

# TANDRIDGE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Council held on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020 at 7.30 pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillors Pursehouse (Chair), Morrow (Vice-Chair), Allen, Black, Blackwell, Blake-Thomas, Bloore, Botten, Caulcott, Connolly, Cooley, M.Cooper, Davies, Dennis, Duck, Elias, Farr, Fitzgerald, Gray, Jecks, Jones, Langton, Lee, Lockwood, Mansfield, Milton, Parker, Ridge, Rujbally, Stamp, Sayer, Steeds, Swann, Vickers, C.White, N.White and Wren

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillors Bourne and Mills

## 219. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Former Councillor Dorinda Cooper

The Chairman reflected that Dorinda Cooper would be missed following her resignation as a Councillor (Valley Ward) on the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

### Former Councillor John Orrick

The Chairman paid a warm tribute to former Councillor John Orrick who had passed away on the 10<sup>th</sup> November 2020. John represented the Queens Park Ward of the District Council, as well as being a Caterham on the Hill Parish Councillor. He had also served as a County Councillor (Caterham Hill Division) from 2009 to 2017. Members observed a one-minute silence as a mark of respect.

## 220. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Jones declared a pecuniary interest in Minute 215 of the meeting of the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020 Planning Committee (2020/1579 – 67 to 69 Croydon Road, Caterham). This was on the basis that his employer owned and operated from premises adjacent to the site.

## 221. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING ON THE 22ND OCTOBER 2020

These were approved as a correct record.

## 222. QUESTIONS SUBMITTED UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 30

Questions were submitted by Councillors Caulcott, Morrow (2), and Dennis (2). The questions and responses are attached at Appendix A.

## 223. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

**RESOLVED**- that the reports of the following meetings be received and the recommendations therein adopted:

**Planning Committee** (5<sup>th</sup> November 2020)

**Community Services Committee** (12<sup>th</sup> November 2020)

**Planning Policy Committee** (17<sup>th</sup> November 2020)

**Housing Committee** (19<sup>th</sup> November 2020)

**Strategy & Resources Committee** (24<sup>th</sup> November 2020)

**Audit & Scrutiny Committee** (26<sup>th</sup> November 2020)

**Planning Committee** (3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020)

## 224. REVIEW OF THE ALLOCATION OF COMMITTEE SEATS TO POLITICAL GROUPS

The Liberal Democrat Group's representation on the Council had reduced from 11 to 9 seats following the passing of ex-Councillor John Orrick on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and the resignation of ex-Councillor Dorinda Cooper on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020. In light of this, a report was submitted to enable the Council to fulfil its statutory duty to review the allocation of committee seats.

The report concluded that the allocation of seats would, as far as reasonably practicable, reflect the new political balance of the Council if the seats previously held by the above-mentioned Members were not filled during the remainder of the 2020/21 municipal year. This recommended course of action was proposed by Councillor Elias and seconded by Councillor Langton.

**RESOLVED** – that the committee seats previously held by former Councillors Dorinda Cooper and John Orrick be not filled during the remainder of the 2020/21 municipal year and that the overall size of the committees concerned be reduced accordingly, i.e.:

- Community Services Committee – from 12 to 11 seats
- Housing Committee – from 12 to 11 seats
- Audit & Scrutiny Committee – from 7 to 6 seats

Rising 9.17 pm

**Full Council – 10<sup>th</sup> December 2020 – Questions submitted under agenda item 4(ii)  
(questions from Councillors)**

**1. Question from Councillor Caulcott**

Please could the chair of the Strategy & Resources Committee advise the Council when the proposed climate change task and finish group will be established, and when will it be expected to report to the Committee?

*Response from Councillor Elias as Chair of the Strategy & Resources Committee*

*The Climate Change Task and Finish Group is in the process of being established. Group Leaders have been contacted to nominate members of their groups to join. The deadline for returning names to the climate change lead is the 11<sup>th</sup> December. The nominated members will then be contacted on the 14<sup>th</sup> December to invite them to the first meeting of the group, which is proposed to be on a Friday in January 2021. As per the action plan report, the next reporting date for the climate change workstream is June 2021.*

**2. Question from Councillor Morrow**

In the report to the 12th November Community Services Committee, it is stated that there is a £900K underspend on the Committee's capital programme, of which £550k relates to upgrading our toilets, £137K to renewing our playgrounds and £89K to maintaining our parks and pavilions. This is very disappointing as it is important that we maintain our public assets in good and serviceable condition.

Please can the Chair of the Committee explain the reason for this unfortunate slippage. Is it lack of funding, management capacity, the impact of COVID or something else?

