

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of a meeting of the Kent County Council held Online on Wednesday, 17 June 2020.

PRESENT:

Mrs A D Allen, MBE (Chairman)
Mr G K Gibbens (Vice-Chairman)

Mr M J Angell, Mr M A C Balfour, Mr P V Barrington-King, Mr P Bartlett, Mrs C Bell, Mrs P M Beresford, Mrs R Binks, Mr R H Bird, Mr T Bond, Mr A Booth, Mr A H T Bowles, Mr D L Brazier, Mr J Burden, Mr D Butler, Miss S J Carey, Mr P B Carter, CBE, Mrs S Chandler, Mr N J D Chard, Mr I S Chittenden, Mrs P T Cole, Mr N J Collor, Ms K Constantine, Mr A Cook, Mr G Cooke, Mr P C Cooper, Mrs M E Crabtree, Mr D S Daley, Mr M C Dance, Miss E Dawson, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Mr D Farrell, Mrs L Game, Mr R W Gough, Ms S Hamilton, Mr P M Harman, Mr P M Hill, OBE, Mr A R Hills, Mrs S V Hohler, Mr S Holden, Mr P J Homewood, Mr A J Hook, Mr M J Horwood, Mr E E C Hotson, Mrs L Hurst, Mr J A Kite, MBE, Mr S J G Koowaree, Mr P W A Lake, Mr B H Lewis, Ida Linfield, Mr R L H Long, TD, Mr R C Love, OBE, Mr G Lymer, Mr S C Manion, Mr R A Marsh, Ms D Marsh, Mr J P McInroy, Mr D D Monk, Mr D Murphy, Mr M J Northey, Mr P J Oakford, Mr R A Pascoe, Mr M D Payne, Mrs S Prendergast, Mr K Pugh, Miss C Rankin, Mr H Rayner, Mr A M Ridgers, Mr C Simkins, Dr L Sullivan, Mr B J Sweetland, Mr M Whiting, Mr M E Whybrow and Mr J Wright

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Cockburn (Corporate Director Strategic & Corporate Services) and Mr B Watts (General Counsel)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

204. Chairman's Announcements

Mr Ian Thomas

(1) The Chairman stated that it was with regret that she had to inform the Council of the sad death of Mr Ian Thomas on 16 June 2020. On behalf of Members she expressed sympathy to his family. She also said Members would have an opportunity to pay tribute to Mr Thomas at the July County Council meeting.

Lord Lieutenant of Kent

(2) The Chairman announced that on the 21 April 2020, Lord De L'Isle had stood down after nine years as the Lord Lieutenant of Kent and had been succeeded by Lady Colgrain. The Chairman said she had sent him 12 rose bushes representing the 12 districts of Kent and had thanked him for his service to the county.

205. Apologies for Absence

The General Counsel reported apologies from Mr J Clinch, Mr A Booth, Mr R Thomas and Mrs P Stockell.

206. Election of Chairman

(Mrs A Allen the present Chairman presided for this item)

(1) Mr Gough moved, and Mr Bird seconded that Mr Gibbens be appointed Chairman of the County Council.

Agreed unanimously

(2) Thereupon Mr Gibbens made his Declaration of Acceptance of Office and returned thanks for his election. Mr Gibbens said that Porchlight would be his charity for the year.

(3) Mr Gibbens, Mrs Dean, Mr Farrell, Mr Brazier and Mr Kite paid tribute to Mrs Allen and thanked her for the manner in which she had carried out her duties as Chairman of the County Council from May 2019 until the present day.

(4) Mrs Allen suitably replied.

207. Election of Vice-Chairman

(1) Miss Carey moved, and Mr Bowles seconded that Mr Northey be appointed Vice-Chairman of the County Council.

Agreed unanimously

(2) Mr Northey thereupon made his Acceptance of Office and returned thanks for his appointment.

208. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests in items on the agenda

Agenda Item no 16 – Treasury Management 6 Month Review 2019/18

(1) Mr Gibbens stated that he received a pension from the Australia and New Zealand Banking Group

(2) Mr Bartlett declared an interest as he is an employee of the Bank of New York Mellon (BNYM).and the Council was investing in a money market fund managed by a company associated with BNYM. Although he had no involvement in the management of this or any other money market fund he did not intend to take any part in the discussion on this item.

General

(3) Dr Sullivan declared an interest as her husband was employed by the County Council as an Early Help and Prevention officer.

209. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2020 and, if in order, to be approved as a correct record

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2020 be approved as a correct record.

210. Protocol for Virtual Meetings

(1) The Chairman moved and the Vice-Chairman seconded the following motion:

“The County Council agrees to adopt the Protocols as set out in the appendix to the report, in order to facilitate the smooth working of its virtual meetings.”

(2) The motion set out in paragraph (1) above was agreed without a formal vote.

(3) RESOLVED that the Protocols as set out in the appendix to the report, be endorsed.

211. Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2019 – Corporate Parenting Panel

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel on 17 September 2019 be noted.

212. Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 December 2019 – Corporate Parenting Panel

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel on 10 December 2019 be noted.

213. Chairman's Announcements

Mr Colin Caller

(1) The Chairman stated that it was with regret that he had to inform Members of the death of Mr Colin Caller, former Labour Member for Gravesham East from 2013 to 2017, on 14 February 2020.

(2) Mr Bird, Dr Sullivan, Mr Burden, Mr Sweetland, Mr Gough and the Chairman paid tribute to Mr Caller.

(3) A minute’s silence was observed in memory of Mr Caller.

(4) The Chairman then moved, the Vice-Chairman seconded, and it was resolved unanimously that:

“This Council records the sense of loss it feels on the sad passing of Mr Caller and extends to his family and friends its heartfelt sympathy to them in their sad bereavement.”

Formal Thanks

(5) The Chairman referred to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact it was having on Kent's communities. He formally thanked all those working in the social care sector and asked Mrs Bell, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, to pass on the Council's thanks to all providers and workers in the sector across the county.

(6) The Chairman also thanked Members, officers, voluntary organisations, the health sector, delivery drivers, key workers, teachers, retail workers and many others for their dedication and tireless efforts in supporting those most in need and for keeping essential services running during this unprecedented time.

(7) The Chairman paid tribute to those that had passed away after contracting the virus and passed on the Council's condolences to their families and friends.

KM Charity/Inspire School Celebration

(8) The Chairman referred to the KM Charity's 20th Birthday celebrations which took place on 5th March 2020. During the evening, Mr Whiting, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, received a Commemorative Award and Certificate on behalf of Kent County Council, in recognition of the Council's help and support for the KM Charity Team and Inspire Schools events and services throughout 2019. The Award was presented by Mike Ward, Chief Executive of the KM Charity Award Team.

Award for Kent Waste Management

(9) The Chairman announced that Kent County Council had received the REPIC 'Champion of Champions' award for delivering a 12-month project that improved annual vehicle usage efficiency by 7%. The award was achieved by optimising e-waste recycling collections and meant that, through positive engagement with the public, Kent had improved the collection of waste electrical materials.

(10) The Chairman invited Members to join him in congratulating all of those involved in the scheme on the achievement and for their dedication to recycling.

The Queen's Awards for Enterprise

(11) The Chairman announced that Kent had two winners of The Queen's Awards for Enterprise this year. They were Nim's Fruit Crisps (Sittingbourne) and Priority Freight Holdings (Dover).

(12) The Chairman congratulated these companies on this great achievement and invited Members to join him in congratulating all of the recipients of The Queen's Awards for Enterprise this year.

The Queen's Awards for Voluntary Service

(13) The Chairman announced that Kent had three winners of The Queen's Awards for Voluntary Service this year. They were 'Broadstairs Town Team', 'The Historical Research Group of Sittingbourne' and 'Nourish' in Tunbridge Wells. The Chairman

added that Home-Start Medway, supporting challenged families with complex needs had also received The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

(14) The Chairman congratulated these voluntary organisations and invited Members to join him in congratulating all recipients of The Queen's Awards.

