

Minutes of a Meeting of Mid Sussex District Council held on 12 November 2014 from 7.00 pm to 8.20 pm.

Present: Councillors:

Gordon Marples (Chairman)
Peter Reed (Vice-Chairman)

Jonathan Ash-Edwards	Bruce Forbes	Natalie March*
Simon Banham	Richard Goddard	Gary Marsh*
Stephen Barnett	Susan Hatton	Peter Martin
Andrew Barrett-Miles	Ginny Heard	Edward Matthews
Richard Bates	Christopher Hersey	Simon McMenemy*
Edward Belsey	Margaret Hersey	Pru Moore
Margaret Belsey	Catrin Ingham	John O'Brien
Liz Bennett	Anne Jones, MBE*	Robert Salisbury
Pete Bradbury	Denis Jones	Ian Simpson*
Heidi Brunsdon*	Graham Knight*	Christopher Snowling
Jack Callaghan	Jim Knight	Dick Sweatman
Cherry Catharine	Jacqui Landriani	Mandy Thomas-Atkin*
Rod Clarke	Andrew Lea*	Colin Trumble*
Phillip Coote	Mike Livesey	Neville Walker
Mims Davies*	Andrew MacNaughton	Garry Wall
David Dorking	Bob Mainstone	Norman Webster
Kathleen Dumbovic	Bruce Forbes	Emily White

*Absent

43. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC – RULE 9

A written question was received from Mr Elliott Fielding:

“Can the Councillors confirm how the Built Up Area Boundaries for villages will be reviewed and amended to enable thriving villages to remain vibrant, reflecting and catering for both current and future needs as per the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework)? Will review be within the District Plan or Neighbourhood Plan process?

How is MSDC ensuring it correctly reflects the community's needs in its draft District Plan when the majority of the Neighbourhood Plans are being developed and housing numbers are yet to be defined with DP5 (District Plan Policy 5 – housing) having little content?

Is the timing of the consultation correct when required data is missing?”

A written reply was delivered by the Cabinet Member for Planning:

We have always been clear that the District Plan is a ‘bottom up’ plan, and that Neighbourhood Plans are its bedrock. It is for Neighbourhood Plans to review their Built Up Area Boundaries and allocate sites for their towns and villages to meet local needs and aspirations.

We have encouraged Town and Parish Councils to make good progress on their Neighbourhood Plans so that they can inform the District Plan and to give the Planning Inspector confidence that development will be delivered in a

sustainable way.

The consultation we are proposing now is on the updated text and policies of the District Plan so that we can ensure that any minor issues with these are resolved ahead of the Examination. There will be a further opportunity in the spring for people to comment on the completed Plan, which will include the proposed number of homes for Mid Sussex as a whole.

We have taken advice from the Planning Inspectorate and Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and firmly believe that our approach is the best way to progress the District Plan with the best chance of success at Examination.

44. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of Council held on 24 September 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

46. URGENT BUSINESS

None.

47. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman confirmed that Councillor Sue Seward had retired. He paid tribute to her work for the Council over many years and offered to pass on the Council's kind regards to her, which was agreed.

The Chairman reported that he had visited the Bolnore Community Partnership on 4 October and had met with the Trustees. He wished them every success.

The Chairman reported that he and the Vice-Chairman had attended a number of events on Remembrance Sunday and thanked Members for marking the date in their respective wards. The Chairman commended Councillor Anne Jones MBE for her work establishing a memorial to a Belgian pilot killed near Burgess Hill during the Second World War.

The Chairman invited Members and their families to join him for refreshments following the next meeting of Council on 17 December.

48. REPORT OF THE RETURNING OFFICER

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Geoff Rawlinson, new Member for Haywards Heath Lucastes Ward, to the Council.

RESOLVED

That the election of Councillor Geoffrey William Rawlinson (known as Geoff Rawlinson) as District Councillor for the Ward of Haywards Heath – Lucastes, be noted.

49. REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT PANEL ON MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES FOR 2015/16

Tony Bellringer, Chairman of the Independent Panel, introduced the report. He took Members through the Panel's review of Members' Allowances and explained the rationale behind the Panel's recommendations for the forthcoming municipal year.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Delivery thanked the Independent Panel for their work to produce the report now before Members. He acknowledged Members' commitment to their roles and the work they undertook on behalf of their constituents and as Committee Chairmen throughout the year. He pointed out that in the current financial climate officers would not be expected to receive a salary increase comparable with the five per cent proposed by the Independent Panel for the Members' Basic Allowance and proposed instead that Members agree to no change in the current Member Allowances scheme, with the exception of the Childcare Allowance, which would increase in line with the Panel's recommendation. This was seconded by the Leader of the Council.

Members added their thanks to the Independent Panel for its work. Several Members asked that in future a longer period be allowed for responses to the Members' survey.

One Member hoped that Members would engage more positively with the Panel going forward. Another Member suggested that an additional £200 per annum would not be a deciding factor in encouraging a person to stand as a candidate and asked that Members' Allowances be reviewed again after May 2015.

