



## Minutes of the Full Council Meeting

Held at the Westgate-on-Sea Town Council Office

78 St Mildreds Road, Westgate-on-Sea CT8 8RF

on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024 at 7.00pm

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### Present

Cllr Wallin (Chairman)

Cllr Veck (Vice Chair)

Cllr King

Cllr Worrow

Cllr Scott

Cllr Fenning

Cllr Thomason

Ms Nabila Yakub – Interim Town Clerk

Ms Emma Dublin – Community Engagement Officer

Jason Gordon – Westgate Community Warden

PC Steven England

Rev Susan Wing

Nic Powley + 3 – Margate Skateboard Club CIC

11 Members of the Public

### FC/24/28 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Donaldson, Cllr Mulinya, Cllr Crow-Brown, Cllr Braidwood.

### FC/24/29 Declaration of Interests

None.

### FC/24/30 Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024

The minutes of the Full Council meeting held on the 10th of July 2024 were presented for approval and **AGREED** as a true record.

### FC/24/31 Election of the new Vice-Chair of Westgate-on-Sea Town Council

The Chair said that Cllr Worrow had resigned as Vice Chair. Cllr Worrow said he was stepping down due to other commitments but would continue as a Councillor. The Chair asked for nominations. Cllr Thomason nominated Cllr Veck, seconded by Cllr Wallin. Cllr Veck was subsequently voted in as Vice Chair.

### FC/24/32 Town Councillor Vacancy Update

The Chair said that the TDC Monitoring officer had confirmed that due to non-attendance for a period of more than 7 months, the Town Council now had a vacancy for a Councillor. This would be filled by co-option or election and TDC would be managing this process in the coming weeks.

### **FC/24/33 Public Right to Speak**

A member of the public asked if Council meetings were being streamed or recorded, and how quickly were they placed on the Council's website to be viewed. Ms Dublin responded that they were streamed and then placed on the Council's Facebook page. She said the Council's website was currently undergoing development and once completed, recordings of meetings would eventually be placed on there.

A member of the public asked if the Town Council had a functioning website. They also asked for responses to their questions at the previous full council meeting.

Cllr King referred to the Council's Standing Orders and reminded the members of the public that they had 3 minutes to ask a question but there would not be a debate ensuing from the question. A brief answer could be provided by the Chair or alternatively a written response would be provided.

The Clerk referred to the publishing of the Planning Agenda. She confirmed that all meeting Agendas would in future be published with 3 clear days before the actual meeting excluding the publication date, Sundays, Bank Holidays and the actual meeting date.

A member of the public asked if there was a more strategic way of publicising meetings, for example including meeting dates in church/school bulletins instead of sticking handwritten notices on notice boards. The Clerk responded that the Town Council did not issue handwritten notes. She said all agendas are printed and posted on the Town Council's Facebook Page and also on their notice board. Cllr Thomason added that the Town Council's magazine would shortly be re-introduced and circulated to every home in Westgate. Details of future meetings would be published in the magazine. Cllr King said the legal requirement was for the Town Council to announce meetings publicly which they did by placing notices on their notice board. He added that the notice-board the member of public referred to was the one used by the residents association and not the Town Council.

A member of the public commented about the amount of time being wasted by debating questions on communications, meeting dates etc. and said this was not helpful and distracted Councillors from undertaking Council business. They added that due to the demographic of Westgate, communication by social media was not the best way of getting the Council's message to residents. They thanked the Councillors for all the hard work they did which was on a voluntary basis.

The Clerk invited Community Warden, Jason Gordon to provide a brief report. Jason said he had just returned from 2 weeks annual leave and was not aware of any major issues in Westgate. He was still supporting both Westgate and Birchington until the outcome of the KCC review of Community Wardens was known. He said he had contacted TDC to organise more multi-agency events in Westgate and that he was aware that PC Steve England was putting together dates for residents for community engagement surgeries in Westgate. He said he had recently intervened with an issue of hazardous waste bags being left at the back of Ethelbert Square. Following various calls he made they were eventually collected. He had recently supported a local junior school with nuisance parking at collection times and was also providing support to a local infants school with some concerns they had raised. He was also supporting the new 12 week Changing Minds Wellbeing Coaching programme which had just commenced at Christchurch, Westgate Bay Avenue. Details of this course were available on the internet and flyers had been provided to the Town Council. He said he had provided a presentation on his role to the Walk and Talk Group.

The Chair thanked Jason for his report.

### **FC/24/34 County and Thanet District Ward Councillors' Report**

The Clerk said that Cllr Crow-Brown had sent his apologies but had submitted a report which she read out on his behalf. In recent weeks he had been dealing with a variety of issues including an issue with the felling of trees at the McCarthy Stone building site (which he subsequently found out had been authorised by TDC due to their diseased condition); numerous road issues, blue badge requests, adult and child social care issues. He also provided an update on the KCC blitz on repairing potholes.