214. Questions

In accordance with Procedure Rule 1.17(4), 12 questions were asked and replies given. A record of all questions put and answers given at the meeting are available [online](#) with the papers for this meeting.

215. Report by Leader of the Council (Oral)

(1) The Leader stated that his update would focus on the impacts of COVID including the authority's response and plans for after lockdown. He set out some of the achievements including remote working and virtual meetings.

(2) Mr Gough highlighted the work had been undertaken with the district and borough councils and other partners to support those who were shielding including the development of local hubs to support Kent's most vulnerable residents and the launch of 'Kent Together'.

(3) Mr Gough commended the engagement work that had taken place between Council staff and Kent Schools to ensure that pupils were able to access education during the time that schools were closed to most pupils, and the assistance provided to enable pupils to return to school.

(4) Mr Gough said that over 15,000 calls had been made by Kent County Council's social workers to ensure the safety of vulnerable children during the COVID-19 outbreak.

(5) Mr Gough referred to the temporary closure of household waste and recycling centres in Kent and paid tribute to the Cabinet Member for Environment, as well as the Head of Commercial Management and Waste Services and his staff in managing the issues related to the closure.

(6) Mr Gough highlighted the support to charities through the Kent Community Foundation and businesses through the Kent and Medway Business Hub and support for the care sector.

(7) Mr Gough stated that an urgent executive decision had been taken to purchase bulk Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for use by Kent County Council staff and for mutual aid to Kent County Council's service providers where they were unable to source supplies.

(8) Mr Gough stated that the interim Strategic Plan would focus specifically on the Council and county's renewal phase. It would include the inter-related issues of school return, public transport, town centres and economic revival, the use of new technology and ways of working, changes to Kent's estate, and Kent County Council's engagement with the public.

(9) Mr Gough said that the work on the interim Strategic Plan would be central to setting priorities for a challenging financial environment. He referred to Kent County Council's 2020-21 budget which had also been affected by the impact of COVID-19. He stated that Kent's additional expenditure, loss of income and savings had reached approximately £120m for the current financial year. He said that government support totalled £65m, excluding additional costs likely to arise during the renewal phase or loss of income from a drop in council tax collection rates. He added that, the County Councils Network regularly drew the government's attention to the financial pressures faced by the local authority sector as a result of the pandemic. He said that, whilst it was likely that some of the financial gap would close, the 2020-21 budget would be re-visited at the County Council meeting in September 2020. He said that it was likely that the following 3-5 years would present sustained financial challenges which must be addressed by realism, a commitment to financial stability and resilience as well as adherence to Council's priorities set out in the Strategic Plan.

(10) Mr Gough referred to recent events in Minneapolis following the death of George Floyd and the issues that the events had highlighted across the world. He said that Kent County Council, both as an employer and as a community leader, must constantly reiterate and practice its longstanding values of equality and respect for those who worked with KCC and for the people they served. He stated that David Cockburn, Head of Paid Service and himself, as Leader of Kent County Council, had issued a joint statement reaffirming these values and recognising the importance of staff groups and forums for minority groups within the workforce.

(11) Mr Gough highlighted the arrival of large numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) in recent months and commented on the progress made addressing many UASC-related issues. He said Kent County Council had received £5m from central government, a commitment from ministers to support the placement of young people with other local authorities and to continue the dialogue on the longer-term issues. He recognised that there was no long-term solution, but the level of commitment from ministers was encouraging.

(12) In conclusion, Mr Gough referred to Kent's Energy and Low Emissions Strategy and confirmed that plans for zero carbon emissions from the Council's estate would be considered by the County Council in July 2020.

(13) Mr Bird, the Leader of the Opposition, endorsed the commendation made by Mr Gough in relation to the efforts and resourcefulness of staff in responding to the pandemic. He also commended Mr Gough as Leader of Kent County Council for the genuine leadership he had displayed over the last three months and his willingness to inform and engage with all Members of the Council. He said that Kent County Council had responded well to the pandemic in exceptionally difficult circumstances and he emphasised the importance of learning from the past when planning for the future.

