

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, 19 December 2024.

PRESENT: Mr B J Sweetland (Chairman), Mr A M Ridgers (Vice-Chairman), Mr N Baker, Mr P V Barrington-King, Mr P Bartlett, Mr D Beaney, Mrs C Bell, Mrs R Binks, Mr T Bond, Mr A Booth, Mr A Brady, Mr D L Brazier, Mr C Broadley, Mr S R Campkin, Mr T Cannon, Miss S J Carey, Mrs S Chandler, Mrs P T Cole, Mr P Cole, Mr N J Collor, Mr M C Dance, Ms M Dawkins, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Mr M Dendor, Mrs L Game, Mr R W Gough, Ms K Grehan, Ms S Hamilton, Ms J Hawkins, Mr P M Hill, OBE, Mr A R Hills, Mrs S V Hohler, Mr S Holden, Mr M A J Hood, Mr A J Hook, Mrs S Hudson, Mr D Jeffrey, Mr A Kennedy, Mr J A Kite, MBE, Rich Lehmann, Mr R C Love, OBE, Mr T Mallon, Mr R A Marsh, Mrs M McArthur, Mr J P McInroy, Ms J Meade, Mr J Meade, Mr D Murphy, Mr P J Oakford, Ms L Parfitt, Mr C Passmore, Mrs S Prendergast, Mr H Rayner, Mr O Richardson, Mr D Robey, Mr A Sandhu, MBE, Mr T L Shonk, Mr M J Sole, Mr P Stepto, Mr R G Streatfeild, MBE, Dr L Sullivan, Mr R J Thomas, Mr D Watkins, Mr M Whiting, Mr J Wright and Ms L Wright

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

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

270. Apologies for Absence
(Item 1)

The Democratic Services Manager reported apologies from Mr Baldock, Mrs Bruneau, Sir Paul Carter, Mr Chard, Mr Chittenden, Ms Constantine, Mr Crow-Brown, Mr Manion, Mr Ross, Mr Simkins and Mr Webb.

The Chairman reported apologies from Mr Cooke.

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

- 1) Mrs Chandler and Mr Rayner declared a pecuniary interest in item 12 – *Motion for Time Limited Debate 3 - 'Family Farm Tax'* – and would not participate in the debate or vote.
- 2) Mr Lehmann declared an interest in item 6 - *Questions* - that he was a Member of Swale Borough Council.

- 3) Mr Streatfield declared an interest in item 6 - *Questions* - that he was a trustee of an independent special school in Sevenoaks.
- 4) Mr Jeffrey declared an interest in item 12 – *Motion for Time Limited Debate 2 – Electoral Reform in Kent* – that he was a retired member of the Association of Electoral Administrators.

272. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2024, if in order, to be approved as a correct record
(Item 3)

Mr Stepto referred to the 7 November meeting and the debate that took place under Item 12 - *Motion for Time Limited Debate 4 – Climate and Nature Bill*. Mr Oakford clarified that there was an agreement that the Pension Fund would not invest in Kent however a formal policy was not in place.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 7 November 2024 be approved as a correct record.

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

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Panel on 30 July 2024 be noted.

274. Chairman's Announcements
(Item 5)

- 1) With great sadness the Chairman informed Members of the death of Mr Richard Parry, former Conservative Member for Sevenoaks West from 2005 to 2017. During his time at KCC, Mr Parry served as Chairman of Scrutiny Committee from 2013 to 2017 and Vice Chairman of Governance and Audit Committee from 2012 to 2017. Mr Parry also served on Policy & Resources Committee, Superannuation Fund Committee, Governor Appointments Panel, Planning Applications Committee and Kent & Medway Fire & Rescue Authority.
- 2) The Chairman invited Members to speak and tributes were made by Mr Gough, Mr Rayner, Mr Holden, Mr Brady, Mr Streatfeild, and Mr Lehmann.
- 3) Mr Sweetland proposed, and Mr Ridgers seconded, that the Council formally record the sense of loss it feels on the sad passing of Mr Parry and extends to his family and friends its heartfelt sympathy to them in their sad bereavement.

