

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COUNCIL held in the Council Chamber, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 13 April 2005.

PRESENT: Councillor J A P Eddy - Chairman

Councillors J D Ablewhite, M G Baker,
Mrs M Banjeree, I C Bates, J T Bell,
Mrs B E Boddington, P L E Bucknell,
E R Butler, Mrs J Chandler, W T Clough,
Mrs D E Collins, S J Criswell, J W Davies,
D B Dew, P J Downes, J J Dutton, J D Fell,
N J Finnie, J E Garner, D A Giles,
Mrs C A Godley, J A Gray, Mrs K P Gregory,
N J Guyatt, A Hansard, D Harty, D P Holley,
C R Hyams, Mrs P J Longford, P G Mitchell,
I R Muir, M F Newman, R Powell,
Mrs D C Reynolds, K Reynolds, T V Rogers,
J M Sadler, T D Sanderson, L M Simpson,
C J Stephens, P A Swales, J Taylor,
I P Taylor, G S E Thorpe, R G Tuplin,
Mrs S J Vanbergen and Ms M Wheeler.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs S A Menczer, A B Stenner and J S Watt.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D H Bristow.

61. PRAYER

The Reverend J Pullen, Vicar of St. Ives opened the meeting with Prayer.

62. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Council Membership

The Council placed on record their appreciation for the services rendered to the Council, latterly as Executive Councillor for Waste Management and Street Scene, by former Councillor R L Clarke, who had resigned on 29th March 2005 as District Councillor for the Little Paxton Ward. The Council extended their best wishes for the future to Mr Clarke and his family.

(b) The Chairman's Civic Ball

The Chairman announced, with regret, that it had become necessary to cancel the Civic Ball, although a cheque for £1,000 had been sent to the Papworth Trust's "Foundations for Living".

63. MINUTES

Subject to the substitution of the word “Longford” by the word “Longfoot” in the spelling of the name of the Rural Dean of Yaxley in Minute No. 43, the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 16th February 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

64. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: SECTION 84 - LITTLE PAXTON WARD

The Chief Executive reported the resignation of former Councillor R L Clarke with effect from 29th March 2005 and that the resultant vacancy in the Little Paxton ward would be filled at a by-election to be held in conjunction with the County Council elections on 5th May 2005.

Having acknowledged the contribution made by former Councillor Clarke in his capacity as Executive Councillor for Waste Management and Street Scene, Councillor Downes asked the Leader whether a replacement appointment to the Cabinet would be made for the remainder of the Municipal Year to which Councillor Holley replied that a new appointment would be dealt with at the forthcoming Annual Meeting of the Council in May.

65. REPORT OF THE CABINET, COMMITTEES AND PANELS

(a) Cabinet

Councillor D P Holley, Leader and Chairman of the Cabinet presented the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 24th February and 17th March 2005.

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Upon being put to the vote, the recommendation contained in Item No. 126 was declared to be CARRIED.

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Upon being put to the vote, the recommendation contained in Item No. 127 was declared to be CARRIED.

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Upon being put to the vote, a recommendation contained in Item No. 128 was declared to be CARRIED.

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Upon being put to the vote, the recommendation contained in Item No. 129 was declared to be CARRIED.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 24th February and 17th March 2005 be received and adopted.

(b) Standards Committee

Mr D H Bristow presented the Report of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 10th March 2005.

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(Councillor Mrs S J Vanbergen declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item No. 15 and left the meeting for the duration of the discussion thereon.)

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 10th March 2005 be received and adopted.

(c) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance)

Councillor P A Swales presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) held on 8th February and 8th March 2005 and of a joint meeting with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources) held on 8th March 2005.

In connection with Item No. 62 and in response to a question from Councillor Downes, the Chairman confirmed that he was satisfied that the observations of the joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels had been taken into account during the deliberations of the Cabinet on the options available to procure headquarters and depot premises for future use by the Council.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) held on 8th February and 8th March and of a joint meeting with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources) held on 8th March 2005 be received and adopted.

(d) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources)

Councillor K Reynolds presented the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources) held on 1st March 2005.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources) held on 1st March 2005 be received and adopted.

(e) Development Control Panel

Councillor P G Mitchell presented the Report of the meetings of the Development Control Panel held on 9th and 21st February and 21st March 2005.

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In connection with Item No. 23 and in response to questions from Councillors Downes, Simpson, Dew, Fell, Guyatt, Sanderson, Mrs Banerjee, Hyams and Dutton, the Chairman assured the Council -

- ◆ that the amount payable in compensation were the footpath at St Germain Walk, Huntingdon to be reinstated was considerable and had been calculated on the basis of the loss of pedestrian movements through Chequers Court together with any reduced rentals that would be likely to ensue
- ◆ that the decision of the Panel was consistent with the previous resolutions of the Council
- ◆ that whilst the issue of health and safety was of paramount importance, it was one of a number of factors to consider
- ◆ that it was envisaged that the redevelopment of Chequers Court would improve the vitality of Huntingdon as a shopping centre and commence within three years, and
- ◆ that the question of access for the disabled to Chequers Court and the Shop Mobility Scheme could be considered in advance of the redevelopment of Chequers Court.

On the same subject and in response to a question from Councillor Sanderson regarding the progress of the proposed shop mobility scheme for Chequers Court, the

Deputy Leader, Councillor Bates undertook to advise the Councillor and Huntingdon Ward Councillors, of the current position after the meeting.

Whereupon, on being put to the vote, the recommendations contained in Item No. 23 were declared to be CARRIED.