(14) Mr Bird referred to the recent announcement from central government to extend Free School Meal vouchers over the summer holidays and the way in which central government had addressed issues relating to the COVID-19 outbreak. He added that much of the financial burden would fall upon local government, making it extremely difficult to nurture the renewal phase.

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(15) Mr Bird suggested that in re-visiting the priorities in the Strategic Plan and Budget, attention should be paid to: educational inequalities; continuing to assist schools to ensure engagement with pupils; supporting schools to re-open to all pupils in September 2020; ensuring respite for carers; working with employers, further education colleges and others to find ways of creating employment for young people; as well as rebuilding an attractive and safe public transport network.

(16) Mr Farrell, Leader of the Labour Group, thanked staff and key workers for their monumental efforts during the pandemic.

(17) Mr Farrell reiterated Mr Gough's comments in relation to equality. He said Kent's residents in lower socio-economic groups and those from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds had been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and addressing these inequalities should be central to the renewal phase. He added that the Labour group would work constructively with Mr Gough and the administration on its response to the 'Black Lives Matter' campaign.

(18) Mr Farrell commended the way in which Kent County Council had provided leadership throughout the crisis, making fair decisions on matters such as PPE acquisition, mortuary provision, launching 'Kent Together' and supporting the care market, whilst also securing further funding for the services provided by Kent for UASC on behalf of the country.

(19) Mr Farrell said Kent's residents and their democratically elected councillors must be central to designing the renewal phase. In addition, he said Kent County Council should continue to support the county's economy, by championing Kent and its businesses, as well as voluntary organisations.

(20) In conclusion, Mr Farrell emphasised the importance of recognising and addressing educational inequalities and the need to protect and support Kent's most vulnerable residents.

(21) Mr Whybrow, Leader of the Independents Group, congratulated the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council on their new roles and thanked the Chairman's predecessor for her hard work over the last 12 months.

(22) Mr Whybrow echoed the thanks of the other group leaders to Council staff and key workers for their efforts throughout the COVID-19 crisis. He also drew attention to the sacrifice and commitment made by frontline staff and urged that the Social Care structure, funding, resources, as well as staff training and remuneration be reviewed with a view to promoting frontline roles.

(23) Mr Whybrow emphasised the importance of a clear, sustainable model for local government funding to allow essential services to be rebuilt. He referred to the recent County Councils Network survey which had predicted a shortfall of £2.5bn to £4.5bn by April 2022 across the sector and said the value of local authorities must be properly acknowledged.

(24) Mr Whybrow referred to Kent County Council's renewal phase. He emphasised the importance of focusing on the green economy, local job creation, active travel and issues related to personal debt, unemployment, educational inequality and mental health.

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(25) In conclusion, Mr Whybrow said Kent County Council and other local authorities had responded well to the pandemic and risen to the challenge in many areas. It was now necessary to demonstrate innovation, vision and commitment to rebuild Kent communities which should be underpinned by the legal powers and necessary funding from central government.

(26) In replying to the comments from the Group Leaders, Mr Gough expressed his appreciation of all that Members and officers had accomplished during the pandemic. He confirmed that lobbying central government for additional funding would continue. He also said that Kent County Council would continue to support schools and the efforts to overcome educational inequalities. He referred to the challenges in relation to recovery in areas such as children's social work and acknowledged that pressures would continue to grow as the lockdown eased.

(27) Mr Gough emphasised the importance of careful preparation for autumn and winter, including a potential second wave of COVID-19. He added that conversations continued to take place between the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, the care sector and himself about the structural and strategic issues faced by the sector.

(28) Mr Gough reemphasised the importance of Member engagement in relation to the Council's renewal phase.

(29) Mr Gough confirmed that Kent County Council had applied for funding from central government to address issues which related to the revival of public transport with a view to ensuring that Kent's congestion and carbon reduction targets could be achieved and to encourage other forms of active transport.