Agreed unanimously.

- 4) The Chairman held a one-minute silence in memory of Mr Richard Parry.
- 5) The Chairman extended his warmest congratulations to Michelle Bramble, who recently won a Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Workforce Award for the category Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champion.
- 6) The Chairman also congratulated Talha Ghaffar who was shortlisted for the Graduate of the Year category in the same LGC Workforce Awards.
- 7) The Chairman congratulated the Internal Audit and Counter Fraud team, who were the winners of the Excellence in Public Sector Audit award at this year's Public Finance Awards.
- 8) The Chairman said that the Council had received a royal award for its work in boosting road safety awareness with young drivers and passengers and congratulated the Kent Safer Road Users Team who had been recognised with the 2024 Prince Michael International Road Safety Award.
- 9) The Remembrance Festival held in November raised £5,000 for the Royal British Legion and the Army Benevolent Fund. The Chairman thanked all those who helped support the event.
- 10) The Chairman thanked all staff and Members who had supported this year's Corporate Parenting Christmas campaign. The Chairman highlighted the importance of the work done to raise awareness of Corporate Parenting across the Council.

275. Questions
(Item 6)

In accordance with Sections 14.15 to 14.22 of the Constitution, 11 questions were submitted by the deadline and 10 questions were put to the Executive as a questioner had given apologies. 10 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.

276. Report by Leader of the Council
(Item 7)

- 1) Mr Gough spoke about the recent publication of the English Devolution White Paper which set out government's plans for devolution in the form of Mayoral Strategic Authorities. He explained that whilst much of the devolution offer would build on existing proposals in areas such as economic development, skills, and infrastructure; strategic planning and public service reform were also central to it. Devolution would offer an opportunity for Kent to regain strategic powers and capacity that had been lost as a result of national policy choices and the clear geographic boundaries of Kent and Medway, which were shared with major public

services, would put the county in a strong position to bring public services closer together and deliver better services and value.

- 2) Mr Gough said the Kent and Medway approach to devolution had been developed, along with the 12 districts, through partnerships across a number of key areas, such as the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership, the Employment Task Force, Pathways for All in post-16 education and skills, and the Integrated Care Strategy. All of which provided a firm foundation for the future.
- 3) The Leader explained that the government would set out early in 2025 which areas would belong to the Devolution Priority Programme and he believed that whilst ensuring the right decision was made, it was in the Council's interests to move sooner rather than later. He highlighted that all 14 local authorities in Kent would be affected and emphasised that this was potentially the most transformational issue facing the Council in many years.
- 4) Mr Gough referred to the government's revised National Planning Policy Framework which was published on 12 December and followed a consultation on the role of planning committees.
- 5) Regarding the Local Government Financial Settlement, Mr Gough noted that whilst improvements in the position for the Council could be seen, pressures remained. He welcomed an increase to the Social Care Grant and the Children's Social Care Prevention Grant, however, he commented that the Recovery Grant was not targeted on areas of greatest spending pressures and this raised questions as to the longer term government approach to funding allocation and the consequences of this for the Council.
- 6) Mr Gough expressed concern at government decisions that would impact the Council's providers such as in relation to the national living wage, the national minimum wage, and employers' national insurance contributions; and about which he and the Cabinet Member would liaise with providers and government ministers.
- 7) Mr Gough referred to the Household Support Fund and in particular the Just Missing Out payment, which went alongside the Council's initiative to boost the take-up of pension credit.
- 8) The Kent and Medway Resilience Forum's implementation of Operation Brock from 15 – 22 December would cover the projected peak tourist traveller period for Eurotunnel and the Port of Dover. Mr Gough said Operation Brock, under current circumstances, remained the only available option and the Council continued to work with National Highways, the Kent and Medway Resilience Forum and the Department for Transport for a permanent solution.
- 9) Regarding the Entry/Exit System (EES) Mr Gough expressed his preference for the European Commission's proposed phased approach over a six

month period and highlighted that work would continue with partners to prepare contingency plans.

