

MINUTES of the SPECIAL MEETING of the SWANSCOMBE & GREENHITHE TOWN COUNCIL
held at THE COUNCIL OFFICES, THE GROVE, SWANSCOMBE on THURSDAY 9 AUGUST
2018 at 7.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs A E D Barham (Town Mayor)
Councillor Mrs S P Butterfill
Councillor Ms L M Cross
Councillor Ms L M Hall
Councillor P C Harris
Councillor Ms L C Howes
Councillor B R Parry
Councillor A S Reach
Councillor B E Read
Councillor Mrs I A Read

ALSO PRESENT: Martin Harding – Assistant Town Clerk/RFO

ABSENT: Councillor Dr J M Harman
Councillor P M Harman
Councillor K M Kelly
Councillor Mrs M B Kelly
Councillor R J Lees
Councillor Mrs L Manchester

142/18-19. ARRANGEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS REGARDING FILMING OR RECORDING THE MEETING.

The Town Mayor explained the arrangements and constraints relating to the filming or recording of the meeting.

143/18-19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors' K G Basson, J A Hayes, D J Mote and S J Ryan.

144/18-19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THE AGENDA.

There were none.

The Chairman gave the opportunity for the meeting to be adjourned at this point to accept questions from the public.

145/18-19. DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW.

Members considered the recent letters sent out by Dartford Borough Council (DBC) to residents of Swanscombe and Greenhithe regarding the Community Governance Review and the three proposals that had been agreed by Dartford Borough Council.

Members felt that the letter, and the subsequent online consultation, were insufficient as the letter did not explain alternative options available for comment. It was considered strange that, given the importance of the consultation, that letters were not addressed to each resident rather than individual household. Members commented that the letters had been sent in envelopes headed "your vote counts" which misled some residents regarding the nature of the documents enclosed.

Members discussed the content of the letter and the online material as neither included the deadline for the consultation. Members felt that given the limited internet access for some residents the information contained within the letter would limit the ability to formalise a strong opinion for any option. Members felt in wrong that the financial implications costs associated with undertaking each option had not been included for the public to consider. Members believed this lack of information was associated with the hurried way in which the consultation had been undertaken.

A brief discussion was held on each option and consideration for its implications. Members asked whether the financial implications were being considered within the Town Council. The ATC/RFO confirmed that this was the case and that different versions of the estimated expenditure for 2019-2020 were being undertaken.

Members questioned whether results of the consultation would be transparent and available following the result.

Members expressed their disappointment that, at the request of the Leader of DBC, the comments requested from the Town Council, ahead of the 16 July 2018 General Assembly Meeting at DBC were not considered by that meeting.

The ATC/RFO confirmed that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) had corresponded to confirm they were awaiting the request for consent from DBC for any proposed changes to parish arrangements. They would not become involved or comment on the consultation process currently being undertaken.

Members unanimously confirmed the Town Councils support for option 1 within the consultation and requested that this be supported with a letter to the Electoral Services Department at DBC, copying in the LGBCE, expressing the Town Councils dissatisfaction with how the consultation was being undertaken.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Town Council submit a response in favour of option 1 from the consultation and highlighting the original comments made to DBC to support this.
2. That the response be accompanied by a letter expressing the Town Councils dissatisfaction with the manner in which the consultation was being handled.

There being no further business to transact the Meeting closed at 8.10 pm.

Signed:

(Chairman)

Date:-