The Leader welcomed Members' comments and thanked the Panel, acknowledging the value of its independent nature. He pointed out that the report contained some interesting and helpful information that, like earlier reports, had informed the debate. He asked that Members support the Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Delivery's proposal.

As there were no further questions, the Chairman took Members to the proposal that Members' Allowances remain unchanged, with the exception of the Childcare Allowance in accordance with paragraph 5.1 of the report, which was agreed.

RESOLVED

That:

- (1) the scheme of allowances for the financial year 2015/16 remain unchanged from 2014/15, and
- (2) the Childcare Allowance
 - (a) be raised and linked to the national living wage rate of £7.85 per hour, and
 - (b) the rate for two or more children be raised to £15 per hour, be agreed.

50. DISTRICT PLAN: DRAFT FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee for Planning and Economic Development introduced the report. He thanked officers for their work on the District Plan draft and

outlined some of the background to the preparation of a draft revised District Plan for public consultation, following the withdrawal of the previous May 2013 version of the Plan. He asked Members to approve the documents before them and this was seconded by the Cabinet Member for Planning.

Several Members expressed their support for the District Plan in its new form going forward for public consultation and hoped to see more Neighbourhood Plans coming forward for submission.

Other Members pointed out that the District Plan would enable the Council to control future housing development in Mid Sussex and welcomed its use of plain English.

Another Member commended officers on formulating realistic, workable policies for the future that reflected earlier input from local residents.

Several Members welcomed draft policies in the Plan, which would safeguard rural areas and guard against the coalescence of separate communities.

Responding to Members' questions, the Cabinet Member for Planning confirmed that discussions with neighbouring authorities were continuing and that some Memoranda of Understanding had been signed and others would follow. He also confirmed that the District Plan would include a key diagram of roads, railways and the three towns in Mid Sussex.

The Cabinet Member for Planning outlined the progress of the Plan so far, and explained that the Plan had been reviewed in line with updated requirements and supporting data. He outlined the process of public consultation and forthcoming timetable for completion and submission for Examination. In particular he confirmed that the next version of the Plan would include a housing number, and that people would have an opportunity to comment on this in May. The Cabinet Member for Planning welcomed the cross-party support expressed for the Plan and urged Members to support the report's recommendations.

The Chairman added his thanks to officers for their work on the draft District Plan and, as there were no further questions, took Members to the report's recommendations, which were agreed.

RESOLVED

That:

- (1) the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (the District Plan) be approved for public consultation;
- (2) publication of the Sustainability Appraisal report of the District Plan for public consultation be agreed;
- (3) publication of the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the District Plan for public consultation be agreed;
- (4) the Community Involvement Plan for consulting on the above documents be approved, and
- (5) a revised timetable for the preparation of the District Plan be approved.

51. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND BUILDING CONTROL ENFORCEMENT POLICY

The Cabinet Member for Health and Community introduced the report. He explained that an effective enforcement policy was one of the tools with which the Council could meet customer demands for advice about compliance, together with fair and consistent enforcement. He asked Members to support the recommendations.

This was seconded by the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee for Leisure and Community, who outlined the Committee's discussions that had led to the recommendations before Members.

As there were no questions, the Chairman took Members to the report's recommendations, which were agreed.

RESOLVED

That:

- (1) the Environmental Health and Building Control Service Enforcement Policy at Appendix A of the report, to take effect from 1 December 2014, be adopted, and
- (2) the principle that the Head of Housing, Environmental Health and Building Control, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health and Community, should be authorised to make minor amendments to the Policy, once adopted, to reflect changes in legislation or guidance and codes of practice where a full review of the policy is not warranted, be agreed.

52. REVISED MID SUSSEX MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT

The Chairman of the Standards Committee introduced the report. He explained the reasons why a revised Code of Conduct was needed and the requirement of Members if the recommendations were approved. He also thanked the Committee for its work. The proposal was seconded by the Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Delivery.

As there were no questions, the Chairman took Members to the report's recommendations, which were agreed.

RESOLVED

That:

- (1) the revised wording of the proposed Members Code of Conduct at Appendix 1 to the report be noted, and
- (2) this wording be adopted as the Members Code of Conduct for Mid Sussex from 13 November 2014.

53. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET MEETING ON 20 OCTOBER 2014

The Chairman took Members to the recommendations, which were agreed.

RESOLVED

That:

- (1) £25,000 grant income relating to Neighbourhood Planning be transferred to Specific Reserve, as detailed in paragraph 20 of the report;
- (2) £93,267 grant income relating to the Localising Council Tax Support New Burdens funding 2014/15 be transferred to Specific Reserve, as detailed in paragraph 21 of the report;
- (3) £7,855 grant income be transferred to General Reserve, as detailed in paragraph 22 of the report;
- (4) £32,475 be transferred to General Reserve as detailed in paragraph 23 of the report, and
- (5) the variations to the Capital Programme contained in paragraph 29 of the report in accordance with the Council's Financial Procedure rule B4, be agreed.

54. REPORT OF THE LEADER

The Leader reported that he had recently met with several groups to discuss what the Council actually does and that as 2014 drew to a close, Members could reflect on some of the Council's achievements. He urged Members to continue to maintain their endeavours up to the elections next May to ensure a fitting legacy was left for the new administration in 2015.