- 10) Finally, on 14 November Mr Gough welcomed, along with Mrs Chandler and Mr Brady, Dame Angela Eagle, Minister of State at the Home Office, and Janet Davey, Minister for Children and Families at the Department of Education, to see first-hand two of the Council's reception centres. He said this was an opportunity to emphasise the need for the National Transfer Scheme to work effectively and efficiently and explained that so far this year there had been 2,666 arrivals of young people, and 2,310 transfers through the National Transfer Scheme. This reflected the approach the Council had taken to take the pressure off the county, but more remained to be done and the case for which was made to Ministers.
- 11) The Leader of the Labour Group, Mr Brady, spoke about devolution and said he understood there had been meetings between the Kent leaders but as yet Kent residents had not been consulted. Mr Brady stressed the importance of working with Kent residents and asked for clarification regarding the deadline for initial proposals whilst questioning what the Administration would decide in relation to the Devolution Priority Programme and whether the elections in May would be cancelled.
- 12) Mr Brady turned to the Local Government Finance Settlement which he said was better than expected with the Labour government estimating an additional £20.1million for adults and an additional £6.2 million for children, which was more than was allocated last year. He said although adult social care needed more funding, it was a step in the right direction. Mr Brady asked the Leader how he proposed to provide more money for local services and whether this would come from unfunded tax cuts and unfunded spending pledges, or by introducing a wealth tax. Mr Brady commented that national insurance increases for the Council's staff would be funded by government and questioned whether it was right that commissioned services should be moved in-house.
- 13) Mr Brady hoped sufficient communication was in place regarding pension credit applications, and encouraged Kent residents, who were eligible, to apply before it closed on 21 December. He welcomed the joined-up approach from government regarding unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC).
- 14) Mr Lehmann, the Leader of the Green and Independents Group, welcomed Mr Mallon to the Council and Mr Lewis to the Green and Independents Group. He commented on the recent government announcement regarding local government reorganisation and how quickly developments had progressed in recent weeks. He referred to Labour's election manifesto which he said did not include reference to unitarisation and a government letter sent to council leaders in July about devolution which stated that government would not force areas to take on a mayor. Mr Lehmann commented that the government's budget Red Book published in October stated that the English Devolution White Paper would set out more detail on

the government's devolution plans including simpler structures but Mr Lehmann questioned whether this was appropriate for a county as large and diverse as Kent.

- 15) Mr Lehmann spoke about the cost of replacing a county council with three unitary authorities and suggested, instead, that the government acknowledge that the Council was an outlier, fund it properly, and work with it to come up with a solution which would allow the districts to remain in place under a county-wide strategic authority or assembly.
- 16) Mr Lehmann said the decision to delay elections if devolution was progressed quickly would come from the Leader and he feared this may indicate how much power would be concentrated in the hands of directly elected mayors. Mr Lehmann said this decision would diminish the democratic power of Kent's residents and he questioned where the transparency and accountability was in making it. Mr Lehmann asked whether the Leader would feel able to share with the Council whether or not he is planning to request the suspension of next May's elections.
- 17) Mr Hook, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, also welcomed Mr Mallon to the Council and wished Members a restful and Merry Christmas.
- 18) Turning to the White Paper, he said his group considered there were serious defects with the proposals and content of the paper and said it was not necessary to create a new authority or a mayor to regain strategic powers. He commented that the word 'democracy' or 'democratic' did not appear once in the White Paper, the word 'people' only appeared a few items and there was no reference to citizens leading the process. He stressed that the process should involve all who wanted a say in designing local government, including parishes, small businesses, charities, trade unions, universities, and private citizens.
- 19) Mr Hook referred to Scottish devolution which brought together all of civil society in Scotland to discuss and design what devolution should look like. He suggested that a conference on the future of democracy in Kent was needed to bring together all of Kent's civil society to listen to each other and share ideas. He commented that the White Paper offered no new powers for councils, only to strategic authorities, and that ought not to be acceptable. Mr Hook reminded Members of his view that it was much better to elect a team rather than one individual.
- 20) Mr Hook said a mayor would not belong to the people but would follow the government's agenda, would be in power for four years and impossible to remove if things started to go wrong. He commented on the lack of diversity currently amongst mayors across the county and the budget a candidate would need to run a competitive campaign. He said it was an idea which was elitist and oligarchic.
- 21) The Leader responded to some of the points made by the Group Leaders. He said it was clear what the direction of travel from government was and

the question was how the Council would achieve the best outcome for Kent residents. Mr Gough referred to some mayoral authorities within the country and said on the whole the experience of mayors had been a positive one. He said it was important that the local government element of a mayoral strategic authority was a partner with the mayor within it, and its role was strategic.