216. Pay Policy Statement

(1) Mrs Prendergast moved, and Mr Gough seconded the following motion:

"The County Council is asked to endorse the Pay Policy Statement."

(2) The motion set out in paragraph (1) above was agreed without a formal vote.

(3) RESOLVED that the Pay Policy Statement 2020-21 be endorsed.

217. Children, Young People and Education Directorate - Top Tier Restructur

(1) Mr Gough moved, and Mr Long seconded the following motion:

“The County Council is invited to endorse the recommendation of the Personnel Committee to agree the :

- (i) formal deletion, in the structure, of the post of Director Education Planning and Access in the Children Young People and Education Directorate;
- (ii) introduction of a new Director – Education role and a new Director – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities role, both as described in Appendix 3 of the County Council agenda pack.”

(2) Following the debate, the Chairman put the motion set out in paragraph (1) above to the vote and the voting was as follows:

For (59)

Mrs A Allen, Mr M Angell, Mr M Balfour, Mr P Barrington-King, Mr P Bartlett, Mrs P Beresford, Mrs R Binks, Mr R Bird, Mr T Bond, Mr A Booth, Mr A Bowles, Mr D Brazier, Mr D Butler, Miss S Carey, Mrs S Chandler, Mr N Chard, Mr I Chittenden, Mrs P Cole, Mr N Collor, Mr A Cook, Mr G Cooke, Mr P Cooper, Mrs M Crabtree, Miss E Dawson, Mrs T Dean, Mrs L Game, Mr R Gough, Ms S Hamilton, Mr M Hill, Mr T Hills, Mrs S Hohler, Mr S Holden, Mr P Homewood, Mr A Hook, Mr E Hotson, Mr J Kite, Mr G Koowaree, Mr P Lake, Ida Linfield, Mr R Long, Mr R Love, Mr G Lymer, Mr A Marsh, Mr J McInroy, Mr D Monk, Mr D Murphy, Mr M Northey, Mr P Oakford, Mr D Pascoe, Mr M Payne, Mrs S Prendergast, Miss C Rankin, Mr H Rayner, Mr A Ridgers, Mr C Simkins, Mr B Sweetland, Mr M Whiting, Mr M Whybrow, Mr J Wright

Against (5)

Mr J Burden, Ms K Constantine, Mr D Farrell, Mr B Lewis, Dr L Sullivan

Abstained (0)

Motion carried

(3) RESOLVED that:

- (i) the formal deletion in the structure of the post of Director Education Planning and Access in the Children Young People and Education Directorate be approved;
- (ii) a new Director – Education role and a new Director – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities role be approved, both as described in Appendix 3 of the County Council agenda pack,

218. Annual Increase of Members' Allowance Scheme

(1) The Chairman moved, and the Vice-Chairman seconded the following motion:

“The County Council is asked to approve the Members’ Allowances Scheme for 2020/21 as set out in Appendix A2 to the report.”

(2) Following the debate, the Chairman put the motion set out in paragraph (1) above to the vote and the voting was as follows:

For (55)

Mrs A Allen, Mr M Angell, Mr M Balfour, Mr P Barrington-King, Mr P Bartlett, Mrs C Bell, Mrs P Beresford, Mrs R Binks, Mr T Bond, Mr A Booth, Mr A Bowles, Mr D Brazier, Mr D Butler, Miss S Carey, Mrs S Chandler, Mr N Chard, Mrs P Cole, Mr N Collor, Mr A Cook, Mrs M Crabtree, Miss E Dawson, Mrs L Game, Mr R Gough, Ms S Hamilton, Mr P Harman, Mr M Hill, Mr T Hills, Mrs S Hohler, Mr S Holden, Mr P Homewood, Mr E Hotson, Mrs L Hurst, Mr J Kite, Mr P Lake, Mr R Long, Mr R Love, Mr G Lymer, Mr S Manion, Mr A Marsh, Ms D Marsh, Mr J McInroy, Mr D Monk, Mr D Murphy, Mr M Northey, Mr P Oakford, Mr D Pascoe, Mr M Payne, Mrs S Prendergast, Miss C Rankin, Mr H Rayner, Mr A Ridgers, Mr C Simkins, Mr B Sweetland, Mr M Whiting, Mr J Wright