The Leader welcomed the approval of the draft District Plan for public consultation. He explained that the Council had spent many years working with community groups and authority partners, not least on leading the way on the duty to co-operate, to provide the most thorough and robust Plan possible. He emphasised that Mid Sussex was a diverse and much valued area of Sussex and that Members owed it to their communities to give the Plan their full support. He welcomed the cross-party support that the Plan enjoyed, as ongoing work on it continued.

The Leader confirmed that the bedrock of the Council's successes had been its financial management and understanding. He acknowledged the need to have a sound financial strategy for both the short and longer term that had continued to maintain services, allowed for significant investments such as the community pavilion improvements and major contracts that had been awarded. He pointed out that the Council's finances had received a firm endorsement from external auditors. The Leader confirmed that the Council's budget proposals for 2015/16 were now well advanced, ahead of discussion by the Scrutiny Committee for Leader and Service Delivery in January 2015 and by Council in February, adding that it was expected to reflect previous budgets in ensuring further financial stability for the Council.

The Leader reported that the Mid Sussex economy continued to perform well, with very low rates of unemployment. He explained that business in the area continued to enjoy success and that business start-up was encouraging, as the Council actively encouraged investment into the area. He confirmed that this had led to the retention

of Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR), directly benefiting the Council. He also praised officers and Members for facilitating the high attendance at a successful Open4Business event, held on 21 October at Burgess Hill.

The Leader confirmed that he continued to represent the Council on the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership and the Greater Brighton Economic Board, as both organisations drew investment into the Mid Sussex locality and were instrumental in backing the Council's own plans for economic and housing growth in the Burgess Hill northern arc. He confirmed that the Council's bid for funding to improve the A2300 in Burgess Hill was at the top of the Local Enterprise Partnership's bid of some £17 million to the government's Local Growth Fund.

The Leader reported that the Airports Commission's assessment of proposals for additional runway capacity was now open for public consultation and that the Council's response to a proposed second runway at Gatwick Airport would be ready for scrutiny in January 2015. He added that these were challenging times, in which the Council had nevertheless delivered a great deal and outlined some of the Council's recent achievements. He confirmed that the Council would continue to plan and invest in the future, as there was still much it could achieve and that he looked forward to working with all Members in doing so.

Responding to a Member's question, the Leader confirmed that the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Property was working hard, meeting with local groups to seek their views. He added that it was up to the Council to look carefully at the Airports Commission's assessment and play a full part in responding to its findings.

Replying to another Member's question, the Leader confirmed that airport noise levels were a concern to the Council and to the Parish Councils affected. He reiterated that there would be many issues to examine and discuss before the Council put forward its response in January 2015.

55. REPORT OF CABINET MEMBERS

Report of the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Property

The Leader conveyed the Deputy Leader's apologies and confirmed that Members would receive a full report from him at the next meeting of Council.

Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Delivery

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Delivery reported that the Council's Corporate Plan and Budget proposals for 2015/16 were currently under discussion, ahead of the meeting of Council in February 2015. He reported that the Council continued to plan for the future, maintaining investment and delivery of its services, ensuring that the Council made the most of what Mid Sussex had to offer. The Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Delivery outlined the evidence for economic growth and explained that it was likely that the Council would benefit from Business Rates retention in 2015/16. He added that thanks to good financial management and planning, the Council's assets would continue to be maximised to enhance the Council's revenue and budget for the benefit of local residents and businesses.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Service Delivery also confirmed that work was

ongoing to improve and modernise the Council's ICT systems, especially those customer-facing services, and to reduce costs.

Report of the Cabinet Member for Planning

The Cabinet Member for Planning thanked Members for approving the draft District Plan for public consultation. He emphasised that work on it continued, including discussions with neighbouring authorities and the Town and Parish Councils. He welcomed the successful examination of the Ardingly Neighbourhood Plan and confirmed that this Plan and the Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Neighbourhood Plan were likely to go to referendum in February.

He confirmed that the public responses to the draft Gypsy and Traveller document would be reported back to the Scrutiny Committee for Planning and Economic Development in January 2015.

Report of the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Sustainability

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Sustainability reported that the proceeds from the Mid Sussex Marathon would be allocated to projects developed by athletics clubs in the district.

The Cabinet Member for Leisure and Sustainability also reported that Bolnore Village Community Partnership had won a Bright FM Community Award 2014 and she commended the Trustees for their hard work and achievements.

Report of the Cabinet Member for Health and Community

The Cabinet Member for Health and Community confirmed that he had nothing to report at present and would bring fresh updates to Members at the next meeting.

56. PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED MINUTES

The previously circulated Minutes of the following meetings were noted:

- (a) the Audit Committee, held on 23 September 2014;
- (b) the Standards Committee, held on 8 October 2014;
- (c) the Scrutiny Committee form Planning and Economic Development, held on 14 October 2014, and
- (d) the Scrutiny Committee for Leisure and Community, held on 15 October 2014.

Chairman