- 22) Mr Gough said there were decisions to be made quickly in January on the Devolution Priority Programme and he stressed the importance of the Council engaging with this sooner rather than later. He highlighted that it was a case of pulling down strategic powers from national government and there were a number of elements of a Mayoral Strategic Authority that would make a huge difference including being eligible for single block transfers of funds and the opportunity to bring together public services within the geography of Kent and Medway.
- 23) Mr Gough welcomed that, as in previous years, the finance settlement had been better than expected but noted that it would not solve all of the Council's problems.
- 24) Finally, the Leader welcomed Mr Mallon to the Council, wished staff and Members a very happy Christmas, and thanked staff for the work they did in delivering to Kent residents.
- 25) RESOLVED that the Leader's report be noted.

277. Corporate Parenting Panel - Annual Report
(Item 8)

- 1) Caroline Smith, Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting and apprentices from Virtual School Kent, Nathan Moody, Jack Phelps, Kiron Bullen and Connor Cruickshank introduced the item.
- 2) Mrs Chandler proposed, and Mrs Prendergast seconded the motion that

"The County Council notes the report and associated Member responsibilities as corporate parents"
- 3) Following the debate, the Chairman put the motion set out in paragraph 2.
- 4) RESOLVED that the County Council notes the report and associated Member responsibilities as corporate parents.

278. Local Transport Plan
(Item 9)

- 1) Mr Baker proposed, and Mr Robey seconded the motion that

“County Council is asked to approve and adopt Local Transport Plan 5: Striking the Balance.

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

For (51)

Mr Baker, Mr Barrington-King, Mr Brady, Mr Bartlett, Mr Beaney, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Booth, Mr Bond, Mr Brazier, Mr Broadley, Mr Campkin, Mr Cannon, Miss Carey, Mrs Chandler, Mr Cole, Mrs Cole, Mr Collor, Mr Dance, Ms Dawkins, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Ms Grehan, Ms Hamilton, Mr Hill, Mr Hills, Mrs Hohler, Mr Holden, Mr Hood, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kite, Mr Lehmann, Mr Love, Mr Mallon, Mr Marsh, Mrs McArthur, Mr McInroy, Ms Meade, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Ms Parfitt, Mr Richardson, Mr Ridgers, Mr Robey, Mr Sandhu, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Mr Whiting, Mr Wright

Against (6)

Mrs Dean, Mr Hook, Mr Passmore, Mr Shonk, Mr Sole, Mr Streatfeild

Abstain (2)

Mr Stepto, Ms Wright

Motion carried.

- 3) RESOLVED that the County Council approves and adopts Local Transport Plan 5: Striking the Balance.

279. Governance Working Party Update
(Item 10)

This item was deferred to the next appropriate meeting of Full Council.

280. Proportionality Update
(Item 11)

This item was deferred to the next appropriate meeting of Full Council.

281. Motions for Time Limited Debate
(Item 12)

Motion for Time Limited Debate 1 – Integrated Care Strategy

- 1) Mr Brady proposed, and Ms Meade seconded the motion that

“This County Council resolves to:

- Agree that all decisions, where relevant, must align with the Integrated Care Strategy objectives and request that decision making documentation demonstrates this.
- Request that decision-making documentation, where relevant, will evidence how a decision is working towards achieving the Integrated Care Strategy’s progress indicators.
- Request that if a decision is made which does none of the above, then a reason for this must be cited within the decision-making documentation.”

