

TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Annual Meeting of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, duly convened and held at the Council Chamber, Royal Tunbridge Wells at 10.00 am on Wednesday 24 May 2017

PRESENT:

The Mayor Councillor David Neve (Chairman)
Councillors Backhouse, Barrington-King, Dr Basu, Bland, Bulman, Chapelard,
Mrs Cobbold, Dawlings, Elliott, Hamilton, Hannam, Heasman, Hill, Hills, Horwood,
Huggett, Jamil, Jukes, Lidstone, Mackonochie, March, McDermott, Moore, Munn, Noakes,
Nuttall, Oakford, Ms Palmer, Podbury, Rankin, Reilly, Scholes, Simmons, Sloan,
Mrs Soyke (Vice-Chairman), Stanyer, Stewart, Mrs Thomas, Uddin, Weatherly, Williams
and Woodward

IN ATTENDANCE: William Benson (Chief Executive), Mark O'Callaghan (Democratic Services Officer) and Keith Trowell (Senior Lawyer and Deputy Monitoring Officer)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

FC1/17 Apologies for absence were reported from Councillors Hastie and Lewis-Grey.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

FC2/17 No declarations of pecuniary or significant other interest were made.

ELECTION OF MAYOR FOR THE ENSUING MUNICIPAL YEAR

FC3/17 The Mayor, Councillor Neve, asked that the Chief Executive take the meeting for this item. The Chief Executive invited nominations for the position of Mayor of the Borough for the municipal year 2017/18.

Councillor Neve proposed that Councillor Mrs Soyke be elected as Mayor. He added that Councillor Mrs Soyke had an impressive attendance record and had held several demanding roles within the Council. She was also involved with many community groups and ran a successful farm, bed & breakfast and campsite demonstrating a tireless work ethic and organisation skills. All these attributes would stand her in good stead for the duties that lay ahead.

Councillor Jukes seconded the motion and added that he had known Councillor Mrs Soyke for many years working on Speldhurst Parish Council and having encouraged her to stand for election to the Borough Council. He was confident that Councillor Mrs Soyke would make a first-class Mayor.

Councillor Hill welcomed the nomination of Councillor Mrs Soyke and noted that there had not been a female Mayor since 2011. She wished her well.

Councillor Chapelard congratulated Councillor Mrs Soyke on behalf of the Liberal Democrats.

The Chief Executive took a vote on the motion.

RESOLVED – That Councillor Mrs Soyke be elected Mayor of the Borough for the municipal year from 24 May 2017 to the date of the Annual Meeting 2018.

The newly-elected Mayor made the declaration of acceptance of office.

Following the declaration the retiring Mayor, the newly-elected Mayor and the Chief Executive left the Chamber to enable the newly-elected Mayor to be robed. Upon return to the Chamber the Mayor, Councillor Mrs Soyke, took the Mayor's chair.

Return of thanks from the newly-elected Mayor

The Mayor, Councillor Mrs Soyke, thanked Councillor Neve for his tireless efforts during his Mayoral year. She added that she would work hard to justify the trust that had been placed in her. She was grateful for the encouragement from Councillor Jukes to stand for election and for taking on the chairmanship of the Planning Committee; she added that she was proud of the achievements of the Planning Committee over the past few years in difficult circumstances. She commended the Council's officers whose commitment to keeping the Council running often went above and beyond the call of duty. The Mayor would be supported by her family, particularly her husband, Mr Peter Soyke, who would also be serving as Mayor's Escort.

Councillor Mrs Soyke stated that the main aim for her Mayoral year was to continue the direction highlighted by the donors of the Mace of the Borough in 1891 as a token of their earnest desire for the continued advancement and prosperity of the Borough. She would do all that she could and welcomed the challenge.

Councillor Mrs Soyke announced that her chosen charity was Domestic Abuse Volunteer Support Service (DAVSS). She had been introduced to them after hearing the harrowing story of domestic abuse on The Archers. DAVSS was a charity, established seven years ago and currently operated only in west Kent. She had initially attended the first day of volunteer training but then completed the 14 day course. During the course she had learnt many shocking and upsetting statistics demonstrating the scale of domestic abuse which included the fact that in the UK, on average, Police attend an incident of domestic abuse every 60 seconds of every day and a woman is murdered by a partner or ex-partner every three days. DAVSS provided free, practical and individualised support for clients, aiming to break the cycle of abuse to enable survivors to take control of their lives again and to improve life opportunities for children who are often traumatised by the experience.

Councillor Mrs Soyke introduced the Reverend Steven Hills, Vicar of St Lawrence Church, Bidborough, as her appointed Chaplain for the year.

The Mayor then presented the Mayor's Escort with his badge of office.