Abstained (13)

Mr R Bird, Mr I Chittenden, Ms K Constantine, Mr G Cooke, Mr P Cooper, Mrs T Dean, Mr D Farrell, Mr A Hook, Mr G Koowaree, Mr B Lewis, Ida Linfield, Dr L Sullivan, Mr M Whybrow

Against (0)

Motion carried

(3) RESOLVED that the Members’ Allowances Scheme for 2020/21 as set out in Appendix A2 to the report be approved.

219. Update of the Members Allowances' Scheme

(1) The Chairman moved, and Mr Sweetland seconded the following motion:

“The County Council is asked to agree to the adoption of the updated Members’ Allowance Scheme as set out in Appendix B1 to the report.”

(2) The Chairman agreed that the County Council in October 2020 would receive a report from the General Counsel reviewing the workload of the Chairman of the Selection and Member Services Committee as recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

(3) Following the debate, the motion set out in paragraph (1) above was agreed without a formal vote.

(4) RESOLVED that the adoption of the updated Members' Allowance Scheme as set out in Appendix B1 to the report be approved.

220. Annual Report on Urgent Executive Decisions

(1) Mr Gough moved, and Mr Oakford seconded the following motion:

“The County Council is asked to note the report.”

(2) Following the debate, the motion set out in paragraph (1) above was agreed without a formal vote.

(3) RESOLVED that the Leader's Annual Report on Urgent Executive Decisions be noted.

221. Independent Person (Standards)

(1) Mr Oakford moved, and Mr Kite seconded the following motion:

“The County Council is asked to agree the appointment of Michael George as the Independent Person for the Members' Code of Conduct for the four-year term 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2024.”

(2) Following the debate, the Chairman put the motion set out in paragraph (1) above to the vote and the voting was as follows:

For (65)

Mrs A Allen, Mr M Angell, Mr M Balfour, Mr P Barrington-King, Mr P Bartlett, Mrs C Bell, Mrs P Beresford, Mrs R Binks, Mr R Bird, Mr T Bond, Mr A Booth, Mr A Bowles, Mr D Brazier, Mr J Burden, Mr D Butler, Miss S Carey, Mr P Carter, Mrs S Chandler, Mr I Chittenden, Mrs P Cole, Mr N Collor, Mr A Cook, Mr G Cooke, Mr P Cooper, Mrs M Crabtree, Mr M Dance, Mrs T Dean, Mr D Farrell, Mrs L Game, Mr R Gough, Ms S Hamilton, Mr P Harman, Mr M Hill, Mr T Hills, Mrs S Hohler, Mr S Holden, Mr P Homewood, Mr A Hook, Mr E Hotson, Mrs L Hurst, Mr J Kite, Mr G Koowaree, Mr P Lake, Ida Linfield, Mr R Long, Mr R Love, Mr G Lymer, Mr A Marsh, Ms D Marsh, Mr J McInroy, Mr D Murphy, Mr M Northey, Mr P Oakford, Mr D Pascoe, Mr M Payne, Mrs S Prendergast, Mr K Pugh, Miss C Rankin, Mr H Rayner, Mr A Ridgers, Mr C Simkins, Mr B Sweetland, Mr M Whiting, Mr M Whybrow, Mr J Wright

Against (1)

Ms K Constantine

Abstained (2)

Mr B Lewis, Dr L Sullivan

Motion carried

(3) RESOLVED that Michael George be appointed as the Independent Person for the Members' Code of Conduct for the four-year term 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2024.

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222. Treasury Management 6 Month Review 2019/20

(1) Mr Oakford moved, and Mrs Crabtree seconded the following motion:

“The County Council is asked to note the report.”

(2) The motion set out in paragraph (1) above was agreed without a formal vote.

(3) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(Mr Bartlett, in accordance with the interest declared at minute no 208 (2) above, withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item)