



**Minutes of an Extra Ordinary Meeting of the
Full Council of Swanley Town Council Held
at the Civic Centre, Swanley on Wednesday
21 January 2015**

Present

Cllr R Morris (Chairman)	Cllr J Sargeant
Cllr L Ball	Cllr T Searles
Cllr J Barnes	Cllr V Southern
Cllr R Brookbank	Cllr J Underwood
Cllr M Fittock	Cllr A Venter
Cllr George	Cllr H Willingale
Cllr C Lee	Cllr Woodbridge
Cllr M Mahy	

Also in attendance

J Pilbeam (Chief Executive)	L Saunders (Operations Director)
S Moor (Responsible Financial Officer)	G Mills (Democratic Services Officer)

The meeting opened at 7.30pm

Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and approved from Cllr Halford

Declarations of Pecuniary and non-Pecuniary Interests

None

Investigation into the Management of Swanley Banqueting and Associated Matters.

(Mr Richard Penn of the Local Government Association, and who was appointed by the Town Council to undertake an independent investigation into the Management of Swanley Banqueting, was present for this item)

- (i) The meeting had before it a report by the Chief Executive setting out the various measures and actions which had now been put in place to address the issues raised firstly in the report undertaken for the Council by Rea Associates and Lyn Scrivener Marketing in May 2008 and secondly the issues raised in the report by Mr Penn.
- (ii) Before the commencement of discussion Cllr Searles proposed and Cllr Ball seconded that the reports now before Full Council be approved and their recommendations adopted.

- (iii) Full Council invited Mr Penn to address the meeting and to present his report. Mr Penn explained to Full Council the background and circumstances which had led to him being asked to undertake his investigation. He set out in some detail the history of the Swanley Banqueting service and the concerns his report had revealed regarding its past performance and management. In his summary and conclusions Mr Penn said in undertaking his report he had conducted a review of the relevant documentation that had been to hand and interviewed all of those officers involved in the management of Swanley Banqueting or who had provided support services to Swanley Banqueting.
- (iv) Despite the strongly held view of some councillors that there had been corruption and even criminality in the way Swanley Banqueting had been managed in the past, Mr. Penn said he could find no specific evidence of any actions or conduct on the part of any employee that could be construed as criminal in nature. However, many of the practices that had developed had become embedded as a part of the culture of the organisation and that had in his view significantly increased the potential for fraud and criminality.
- (v) Mr. Penn said that his investigation had pointed to the need for a comprehensive range of actions to complement and enhance the significant improvements to the managerial competence and organisational culture that the current Chief Executive Officer had introduced since she commenced her employment some 18 months ago. He said it had been a challenge for the new Chief Executive Officer to not only lead the organisation and manage the Council's work during this period but also to drive forward the improvement programme that had been required. He said that it would take more time as well as significant resource investment for all of the actions he had proposed to be put in place. He said he had been impressed with the enthusiasm and commitment of those who still worked for the Council who had told him that they felt much more valued and empowered. He said he had also been encouraged by the recent injection of 'fresh blood' by appointments to key posts. He concluded by saying he was confident that the end result of the improvement programme would be a motivated, efficient and well-managed organisation of which the Town Council, its employees and the community of Swanley at large would again be proud. The full set of conclusions and recommendations put forward by Mr. Penn are set out in the appendix to these minutes.
- (vi) During the course of discussion members of the Council questioned Mr. Penn in some detail on the content of his report and its findings. In particular Council Members questioned Mr. Penn closely on areas such as past supervisory and accounting practices used by then management of the service, and how, as identified by Mr. Penn, that had contributed over a number of years to the service falling so badly short of the good governance and management that should be expected of a service that was being run by the Council. Cllr Southern spoke in his capacity as Chairman of the Swanley Banqueting Board and presented Council with information regarding historical abuse of the way banqueting staff, and in particular casual staff had been recruited and paid. Cllr Fittock spoke about the problems identified in the report and that it had been the responsibility of different administrations over a

number of years to deal with the problems that had been identified. Cllr Searles said the report clearly set out the mistakes that had been made in the past but with this report the Council had now grasped the nettle and was already taking forward a number of the recommendations that had put forward by Mr. Penn.

(8.45 PM – Cllr Woodbridge left the meeting)

- (vii) Towards the conclusion of debate Cllr Willingale proposed and Cllr Brookbank seconded that Mr Richard Penn be thanked for his report, the Personnel Committee be thanked for appointing Julie Pilbeam, the Chief Executive, and that the work now started should be continued beyond the next Council elections. **All in favour.**

- (viii) It was then **RESOLVED** that the proposal by Cllr Searles and seconded by Cllr Ball that the Council approves the findings and adopts the recommendations set out in the reports by the Chief Executive and Mr Penn be agreed. This was carried unanimously. *(The full set of conclusions and recommendations put forward by Mr. Penn in his report are set out in the appendix to these minutes).*

- (ix) The meeting concluded with the Mayor adding his thanks to Mr Penn on behalf of the Council for his report and for attending the meeting to which Mr Penn responded accordingly.

The meeting closed at 8:50pm

The next meeting of the full Council is on Wednesday 4 February 2015 in the Council Chamber, the Civic Centre, St Mary's Road, Swanley commencing at 7:30pm

Signed.....Chairman

Date 4 February 2015