Cllr Scott provided an update on issues including the hazardous and clinical waste that had since been cleared; issues relating to Station Road and St Mildreds Road. He emphasised the importance that residents contacted him directly if they witnessed fly tipping in and around the town. He said he was pleased to see that the litter picking volunteers were again active in the town and the positive reception they had received. He thanked them for the work they had undertaken.

### **FC/24/35 Chairman and Councillors' Reports**

The Chairman said the Town Clerk required a new laptop. He said the current one is old and required replacing. He proposed a budget of £1000. Cllr Worrow supported the proposal. Cllr Thomason added that the new laptop would be the property of and for the use of the Town Council.

Cllr Scott said that three quotes should be obtained to ensure cost effectiveness. Cllr King said this issue should be discussed and recommendations made at the Finance and General Purposes Committee. Cllr Veck said it was 2 months until the next Finance and General Purposes Committee and there was now an urgent need to obtain a replacement. The Chair agreed and called for a vote in favour of obtaining 3 quotes as soon as possible.

A vote was taken and the motion **carried**; however Cllr King voted against and Cllr Scott abstained.

The Chair referred to the recording and streaming of council meetings. He said he had undertaken some research, and members would need to consider the type of equipment, and the number of cameras required to ensure that members who were speaking would be captured on screen. The cost of equipment would be £1500 to £2000. Cllr Scott said that the Council already had the equipment. He said it just needed to be used properly, and staff trained in its use. The Chair said it did not give a good visual of the room. Cllr Worrow said it was important to undertake reviews of what was required and spend Council funds wisely. He said it was important to invest so that the Council provided a professional service. It was **agreed** to look at options for improving the current system or investing in new equipment.

The Chair said he had received a report of arson in the town which he had informed the Police of.

The Chair referred to the recent publication of the Planning Committee Agenda and took responsibility for the perceived error. He said he had identified inconsistencies in the 1973 Local Government Act with regard to the notice required for Full Committee meetings and other Committee meetings.

Cllr Worrow said he had recently attended a TDC meeting as a District Councillor. One of the subjects was assets in Thanet and he raised the Westgate Pavilion which he felt was not being used to its potential. A member of the public said it was now owned by the School of English. Cllr Worrow said it was an asset that should be used much more for the benefit of residents. He also said he spoke at the recent TDC Planning Committee on the proposal to build 1600 homes in

Birchington. He said the Planning Committee voted against the recommendations of the TDC Planning Applications Manager and the item had been deferred pending a response from the developers. He said this was positive news for Westgate and he thanked residents for all that they were doing to object to the developers proposal for Westgate. He congratulated the Chair for all he was doing to support the Council and thanked the Councillors for all the work they did on a voluntary basis. He also congratulated the new Vice Chair on his appointment.

Cllr Thomason confirmed that the monthly surgeries had re-commenced. They would continue on the second Saturday of each month. Cllr Thomason provided an update on the poverty alleviation programme. She referred to hygiene products and said consideration was given to making female hygiene products more affordable and that the Council had teamed up with 'Hey Girls' a non-profit organisation who were used nationwide. The Council had ordered a box of products and leaflets. The products would be available in the Town Council offices and would be advertised in the Town Council's magazine.

Cllr Thomason referred to food and it had been decided not to provide food parcels due to resources that would be required plus Data Protection issues in requiring people to provide their personal information. Instead, they would be providing £5.00 Vouchers to be used at a local greengrocer. Residents would need to come into the Town Council office and just give their name to receive a voucher. They could volunteer further information if they chose to on feedback of the service which could assist the Council seeking additional funding.

Cllr King provided an update on the no35 bus service. He said the Council would be submitting a formal complaint to KCC over their decision not to have an equality impact assessment.

Cllr King said he and colleagues were looking to identify a safe play area north of Canterbury Road , Westgate. He and the Town Clerk had been in discussions with three companies: Sovereign, Play Creative and Street Safe to see what they each had to offer. This will be reported back to the Council. He said he attended the Westgate-on-Sea Community Association meeting. The lease for the community centre was due for renewal. He added that there was ongoing issue with the installation of a mast at the rear of the community centre.

Cllr Veck referred to Cllr Thomason's update on the Saturday Councillor surgeries and said the times would be 10.30am to 11.45am on the second Saturday of each month.

Cllr Veck said that a teleconference meeting was held on 20<sup>th</sup> August with representatives of Westgate and Garlinge Action Group, Cllrs Wallin and Scott, the Council's Planning consultant, Alison Eardly and Anna Gillings the developers' consultant. A second teleconference was being planned for early October and it was hoped that Nicola Bale from Places for People, the house builders would be in attendance. One of the actions was for representatives to have a set of agreed questions for the consultant at the next meeting.

