DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL

MINUTES of the proceedings of the meeting of the General Assembly of the Council held on Monday 13 January 2020.

PRESENT:

The Mayor Councillor R S L Perfitt
The Deputy Mayor Councillor R M Curran

Councillor Mrs A D Allen, MBE Councillor R A S Jones
Councillor I D Armitt JP Councillor J A Kite, MBE
Councillor A E D Barham Councillor A R Lloyd
Councillor E H Ben Moussa Councillor T A Maddison
Councillor S H Brown Councillor C S McLean
Councillor J Burrell Councillor D J Mote
Councillor D Butler-Ruhle Councillor D T Nicklen
Councillor S P Butterfill Councillor A J Oakley-Dow
Councillor L A Canham Councillor V Oguntepe
Councillor P Cutler Councillor T Oliver
Councillor M J Davis Councillor Mrs J A Ozog
Councillor L H K Edie Councillor M I Peters
Councillor B Garden Councillor L J Reynolds
Councillor R Gosine Councillor A S Sandhu, MBE
Councillor S N Gosine Councillor C J Shippam
Councillor K J Grehan Councillor Mrs R F Storey
Councillor D A Hammock Councillor D Swinerd
Councillor P M Harman Councillor Mrs P A Thurlow
Councillor D E Hunnisett Councillor R J Wells

ABSENT:

Councillor A Gaskin
Councillor D J Reynolds

58. WELCOME AND BRIEFING ON CYBER SECURITY

The Mayor welcomed Members, Officers and the public to the meeting and informed Members that there would be a short briefing on cyber security following the meeting and stressed the importance of attending the briefing.

59. PRAYERS: REVEREND HELEN REEVES

The Mayor's Chaplain led the Council in prayer.
60. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Gaskin and D J Reynolds.

61. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Mayor informed Members that the Strategic Director (Internal Services) had exercised her delegated authority, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, to grant a dispensation to all Parish/Town Councillors to speak and vote on Agenda item 12 (Financial Contributions to Parish and Town Councils 2020/21) because otherwise so many members of the Council would have had a prejudicial interest in the matter that it would impede the transaction of business.

The Mayor further informed Members that the Strategic Director (Internal Services) had exercised her delegated authority, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, to grant a dispensation to all Councillors to speak and vote on Agenda item 13 (Report and Recommendations by the Independent Remuneration Panel) because otherwise so many members of the Council would have had a prejudicial interest in the matter that it would impede the transaction of business.

There were no other declarations of interests.

62. **MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting of the General Assembly of the Council held on 7 October 2019 be agreed as an accurate record.

63. **MAYOR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor informed Members that he had enjoyed attending a number of events over the Christmas period and in particular a 100th birthday celebration for an amazing local lady.

He also informed Members of a forthcoming charity dinner at Efes Turkish restaurant on 21st January and encouraged Members to support this event in aid of his charity appeal.

64. **LEADER’S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Leader of the Council made the following announcements:

- **Former Council Leader, Malcolm Nothard**

The Leader of the Council expressed his sorrow at the recent death of Malcom Nothard, a former Leader of the Council. He paid tribute to Mr Nothard and to his work on behalf of the people of Dartford and to the many sacrifices he had made in terms of career, family life and health to carry out his Council duties. He sent his condolences to Mr Nothard’s family.
• **Former Councillor Eva May**

The Leader of the Council advised Members of the loss of another long serving Councillor and former Mayor, Eva May. He paid tribute to Mrs May’s work as a councillor, working closely with her husband, and to her strong beliefs and dedication to the people of Dartford and the town.

Councillor Maddison, as a long serving Member of the Council, also paid tribute to Mr Nothard and to Mrs May, who he said had shown him the ropes when he was first elected. He said that he echoed the Leader of the Council’s comments and that they had both been great Dartfordians.