*Response from Councillor Connolly as Chair of the Community Services Committee*

*This year has been particularly difficult for the Council and projects and programmes have had to be realigned to match resources. Many capital projects have had to be delayed or reassessed due to the impact of the pandemic on both the contractors' and the Council's financial positions.*

*The £550,000 toilet refurbishment programme went to Community Services Committee (on 2 occasions and a Members' workshop). As part of the Committee paper, an additional resource was agreed to carry out a full survey and to prepare a specification. A further paper is being prepared for consideration by the Community Services Committee in January to give Councillors further options and a revised spending profile, to reflect the Council's priorities and current financial position. The toilets are being maintained and all statutory testing completed. Our financial position won't enable all the WCs to be upgraded.*

*With regard to Children's playground works, a refurbishment of the Queens Park play area was included in the capital plan this year. This has been postponed due to talks with Surrey County Council on flood evaluation proposals. An external company is also to be engaged, as part of the open space strategy, to look at options for the Queens Park site and how the Council can maximise this site's potential.*

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*The remaining playgrounds refurbishments and procurement programme has been delayed due to a lack of resources and other Council priorities. There has also been an impact for playground suppliers as site visits have been difficult due to the Covid situation. It is anticipated that we will deliver several playground refurbishments during January to March 2021. All playgrounds are inspected weekly and any public safety issues are repaired immediately. The weekly inspections are also supported by an independent assessors' report that informs the capital replacement programme and any priority replacement of equipment and safety surfacing.*

*The Queen's Park Pavilion cladding works have been delayed and a works specification and a procurement exercise are planned for 2021/22, when it is anticipated that resources will become available. This work will also be considered alongside the consultant's findings for Queens Park. The pavilion is regularly inspected and all statutory compliance inspections completed.*

### **3. Question from Councillor Morrow**

Can the Chair of Strategy & Resources advise whether the ICT/Digital Strategy currently being worked on will deliver the process improvements and revenue savings envisaged when we embarked on the Customer First project, and whether such savings are being incorporated into the 2021/22 budget. If not, why not?

*Response from Councillor Elias as Chair of the Strategy & Resources Committee*

*The digital/IT strategy will be developing a vision of how we can harness the digital design, data and technology to work efficiently and transform the relationship between residents and the council over the next 3 to 5 years.*

*As the digital world is always changing and advancing, it's a plan for the future. The strategy may include some high-level themes around process redesign, automation, website improvements etc, but is independent of previous projects, including Customer First.*

*All identified savings as part of the Customer First programme were taken out at the point of implementation and were not spread across subsequent years.*

*As the strategy is still being developed, there will not be any savings incorporated into the 21/22 budget as this is in the process of being finalised now – but any opportunities identified as part of the strategy will be included in the budget for 22/23 and beyond.*

In response to Councillor Morrow's supplementary question, Councillor Elias undertook to find out when the ICT/Digital Strategy would be brought to the Strategy & Resources Committee.

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#### 4. Question from Councillor Dennis

Regarding the Community Services minutes (agenda item 5.2/169) could we be assured that the summary of consultation feedback and the amended draft Open Spaces Strategy will be made available sufficiently in advance of the meeting of 9th March 2021 to allow members and Parish Councils adequate time to review and comment on them? Regarding the reference to Planning Policy Committee, may we also have confirmation that this timetable includes engaging with that Committee, bearing in mind that it does not meet until after 9th March?

##### Response from Councillor Connolly as Chair of the Community Services Committee

*Following the points raised at the Community Services Committee and the consultation comments received on the draft Open Space Strategy, it is proposed that a revised version of the Open Space Strategy be circulated to all Members, including to Members of the Planning Policy Committee, and Parish Councils, in mid-January 2021 for their feedback. Comments will need to be received within two weeks of the Strategy being circulated so that officers can take account of the comments raised and make any amendments before the papers are published to consider the adoption of the Open Space Strategy at the Community Services Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021. It is understood that this timeframe could be challenging for Parish Councils to provide feedback due to the scheduling of their meetings. However, as Parish Councils have seen the Strategy on two separate occasions, it is considered that their comments will have hopefully been reflected in the final document.*

#### 5. Question from Councillor Dennis

Regarding the Planning Committee minutes (agenda item 5.7/214) the Council's own development at Rochester Gardens is just up slope from the flood risk zone at Town End where elderly residents had to be rescued in 2016. In such locations, a standard planning condition is normally applied as a basic safeguard, requiring approval of a detailed design for sustainable drainage to prevent storm water discharge into the street, worsening flood risk downstream. Why has such a condition not been included for Rochester Gardens when it has been for the Council's adjoining smaller development at Foxacre (see page 28 of reports)? Can we remedy this in order to apply the same standards of protection to both sites? If not, may we be assured when ratifying this scheme that the Council, as developer, will act as if such a condition were in place and circulate to local members and Caterham on the Hill Parish Council the final sustainable drainage design for meaningful consultation and comment?

##### Response from Councillor Black as Chair of the Planning Committee

*The development at Rochester Gardens (2019/1310) is for 5 new units and, therefore, falls under the minor development category. The development at Foxacre (2019/1309) is for two new units and, therefore, also constitutes minor development. It is noted that a sustainable drainage system condition has been recommended for Foxacre and that the development proposed deep borehole soakaways as part of a sustainable drainage system. The Environment Agency expressed concern that boreholes may contaminate the aquifer in the area and, therefore, required a number of conditions in relation to further investigation and potential remedial works.*

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*For Rochester Gardens, the same system of deep borehole soakaways is proposed, and the Environment Agency has expressed the same concerns and conditions. Flooding was discussed at the December Committee and the presenting officer suggested that the landscaping condition be altered to include sustainable drainage system details. This would seek to address water run-off which may contribute to surface water flooding downstream. As such, the landscaping condition on the draft decision for the Rochester Gardens application has been amended to include details of a sustainable drainage system to be submitted under the hard-surfacing material details.”*