

MINUTES of the SPECIAL MEETING of the SWANSCOMBE & GREENHITHE TOWN COUNCIL
held at THE COUNCIL OFFICES, THE GROVE, SWANSCOMBE on WEDNESDAY 9 OCTOBER
2019 at 8.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Peter Harman - Town Mayor
Councillor Anita Barham
Councillor Emma Ben Moussa
Councillor Sue Butterfill
Councillor Lorna Cross
Councillor Ann Duke
Councillor Dr Jo Harman
Councillor Peter Harris
Councillor Jay Shah
Councillor Maurice Weet

ALSO PRESENT: x 19 Member of the public
Ann Allen MBE – Chairman of Kent County Council (KCC)
Jeremy Kite MBE – Leader of Dartford Borough Council (DBC)
Graham Blew – Town Clerk
Martin Harding – Assistant Town Clerk/RFO
Sandra Kelleher – Administration Assistant
Rebecca Rawlings – Administration Assistant

ABSENT: There were none.

278/19-20. 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.

279/19-20. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors' Linda Hall, John Hayes and Lesley Howes.

280/19-20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THE AGENDA.

There were none.

281/19-20. THE TOWN MAYOR WILL STATE THE OBJECT OF THE MEETING.

The Town Mayor stated that under Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to confer the honour upon persons who have rendered eminent service to the council's area.

And that, further to minute 153/19-20, the honour was being conferred at this meeting of the Council specially convened for such purpose.

282/19-20. HONORARY FREEMAN.

The Town Mayor put forward a motion:

"That, pursuant to its powers under Section 249 (5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council do confer upon the following;

Mr Bryan E Read

The title of Honorary Freeman of the Parish of Swanscombe and Greenhithe, in recognition of the eminent services which he has rendered to the Council and the Council's area."

Councillor Sue Butterfill seconded the motion.

The motion was unanimously agreed.

The Town Mayor gave a brief summary of Bryan's time in public office, including 36 years as a Town and Borough Councillor from 1983 to 2019, Town Mayor on six occasions, Cabinet member at Dartford Borough Council along with sitting on various committees and as a Lead Member for both the Paramount Theme Park and Ebbsfleet Development.

Councillor Sue Butterfill read out an extract from the minutes of the first recorded meeting of the Swanscombe and Greenhithe Residents Association dated 31 October 1980. The extract highlighted the topics of discussion at the time were refuse collection, parking and stray dogs. Councillor Sue Butterfill confirmed that this minute book, along with two others showing the formation of the residents association, would be bound and presented to Bryan to show the work he had undertaken in creating the Association 39 years ago.

The Town Mayor introduced the Chairman of KCC, Ann Allen MBE who expressed her delight at being able to attend this evening as she regarded both Bryan and Ivy Read as close personal friends. She recounted a memory of her first time as Mayor of Dartford when she made the decision to take Bryan and Ivy with her to Buckingham Palace regardless of their differing political affiliations. She thanked Bryan for his work over the years and stated that Kent was lucky to have someone like Bryan who had helped to put Swanscombe on the map.

The Town Mayor introduced the Leader of DBC, Jeremy Kite MBE who explained that although 1980 was a significant date, the most important to him was 17:26 on a damp and gloomy day in May 2003. This was the meeting where the Swanscombe and Greenhithe Residents Association had invited the Conservative Councillors to the Leisure Centre to discuss forming a coalition. He recounted that he did not remember ever laughing so much during a meeting and that although they pitched proposals to the Residents Association and listened to Bryan's list of what he wanted the meeting somehow ended in the pub. He recalled Bryan always being a very influential individual who somehow always managed to get what he wanted. That first meeting did not end with a contract but with an agreement and a handshake. Although they did not always agree during future discussion between them, they always ended with a handshake. Following the election in 2007, when a majority was secured at Dartford, he made the decision to have Bryan as part of the Cabinet at Dartford Borough Council, again regardless of their political differences. Councillor Kite stated that if he had to give one word to describe Bryan it would be integrity. He was proud to have been able to provide the building this meeting was taking place in. This was an item off Bryan's list as he wanted a home for this Council. He regarded Bryan as a great friend and a privilege to know and that Bryan was the most influential individual in local politics to have never actually got involved in local politics, he always put his community first.

❖ ***At this point the Town Mayor invited, and accepted, contributions from both councillors and the public.***

Councillor Maurice Weet confirmed that although he was a new Councillor, he was in post because of what Bryan had started and he hoped that he could continue and echo the achievements Bryan had made.

Richard Lees was pleased with the words that had been said regarding Bryan and felt that this was a fabulous tribute. He stated that it was only fitting that Bryan received the first award of this type and that this had now set a very high benchmark. Richard recounted that he got involved in politics because of Bryan's passion and how community was always at the heart of whatever he did.

Councillor Anita Barham recalled how, in 1991, her husband handed over the mayoral chain to Bryan when he was first made Town Mayor. Although at the time they were from different political parties it did not matter as he was such a nice person.

Councillor Ann Duke explained that Bryan, although he would not be aware, had inspired both herself and her brother, from a very young age, to become involved in the local community. She wanted to thank him for his inspiration.

Dartford Borough Councillor, David Mote stated that it was a privilege to have known Bryan and that his family had known Bryan and Ivy for longer than him as they had taken his children with them on a trip to Blackpool many years ago which his son still remembers to this day. Councillor Mote said that he had always found Bryan to be eminently fair during his time on the Town Council and that during that time Bryan had ensured that opportunities were in place for opposition members, like himself, to be on the Town

Councils Committees. During that time Bryan had really shown him what the meaning of community was all about.

Councillor Lorna Cross wanted to thank both Bryan and Ivy. She confirmed that she would not be here if it were not for them, and both had been an example for her.

Local Historian, Christoph Bull stated that it was a great pleasure and honour to be here this evening and that Bryan fully deserved all of the words that had been said about him so far. Christoph confirmed that they both shared a great passion for the community of Swanscombe and Greenhithe and given that his area of expertise is local history, he could clearly state that Bryan was the most significant local figure in Swanscombe and Greenhithe since the Second World War.

Dave Jonson stated that although he had only lived in Swanscombe a short period he was aware of who Bryan was and what he had done for this Town.

The Town Mayor finished by recounting how he had begun in politics whilst skiing in Andorra with his daughter. He had received a phone call from Bryan who just lured him into becoming involved in the community. He hoped that the current councillors could go some way to continuing what Bryan had started.

The Town Mayor then presented Mr Bryan E Read with a framed scroll conferring the title of Honorary Freeman of the Parish of Swanscombe and Greenhithe.

As a mark of the gratitude the Council had for the service she had also given as a Town Councillor and the support provided the Town Mayor also presented a bouquet of flowers to Mrs Ivy Read.

Bryan Read expressed how nice and appreciated all the words that had been said this evening were. Reflecting back he would not have done anything differently. He told the story of how the Residents Association was formed in protest to imposed changes of refuse collection from metal bins to black bags, initially trialled in Swanscombe. It was following this that the group decided to put people forward for election to try and change things. He wanted to thank his family for their full backing as he knew how his time involved with council business had been a burden on them. He was pleased to have worked with so many great people over the years. He finished by imparting a small piece of advice..... "Remember that you cannot always solve everything but the most important thing to do is to always listen and empathise, as this goes a long way."

There being no further business to transact the Meeting closed at 8.35 pm.

Signed: _____ Date:- _____
(Chairman)