• **Special Meeting of the General Assembly of the Council – 17th February 2020**

The Leader of the Council reminded Members that a special meeting of the General Assembly of the Council would be held on 17th February 2020 to confer the freedom of the Borough on former Councillor Pat Coleman in recognition of over 40 years of public service. He stressed the importance of the meeting as a highlight of civic life and hoped that all Members would attend. He also felt that in view of Mr Coleman’s long association with both of the recently deceased former Councillors it might also be appropriate to hold a minutes silence at the start of that meeting in remembrance of their contribution to Dartford.

• **General Election – 12 December 2020**

The Leader of the Council congratulated the sitting MP, Gareth Johnson, on his re-election at the General Election on 12th December 2019 gaining 34,006 votes representing 62.95% of the votes cast, which he believed was the highest ever achieved in Dartford. He also paid tribute to all of the other candidates who stood for election, including the Shadow Leader of the Council, and congratulated them on conducting a fair and even handed campaign.

• **Santa on Tour**

The Leader of the Council expressed his thanks to everyone involved in organising the Santa on Tour events before Christmas, with particular thanks to the three ‘elves’. He said that this had made Christmas special for over a thousand children and had once again proved to be a great success and was likely to take in even more venues next year.

65. **QUESTIONS FROM POLITICAL GROUP LEADERS**

The following questions were submitted by the Shadow Leader of the Council:

*Question 1*
In light of the spate of so many brazen personal robberies recently in the Borough (on our streets, bus stops, shopping malls and parks), how best can the Council provide further appropriate resources to support overstretched Police Kent and effectively protect our citizens both immediately and in the future?

**Question 2**

Dartford council puts a lot of funding into it’s leisure activities and events. However, we need to be more inclusive to those with SEND. All residents should have access, and more provisions need to be made. Would you consider, for instance, increasing relaxed viewings and quiet hours to achieve this?

In accordance with Standing Order 14 the questions and answers, including any supplementary questions and answers, are recorded in a book kept for this purpose in the Members’ Area.

66. MOTIONS

There were no motions.

67. URGENT ITEMS

There were no urgent items.

68. COUNCIL IN COMMITTEE

It was moved by Councillor R S L Perfitt, seconded by Councillor J A Kite and

RESOLVED:

That in accordance with Standing Order 11(13) the General Assembly of the Council go into Committee and the rules of Procedures for Committees do apply.

THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL, COUNCILLOR J A KITE MBE, IN THE CHAIR

69. REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES (IF ANY)

There were no references from other committees.

70. SETTING OF THE COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR THE BOROUGH FOR 2020/21

The Council was asked to determine the tax base for the Borough for 2020/21, including those parts relating to Parishes, in accordance with section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the matters contained in this report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 2012 and on the
basis of the detailed calculations in Appendix A to the report, the amount calculated by the Dartford Borough Council as its tax base for the year 2020/21 shall be:

£

For the whole of Dartford Borough: 38,756.93
For parts of Dartford Borough:

Bean Parish 563.16
Darenth Parish 1,281.25
Longfield and New Barn Parish 2,481.96
Southfleet Parish 641.45
Stone Parish 4,254.71
Sutton-at-Hone and Hawley Parish 1,477.61
Swanscombe and Greenhithe Town 4,481.78
Wilmington Parish 3,002.32

71. FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS 2020/21

The General Assembly of the Council considered a report which detailed the proposed financial contributions to be made by the Council to Parish and Town Councils in 2020/21 and the continuation of the Capacity Building Fund. The Leader of the Council explained that the Council worked closely with the parishes and town council and unlike most authorities, continued to make a financial contribution to them, albeit of a diminished nature, which reflected changes to the Council’s funding.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed contributions to Parish/Town Councils agreed by the Cabinet at its meeting on 5 December 2019, be part of the overall budget, subject to formal approval by the General Assembly of the Council (Budget) meeting on 24 February 2020.

72. REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

The General Assembly of the Council considered the report and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) which had carried out a periodic review of the current Members’ Allowances Scheme and proposed a revised scheme of Members’ Allowances to take effect from 1st April 2020. As part of its work the IRP had considered a motion relating to parental leave, which had been referred to it by the General Assembly of the Council which met on 7 October 2019, and proposed changes to the Scheme of Member’ Allowances to reflect this. The Leader of the Council stressed that parental support had always been embedded in the scheme of allowances but on a discretionary basis. The IRP had considered this matter and was
recommending its specific inclusion in the revised scheme, effectively reflecting existing practice but making it more overt. He thanked the IRP for the work carried out during the review of Members' Allowances, and whilst recognising that the IRP’s recommendations were advisory and could be accepted or rejected, but could not be changed, he commended the importance of the independent review process and the weight attached to the IRP’s recommendations as a result.

The General Assembly of the Council thanked the IRP for its report and the work carried out during the review.

RESOLVED:

1. That the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel review of the Members’ Allowances Scheme, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be endorsed; and

2. That the revised Scheme of Members’ Allowances, set out in Appendix B to the report, be approved with effect from 1 April 2020.

73. JOINT TRANSPORTATION BOARD AGREEMENT WITH KENT COUNTY COUNCIL AND PARISH REPRESENTATION

The General Assembly of the Council considered a report which described the proposed new agreement governing the work of the Joint Transportation Board (JTB) with Kent County Council and that the Parish/Town Council representation for 2019/20 should be increased from one to two members. It was noted that the existing agreement had been made in 2005 and that, although this had worked well, it was good practice to review working arrangements periodically. The existing agreement provided for the Parishes/Town Council to have one representative on the JTB but an election to fill this vacant position carried out in Autumn 2019 resulted in the two candidates having an equal number of votes. The new JTB agreement provided for the number of Parish/Town Council representatives to be not less than one and no greater than three. In view of the equality of votes it was recommended that the Parish/Town Council representation should be set at two for 2019/20 and this position was endorsed by the Cabinet on 5 December 2019. Members felt that this was a sensible and pragmatic approach.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed Joint Transportation Board Agreement with Kent County Council, attached at Appendix A to the report, be adopted and that the number of Parish/Town Council representatives be set at two.

74. ADOPTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE ALLIANCE (IHRA) WORKING DEFINITION OF ANTISEMITISM

The General Assembly of the Council considered a report which sought approval for the Council to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s (IHRA’s) definition of anti-semitism and the working examples, set out in the report. It was noted that the Government had urged all councils to
adopt the definition and working examples. It was also noted that the Council was also being asked to authorise Officers to consider whether the Members’ Code of Conduct should be amended to apply the IHRA definition of antisemitism in the broader context of respect, tolerance, inter-faith understanding and equality.

The Leader of the Council stressed the importance of this issue and the need to do everything possible to combat intolerance and hatred of any kind. He said that whilst people should always be free to express political views a line needed to be drawn in the sand between this and what was unacceptable. The adoption of the international definition of anti-semitism sought to do this but he felt that it was also important for it to be embedded in the Member Code of Conduct. He informed Members that the Council would be holding a holocaust memorial event on 27th January which would be the first of a series of low key but dignified events to commemorate the holocaust.

The Shadow Leader of the Council asked whether the Leader of the Council would support the adoption of a similar definition of Islamophobia if this was proposed. The Leader of the Council confirmed the importance of defending against all behaviours and views designed to create hatred and intolerance.

The recommendations were put to the vote and it was unanimously

RESOLVED:

1. That the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s definition of antisemitism, and working examples, as set out in the report, be adopted; and

2. That Officers consider whether the Member Code of Conduct might be amended to apply the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s definition of antisemitism in the broader context of respect, tolerance, inter-faith understanding and equality.

75. RE-CONVENING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL

It was moved by Councillor J A Kite, seconded by Councillor C J Shippam, and

RESOLVED:

That in accordance with Standing Order 11(14) the General Assembly of the Council now re-convene.

THE MAYOR, COUNCILLOR R S L PERFITT, IN THE CHAIR

76. RESERVED MINUTES

No Cabinet minutes were reserved for debate.
The Mayor reminded Members about the cyber security briefing which would be held following the meeting and declared the meeting closed.

The meeting closed at 7.55 pm

MAYOR