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

For (15)

Mr Brady, Mr Campkin, Ms Dawkins, Mrs Dean, Ms Grehan, Ms Hawkins, Mr Hood, Mr Hook, Mr Lehmann, Ms Meade, Mr Passmore, Mr Sole, Mr Stepto, Mr Streatfeild, Ms Wright

Against (35)

Mr Baker, Mr Beaney, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Booth, Mr Bond, Mr Brazier, Miss Carey, Mr Cannon, Mrs Chandler, Mr Cole, Mrs Cole, Mr Dance, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Mr Hill, Mr Hills, Mrs Hohler, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kite, Mr Love, Mr Marsh, Mr McInroy, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Ms Parfitt, Mr Richardson, Mr Ridgers, Mr Robey, Mr Sandhu, Mr Shonk, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins

Abstain (1)

Mr Mallon

Motion lost.

Motion for Time Limited Debate 2 – Electoral Reform in Kent

3) Mr Streatfeild proposed, and Mr Hook seconded the motion that

“This Council notes:

- a. Public trust in the UK Government and local government has sunk to its lowest-ever recorded level. In 2023, the Office for National Statistics published data from a survey of UK adults with 34% saying they trusted local government, and 27% the UK Government.
- b. The 2024 UK General Election was the most disproportionate ever, with the new Government winning 411 of the 650 available seats in the House of Commons, whilst only receiving 33.7% of the total number of votes.

- c. A majority of votes cast in the 2024 General Election were for candidates who were not elected – at 58%, the highest in seventy years.
- d. Turnout at the 2024 General Election in the South East was 64%, the lowest since 2001.
- e. Many Kent citizens have not registered to vote.
- f. In the previous Parliament, the former Conservative Government weakened the independence of the Electoral Commission, removed the right of people to express a 2nd preference for the vote systems for mayoral elections in England, and introduced the Voter ID scheme.
- g. The work of organisations like Make Votes Matter, Unlock Democracy and the Electoral Reform Society, amongst others, in building the case for electoral reform.
- h. The new Government has not committed to reform of the voting system.
- i. Other parts of the UK, use the Single Transferable Vote (STV) system, and have done so for many years. In Northern Ireland, STV has been used in local elections since 1973, and in Scotland STV has been used for council elections since 2007.

This Council believes that:

- a. The current electoral system used in English local elections, referred to as ‘first past the post’ underpins the adversarial and divisive nature of Kent politics, and feeds public disillusion.
- b. Kent’s electoral system leaves thousands of people feeling that their votes are irrelevant and their views unrepresented.
- c. It is undemocratic that, under the electoral system in Kent, not all votes count the same, which leaves thousands of people feeling disempowered and without a proper say in how the county is run.
- d. Improving our democracy is an important end in itself, but also a necessary step to building a better county with good schools and hospitals, affordable housing and safe communities.

This Council resolves to:

Request that the Leader writes to the Prime Minister, and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, requesting the following:

1. Replace the ‘first past the post’ system for Kent County Council elections, with proportional representation by the Single Transferable Vote (STV) system.
2. Implement a system for elections for single positions such as directly elected mayors that enables voters to express an order of preference and require a winning candidate to achieve more than 50% of the vote after lower placed candidates are eliminated.
3. The UK adopts an automatic system of inclusion on the electoral register.
4. Scrap the Voter ID requirement.

5. Lower the age of universal suffrage to 16.
 6. Extend the right to full participation in civic life, including the ability to stand for office or vote in UK referendums, local elections and general elections, to all EU citizens with settled status, and to anyone else who has lived in the UK for at least five years and has the right to stay permanently.
 7. Extend political education in Kent secondary schools, to prepare future citizens to participate in public life.
- 4) Following the debate the Chairman put the motion set out in paragraph 3 to the vote and the voting was as follows:

For (14)

Mr Brady, Mr Campkin, Ms Dawkins, Mrs Dean, Ms Grehan, Ms Hawkins, Mr Hood, Mr Hook, Mr Lehmann, Ms Meade, Mr Passmore, Mr Sole, Mr Stepto, Mr Streatfeild

Against (37)

Mr Baker, Mr Beaney, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Booth, Mr Bond, Mr Brazier, Miss Carey, Mr Cannon, Mrs Chandler, Mr Cole, Mrs Cole, Mr Dance, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Mr Hill, Mr Hills, Mrs Hohler, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kite, Mr Love, Mr Mallon, Mr McInroy, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Ms Parfitt, Mr Rayner, Mr Richardson, Mr Ridgers, Mr Robey, Mr Sandhu, Mr Shonk, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Ms Wright

Abstain (0)

Motion lost.

