapid lifting of the de facto ban on new onshore wind farms.
18. Mr Lehmann closed by confirming his relief that the planned London resort project had ceased. He commented that the project would have impacted the biodiversity and insect life of north Kent as well as creating a strain on the local road network. He thanked the Save Swanscombe Peninsula Campaign for their work over many years in protecting the land.
19. Mr Streatfeild on behalf of the Liberal Democrats Group acknowledged the general election results and welcomed the first Liberal Democrat MP in Kent.
20. In relation to the King's speech, Mr Streatfeild stated that he felt the NHS should be at the heart of the reforms with a legal right to be seen by a GP within one week. On the topic of devolution, he confirmed that his party did not share the Labour views for a Metro Mayor but did have the same enthusiasm for devolution.
21. Mr Streatfeild referred to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) and the National Transfer Scheme and questioned whether the new government would require local authorities to look after children who arrived in Kent, or instead, set up a national child refugee agency to meet the national responsibility.
22. Mr Streatfeild highlighted the current consultation on SEND specialist schools and the views submitted by headteachers that contrasted with the Council's position.
23. Mr Streatfeild referred to the Household Support Fund and said that he hoped the government would take the Liberal Democrat view on Adult Social Care and commented on the Council's ASCH Charging Policy which now took into account the higher rate of Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Personal Independent Payment (PIP) and Attendance Allowance (AA) when calculating the cost of care and support.
24. Mr Gough responded to the points raised about Infrastructure First and commented that work was carried out within the constraints of a national system, particularly in relation to developer contributions when it came to building school capacity.
25. In response to the point made about devolution, the Leader commented that the new administration was building on a previous levelling up white paper, although with some differences for example in relation to a less prescriptive approach to mayors.
26. In response to comments regarding climate change, the Leader stated that the Council sought to discharge the responsibilities within its remit. He highlighted that the reduction of greenhouse gasses from the Council's

estate and operations, the local nature recovery strategy 'Making Space for Nature', and mitigation around flooding, demonstrated the administration's awareness to the consequences of climate change.

27. The Leader identified that, from the comments made, there was common ground in relation to concerns surrounding planning changes.
28. In response to comments made about buses, the Leader said that whilst there was a range of options, funding was the key issue. He referred to the use of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to secure school transport.
29. In response to the point raised about SEND, the Leader commented that the approach taken in this area should be evidence based and was linked to a wider systemic issue. He referred to the programme the Council had undertaken in relation to significant change within SEND and highlighted the challenges in the current framework that needed to be addressed nationally to provide an affordable outcome for services for children and families.
30. RESOLVED that the Leader's Report be noted.

240. End of Year Performance Report 2023/24
(Item 8)

1. Mr Grough proposed, and Mr Oakford seconded the motion that:
"County Council is asked to note the Performance Report."
2. The Chairman put the motion set out in paragraph 1.
3. RESOLVED that the County Council notes the Performance Report.

241. Integrated Care Partnership Terms of Reference
(Item 9)

1. Mr Gough proposed, and Mr Watkins seconded the motion that
"County Council is asked to approve the refreshed ICP Terms of Reference."
2. Following the debate, the Chairman put the motion set out in paragraph 1 to the vote.

For (44)

Mr Barrington-King, Mr Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Bond, Mr Brazier, Miss Carey, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chard, Mr Cole, Mrs Cole, Mr Collor, Mr Cooke, Mr Crow-Brown, Mr Dance, Mr Dendor, Mr Gough, Ms Hamilton, Mr Hill, Mr Hills, Mr Holden, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kite, Mr Love, Mr Marsh, Mrs McArthur, Mr

McInroy, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Mr Ozog, Mrs Parfitt-Reid, Mr Rayner, Mr Ridgers, Mr Robey, Mr Sandhu, Mr Simkins, Mr Sweetland, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Mr Webb, Mr Wright, Ms Wright

Against (3)

Mr Baldock, Ms Meade, Mr Whiting

Abstain (16)

Mr Brady, Mr Campkin, Mr Carter, Mr Chittenden, Ms Constantine, Ms Dawkins, Mr Harman, Ms Hawkins, Mr Hood, Mr Lehmann, Mr Lewis, Mr Passmore, Mr Shonk, Mr Sole, Mr Stepto, Mr Streatfeild

Motion carried.