(In accordance with Rule 14.5 of the Council Procedure Rules, Councillor J J Dutton requested that it be recorded that he had voted against the resolution.)

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In connection with Item No. 28 and in response to questions by Councillors Clough and K Reynolds, the Chairman replied that he was unable to confirm that income from planning applications had decreased following the difficulties experienced in meeting performance targets for the determination of applications, that a review of the division by the Head of Planning Services would seek to address the retention of experienced staff and the training of new officers and that he was not aware whether the review would include the possibility of outsourcing of the service.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meetings of the Development Control Panel held on 9th and 21st February and 21st March 2005 be received and adopted.

(f) Employment Panel

Councillors J W Davies presented the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 2nd March 2005.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 2nd March 2005 be received and adopted.

(g) Corporate Governance Panel

Councillor I C Bates presented the Report of the meetings of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 23rd and 30th March 2005.

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With regard to item No. 14, the Chairman thanked those Panels, individual Members and Officers who had contributed to the recent review of the Constitution. Whereupon, the recommendations contained in item No. 14 were declared to be CARRIED.

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RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 23rd and 30th March 2005 be received and adopted.

66. A14 - PROPOSALS FOR UPGRADE - BRAMPTON HUT TO FEN DITTON: CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS

(The Chairman announced that he proposed to allow consideration of the following item as a matter of urgency in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972 to give the Council the opportunity of registering their concern to the Highways Agency in response to the postponement by the Agency of public exhibitions on proposals to upgrade the A14 from Brampton Hut to Fen Ditton until after 5th May 2005.)

In moving the following Motion, Councillor P A Swales informed the Council of the concerns expressed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) and their wish to draw these urgently to the attention of the Council –

“that the Council registers its deep concern with the Highways Agency over the Agency’s decision to postpone the public exhibitions to be held locally on the proposals to upgrade the A14 from Brampton Hut to Fen Ditton until after 5th May, both in terms of the inconvenience that this has caused to local people wishing to attend the exhibitions and the curtailment of time that this will now allow for comment before the deadline of 30th June”.

Councillor Guyatt duly seconded the Motion subject to the following amendments which were accepted by Councillor Swales –

- ◆ in the first line delete the words “Highways Agency” and insert the words “Cabinet Office”; and
- ◆ in the second line insert the words “Highways” before the word “Agency”.

Councillor Guyatt, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy confirmed that both options for the upgrading of the A14 between Ellington, to the west of Huntingdon and Fen Ditton to the North East of Cambridge would be evaluated by the District Council in advance of the deadline for representations of 30th June 2005 and that a report on the issues would be submitted to the Cabinet and Council in due course. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED (nem con)

that the Council registers its deep concern with the Cabinet Office over the Highways Agency's decision to postpone the public exhibitions to be held locally on the proposals to upgrade the A14 from Brampton Hut to Fen Ditton until after 5th May, both in terms of the inconvenience that this has caused to the local people wishing to attend the exhibitions and the curtailment of time that this will now allow for comment before the deadline of 30th June.

67. ORAL QUESTIONS

In accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules (Section 8.3) of the Council's Constitution, the Chairman proceeded to conduct a period of oral questions addressed to Executive Councillors and Panel Chairmen as follows:-

Question from Councillor Mrs C A Godley to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Councillor N J Guyatt

In response to a question regarding the implications of the car parking review on Bridge Place, Mill Yard and Park Lane car parks in Godmanchester, Councillor Guyatt explained that these locations had been included in a proposed Order to enable the car parks to be managed better but that otherwise there was no intention to charge for their use.

Question from Councillor R Powell to the Leader of the Council, Councillor D P Holley

In response to a question regarding the assistance available to users of wheeled bins, the Leader confirmed that the elderly and disabled would continue to receive help in the collection of refuse from their wheeled bins in the same manner as they had previously in the collection of their black refuse bags.

Question from Councillor I P Taylor to the Leader, Councillor D P Holley

In response to a question regarding the decision by Huntingdonshire Housing Partnership to increase the rent of garages which had resulted in a 110% rise for non HHP tenants and the implications for health and safety and on-street parking which might result, the Leader advised that HHP was an independent organisation over which the District Council had no control although representations could be made via the District Council's representatives on the HHP Board should the questioner wish to draw the issue to their attention.

Question from Councillor Mrs B E Boddington to the Leader of the Council, Councillor D P Holley

In response to a question as to when residents would be able to dispose of kitchen waste in their wheeled bins, the Leader undertook to obtain the answer and circulate a copy to all Members of the Council.

Question from Councillor J J Dutton to the Leader, Councillor D P Holley

In response to a question as to whether the District Council or Churchmanor Estates would be liable in the event of an accident to a pedestrian on the sloped area of Chequers Court, the Leader undertook to clarify the land ownership issues at that location and to reply in writing to the questioner.

Question from Councillor G S E Thorpe to the Leader, Councillor D P Holley

In response to a question as to whether the possible capping of the Council's expenditure in 2005/06 was the result of funding revenue expenditure from reserves, the Leader replied that he deeply regretted the decision of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to identify the District Council for possible capping, that a submission had been made to the ODPM in response to the threat, that the District Council continued to set a council tax level below the average for all Districts and that it was difficult for all authorities to budget accurately in the face of dramatic changes in local government finance from year to year.

68. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: SECTION 85

The Chief Executive reported that there were no absences of Members from meetings for consideration in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The meeting concluded at 3.50 pm

Chairman