#### **FC/24/36 Update on the 2023-2024 Statement of Accounts and the new Accounting System**

The Clerk provided an update on the statement of accounts. She said due to the changeover between the previous Clerks including the gap between the resignation of one clerk and the recruitment of the subsequent clerk, the accounts had not been fully completed. Following the resignation of the Clerk in July 2023, the accounts had been carried forward on the accounting system by her deputy until she resigned in October 2023. The new Clerk started in January 2024. It transpired that the accounting system had not been updated from the end of October 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. However, the previous Clerk had provided accounts on spreadsheets which she had presented to the internal auditor. The internal auditor submitted the accounts that were available to the external auditor who subsequently contacted the Council seeking

clarification on a number of issues. As the information required was no longer available, the Clerk said that she and the Chair reconstructed the accounts from the previous reconciliation. This involved identifying every invoice and every expenditure up until the end of the financial year, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. The Council's accounts had now been restated and reviewed by the governing body. They had subsequently requested that the AGAR notice (Annual Governing Statement) be amended to take account of some of the issues that had been identified. This was now on public display on the noticeboard with the amendments included. The Clerk said the amendments were basically to clarify some technical issues with the accountancy systems. The accounts were now accurate and are available for public scrutiny. The Council had now moved to a new accountancy system called Scribe which was used by many councils nationwide. It was very user friendly and transparent. Due to the work that had been undertaken to bring the accounts up to date, it had been identified that refunds of VAT had not been claimed by the Town Council. This would now be claimed back and could mean reimbursement of thousands of pounds into the Town Council's funds.

Cllr Veck formally thanked the Clerk for the hard work she had undertaken to bring the Town Council's accounts up to date. This was supported by the other Councillors and members of the public.

#### **FC/24/37 Update on the Lymington Road Skatepark**

A presentation was given by Nic Powley from Margate Skateboard Club CIC which outlined potential improvements to the Lymington Road Skatepark. Proposals were presented which included a new build using concrete which would make it quieter and with minimal future maintenance. The proposal would be to commence the build in early spring with completion within 6 weeks. Planning and design costs would be approximately £2000 and the build costs approx. £10000-£12000. He said there would be potential for major competitions to be held there as well as other events.

Following his presentation, Nic Powley answered some questions for Members.

Cllr Veck proposed that this project was taken forward and volunteers sought from the Council to be part of the project. He added that considerations would need be given to costs, planning permission and health and safety. The proposal in principle was unanimously **agreed**.

#### **FC/24/38 Report from PC Steven England, Ward Officer for Westgate and Birchington**

PC Steven England provided an update. He referred to retail crime theft and said that a man was founded guilty of 5 separate cases of shoplifting and assault at the Co-Op in Station Road. Sentencing would be on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2024. He said he had also apprehended two suspects who stole 3 bottles of wine from a retail premises in St Mildreds Road. Both suspects subsequently entered guilty pleas for other offences, and they received fines and orders to pay compensation to the retail premises. Another suspect was successfully apprehended for receiving a quantity of stolen meat from the Co-op. The goods were recovered and returned to the store. Investigations were ongoing. PC England said that two people who were sleeping rough in Westgate and had committed anti-social behaviour crimes had been issued with community protection warnings which meant they could not enter the town boundaries. They had since left the area. There had also been multi-agency action involving Kent Police and Orbit Housing following complaints about the occupants of a residential address in Westgate using abusive language and playing loud music. One of the tenants was served with an exceptional behaviour agreement which was linked in with their tenancy. Another intervention was at a property in School Close following complaints of abusive and threatening language by an occupant. A Community Protection Warning was issued for the behaviour to stop immediately.

PC England referred to road policing and said he would be participating with Thanet Community Road Safety Unit in a speed enforcement day during the first week of October. On 3<sup>rd</sup> August a female in Westgate was arrested for driving whilst disqualified and also in possession of cocaine. PC England referred to community engagement and said he would be arranging surgeries within Westgate where members of the public could speak to him and representatives of other agencies. He said he would also be a regular contributor to the Town Council's magazine providing updates. Cllr Veck said the Town Council was updating the Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) and was considering the views of residents. He asked PC England if he had any specific areas of concern that could be fed into the HIP. PC England said there were issues of speed particularly along Sea Road and Westgate Avenue and speed checks were undertaken the previous month where two speeding tickets were issued to motorcyclists. He asked to be involved in future discussions on the Highways Improvement Plan.

**FC/24/39 Town Clerk's correspondence**

The Clerk said the Council was endeavoring to establish and strengthen relationships with local businesses and local residents. The Council had an open-door policy for the public to discuss any issues from 10.am to 12.30 every morning Monday-Thursday. The Clerk said staff would be flexible if residents were unable to make these times.

**FC/24/40 Date of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2024 at 7.00 pm.

**Signed:** *Nabila Yakub*

**Interim Town Clerk**

**Westgate-on-Sea Town Council**

**Dated: 8<sup>th</sup> October 2024**