PRESENTATION OF BADGE TO IMMEDIATE PAST MAYOR

FC4/17 A badge of office was presented to the immediate past Mayor, Councillor Neve, and the past Mayoress, Mrs Jill Neve. In addition, a photo book was presented to them both containing memories of his year in office.

Return of thanks from the immediate past Mayor

Councillor Neve commented that he had had a wonderful time and it had been a privilege to serve as Mayor. He had attended 319 events in addition to many day-to-day meetings, details of which were set out in the written

summary which had been made available to members. A book would be produced nearer to Christmas containing all of the events attended and the associated puns for the benefit of his charity, Beat.

Councillor Neve gave special thanks to the Mayoral team and for the steadfast support of his wife, Mrs Jill Neve.

Councillor Neve thanked the team from Beat for their work behind the scenes which made the fundraising possible. Groups, individuals, local and national businesses had given to or sponsored events with donations. He presented a cheque for £26,000 to Beat with more still being received.

Mr Philip Roethenbough received the cheque on behalf of Beat and thanked all those involved in the fundraising. He commented that eating disorders were not 'just fussy eating' and in fact Anorexia had the highest mortality rate for any mental illness. Support differed and was patchy even amongst health service providers. Beat was a small national charity with a focus on early intervention. The money would be used to create a lasting legacy by making Tunbridge Wells a centre of excellence.

APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY MAYOR FOR THE ENSUING MUNICIPAL YEAR

FC5/17 Councillor Jukes proposed that Councillor Horwood be appointed Deputy Mayor. He noted that Councillor Horwood had had a long career in British Rail during which he had taken his accountancy exams and becoming a chartered accountant; he went on to manage the pension fund and be involved in major projects. Taking early retirement from British Rail, Councillor Horwood then became a V.A.T. consultant and was able to enjoy a number of sporting interests. Councillor Horwood had been a member of the Council for approximately 25 years during which he had occupied all of the top offices at some stage.

Councillor McDermott seconded the motion and added he had known Councillor Horwood for eight years and was delighted to recommend him.

Councillor Neve commended Councillor Horwood.

Councillor Hill congratulated Councillor Horwood and noted that his 25 year apprenticeship would serve him well.

Councillor Chapelard expressed his congratulations.

Councillor Hills commented that Councillor Horwood would make a good Deputy Mayor and the Borough would also be getting a great Deputy Mayoress.

Councillor Barrington-King welcomed the appointment of Councillor Horwood.

The Mayor took a vote on the motion.

RESOLVED – That Councillor Horwood be appointed Deputy Mayor of the Borough for the municipal year from 24 May 2017 to the date of the Annual Meeting 2018.

The newly-elected Deputy Mayor made the declaration of acceptance of office.

Following the declaration the newly-elected Deputy Mayor received his robes and chain of office and took the Deputy Mayor's chair.

The Deputy Mayoress received her badge of office.

Return of thanks from the newly-elected Deputy Mayor

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor Horwood, commented that he did not expect to be making such a speech but thanked those who had supported his appointment. He added that he would endeavour to undertake the role of Deputy Mayor and give the Mayor all the support he could in the forthcoming year.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE MAYOR AND THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

FC6/17 The Mayor had no announcements to make.

The Chief Executive had no announcements to make.

APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES, INCLUDING CABINET PORTFOLIOS

FC7/17 The Mayor, Councillor Mrs Soyke, introduced the item to approve the allocation of seats to political groups and nominations for committees as per the report. She added that the names of those to be appointed had been tabled at the meeting.

Councillor Jukes proposed that members be appointed as set out in the tabled papers subject to an amendment to be set out by Councillor McDermott.

Councillor McDermott confirmed that Councillor Dr Hall would replace Councillor Hannam on the Planning Committee; subject to this change he seconded the motion.

The Mayor took a vote on the motion.

RESOLVED –

1. That the allocation of seats to committees as set out in paragraph 2.7 of the report, be approved;
2. That appointments to the committees in accordance with the nominations made by each political group leader as set out in Appendix A, except that Councillor Hannam be replaced on the Planning Committee by Councillor Dr Hall, be approved;
3. That the Chairmen and the Vice-Chairmen of the committees, as set out in Appendix A, be approved; and
4. That the appointments made by the Leader of the Council to the Cabinet portfolio holder positions, as set out in Appendix B, be noted.

COMMON SEAL OF THE COUNCIL

FC8/17 **RESOLVED** – That the Common Seal of the Council be affixed to any contract, minute, notice or other document arising out of the minutes or pursuant to any delegation, authority or power conferred by the Council.

NOTE: The meeting concluded at 11.05 am.