Motion for Time Limited Debate 3 – ‘Family Farm Tax’

- 5) Mr Meade proposed, and Mr Cannon seconded the motion that

“The County Council resolves;

1. To declare our complete solidarity with the farmers of Kent in opposing the Government’s decision to change the long-established Inheritance Tax Relief for Agricultural Land as announced in the Government’s October Budget.
2. To recognise the monumental importance of farming to the local economy of Kent, which contributes in excess of £405m annually to our local economy and supports over 13,250 jobs across the County.
3. To commend the hard work and resilience of Kent’s farmers and to acknowledge the important contribution that Kent farms make to the overall food security of the United Kingdom.
4. To request that the Leader of the Council writes to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to outline the Council’s dismay at this decision, and further to call on the Government to reverse this decision, noting the

detrimental impact that the Family Farm Tax will have on Kent's farmers and our local economy.

5. To request that the Executive calls upon all Kent MPs to protect the Kentish rural way of life by supporting their farming constituents, and more widely the residents and businesses of Kent, by proactively opposing the Government's decision to tax family farms in this way.
 6. To request that the Cabinet Member for Economic Development engages with Kent's farmers and community representatives to better understand the difficulties faced by the farming sector at this time and to explore what further written support the County Council can provide to assist their campaigns."
- 6) Following points raised during the debate in relation to paragraphs 4 and 5 of the motion, the General Counsel advised that the drafting of the letter to government could incorporate the points raised and be agreed by the Leader outside of the meeting.
- 7) Following the debate, the Chairman put the motion set out in paragraph 5 to the vote and the voting was as follows.

For (35)

Mr Baker, Mrs Bell, Mrs Binks, Mr Booth, Mr Bond, Miss Carey, Mr Cannon, Mr Cole, Mr Dance, Mrs Dean, Mr Dendor, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Mr Hill, Mr Hills, Mr Hook, Mrs Hohler, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kite, Mr Love, Mr Mallon, Mr McInroy, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Ms Parfitt, Mr Passmore, Mr Robey, Mr Sandhu, Mr Sole, Mr Shonk, Mr Streatfeild, Mr Thomas, Mr Watkins, Ms Wright

Against (0)

Abstain (9)

Mr Brady, Mr Campkin, Ms Dawkins, Ms Grehan, Ms Hawkins, Mr Hood, Mr Lehmann, Ms Meade, Mr Stepto

Motion carried.

- 8) RESOLVED that the County Council resolves:
1. To declare our complete solidarity with the farmers of Kent in opposing the Government's decision to change the long-established Inheritance Tax Relief for Agricultural Land as announced in the Government's October Budget.
 2. To recognise the monumental importance of farming to the local economy of Kent, which contributes in excess of £405m annually to our local economy and supports over 13,250 jobs across the County.
 3. To commend the hard work and resilience of Kent's farmers and to acknowledge the important contribution that Kent farms make to the overall food security of the United Kingdom.

4. To request that the Leader of the Council writes to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to outline the Council's dismay at this decision, and further to call on the Government to reverse this decision, noting the detrimental impact that the Family Farm Tax will have on Kent's farmers and our local economy.
 5. To request that the Executive calls upon all Kent MPs to protect the Kentish rural way of life by supporting their farming constituents, and more widely the residents and businesses of Kent, by proactively opposing the Government's decision to tax family farms in this way.
 6. To request that the Cabinet Member for Economic Development engages with Kent's farmers and community representatives to better understand the difficulties faced by the farming sector at this time and to explore what further written support the County Council can provide to assist their campaigns.
- 9) The Chairman proposed that Council resolve to extend the meeting beyond 4.30pm and it was agreed unanimously.