3. RESOLVED that the County Council approves the refreshed ICP Terms of Reference.

242. Standards - Independent Person appointment
(Item 10)

1. Mr Kite proposed, and Mr Jeffrey seconded the motion that

“County Council is asked to agree the appointment of Michael George as the Independent Person for the Member Code of Conduct for the three-year term 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2027.”

2. The Democratic Services Manager advised Members of a typographical error in the report and clarified that the three-year term of appointment was from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2027.
3. Following the debate, the Chairman put the motion set out in paragraph 1 to the vote.

For (57)

Mr Baker, Mr Barrington-King, Mr Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Bond, Mr Brady, Mr Brazier, Mr Cannon, Miss Carey, Mr Carter, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chard, Mr Chittenden, Mr Cole, Mrs Cole, Mr Collor, Ms Constantine, Mr Cooke, Mr Crow-Brown, Mr Dance, Ms Dawkins, Mr Dendor, Mr Gough, Ms Hamilton, Mr Hill, Mr Hills, Mr Holden, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kennedy, Mr Kite, Mr Lewis, Mr Love, Mr Marsh, Mrs McArthur, Mr McInroy, Mr Meade, Ms Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Mr Ozog, Mrs Parfitt-Reid, Mr Passmore, Mr Rayner, Mr Ridgers, Mr Robey, Mr Sandhu, Mr Shonk, Mr Simkins, Mr Sole, Mr Streatfeild, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Mr Webb, Mr Whiting, Mr Wright, Ms Wright

Against (0)

Abstain (7)

Mr Baldock, Mr Campkin, Mr Harman, Ms Hawkins, Mr Hood, Mr Lehmann, Mr Stepto

Motion carried.

4. RESOLVED that the County Council agrees the appointment of Michael George as the Independent Person for the Member Code of Conduct for the three-year term 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2027.

243. Ukraine co-operation

(Item 11)

1. The Chairman welcomed Mr Vladyslav Sadovoi, a Ukrainian resident of Kent, to the meeting.
2. Mr Meade declared an interest that an exhibition at Kent County Council was funded through sponsorship of DPS Print, a local business in Gravesend.
3. Mr Meade proposed, and Mr Gough seconded the motion that
“County Council is asked to
 - a) Endorse the planned co-operation activity with the Chernihiv Region of Ukraine.
 - b) Note that relevant Executive decisions and operational activity will be progressed to deliver the objectives in due course.”
4. Following the debate the Chairman put the motion set out in paragraph 3 and it was agreed unanimously.
5. A recorded message from Mr Vyacheslav Chaus, Regional Governor of the Chernihiv Oblast was shown to Members.
6. Mr Sadovoi spoke about his personal experience in relation to the conflict in his home country of Ukraine, and his experience since coming to Kent under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme where he has lived for the last two years.
7. The Chairman thanked Mr Sadovoi for sharing his experience and thoughts, and said it was important and helpful for the Council to hear about the impact of the conflict. The Chairman expressed his sympathy and support on behalf of the Council to Mr Sadovoi and all other displaced Ukrainians.
8. RESOLVED that the County Council:

- a) Endorses the planned co-operation activity with the Chernihiv Region of Ukraine.
- b) Notes that relevant Executive decisions and operational activity will be progressed to deliver the objectives in due course.

244. Appointment of the Leader of the Opposition
(Item 12)

This item was taken after Item 5.

The Chairman proposed that Mr Brady be appointed by Council as the Leader of the Opposition.

Carried without a formal vote.

RESOLVED that Mr Brady be appointed as Leader of the Opposition.