Motion for Time Limited Debate 4 – Climate and Nature Bill

- 10) Jenni Hawkins proposed, and Mr Stepto seconded the motion that

“County Council notes that:

The Climate and Nature Bill (formerly, the Climate and Ecology Bill) has been introduced in the UK Parliament on four occasions since 2020, including most recently in the House of Commons on 16 October 2024 by Dr Roz Savage MP. Its second reading will take place on 24 January 2025, and it is now progressing through the UK Parliament with cross-party support. The Bill is backed by [250] cross-party MPs and Peers; [372] local authorities and the London Assembly; [1,240] scientists, such as Prof Sir Partha Dasgupta and Prof Sir David King; NGOs, like The Wildlife Trusts, Doctors' Association UK, Friends of the Earth, The W.I., The Climate Coalition and CPRE; businesses, including The Co-operative Bank, Arup, JLL, SUEZ UK and Ecotricity; and 53,000 members of the public. The Bill would require the UK Government to develop and deliver an integrated climate and nature strategy, as part of:

1. Tackling the intertwined crises in climate and nature in a joined-up way;
2. Reducing emissions fairly and rapidly for the highest chance of meeting the UK's obligation to limiting global warming to 1.5°C;
3. Halting and reversing the decline in biodiversity by setting nature measurably on the path to recovery by 2030;
4. Taking responsibility for the UK's overseas emissions and ecological footprints;

5. Prioritising nature in decision-making, and ending fossil fuel imports and production as rapidly as possible;
6. Ensuring that no-one and no community is left behind in the just transition by providing retraining for those currently working in fossil fuel industries; and
7. Involving citizens in finding a fair way forward via an independent, representative and temporary 'Climate and Nature Assembly', in order to bring public opinion along with the pace of change required.

This Council resolves to request that the Cabinet Member for Environment:

1. Ensures that its policies align with the relevant sections of the Climate and Nature Bill;
2. Inform local residents, and local press/media, of our motion;
3. Write to all elected MPs in Kent to inform them that our motion has been passed, urging them to sign up to support the Bill, and requesting that they vote for the Bill at its second reading on 24 January 2025.
4. Write to Zero Hour, the organisers of the cross-party campaign for the Bill, expressing our official support (councils@zerohour.uk)."

- 11) Following the debate, the Chairman put the motion set out in paragraph 10 to the vote and the voting was as follows.

For (15)

Mr Booth, Mr Brady, Mr Campkin, Ms Dawkins, Mrs Dean, Ms Grehan, Ms Hawkins, Mr Hood, Mr Hook, Mr Lehmann, Ms Meade, Mr Passmore, Mr Sole, Mr Stepto, Mr Streatfeild

Against (23)

Mr Baker, Mrs Bell, Mr Bond, Mr Cannon, Mrs Chandler, Mr Cole, Mr Dance, Mr Dendor, Mr Gough, Mr Hills, Mrs Hohler, Mr Jeffrey, Mr Kite, Mr Love, Mr McInroy, Mr Meade, Mr Murphy, Mr Oakford, Mr Rayner, Mr Robey, Mr Sandhu, Mr Shonk, Mr Thomas

Abstain (0)

Motion lost.

282. Remote meetings and proxy voting consultation
(Item 13)

This item was taken after item 9.

- 1) Mr Jeffrey proposed, and Mr Kite seconded the motion that

“County Council is asked to:

- a) Note the report;
 - b) Comment on the key points for a response to the government consultation;
 - c) Delegate to the Monitoring Officer the submission of the response to the Consultation in consultation with the Leader of the Council.”
- 2) Following the debate, the Chairman put the motion set out in paragraph 1.
- 3) RESOLVED that the County Council:
- a) Notes the report;
 - b) Comments on the key points for a response to the government consultation;
 - c) Delegates to the Monitoring Officer the submission of the response to the Consultation in consultation with the Leader of the Council.