

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, 27 September 2006.

PRESENT: Councillor P A Swales – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, R W D Bailey, M G Baker, K M Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, I C Bates, J T Bell, Mrs B E Boddington, D H Bristow, P L E Bucknell, E R Butler, Mrs J Chandler, K J Churchill, Mrs D E Collins, S J Criswell, J W Davies, D B Dew, P J Downes, J J Dutton, RWJ Eaton, J D Fell, J E Garner, D A Giles, Mrs C A Godley, J A Gray, N J Guyatt, A Hansard, D Harty, C R Hyams, Mrs P J Longford, Mrs S A Menczer, I R Muir, M F Newman, R Powell, T V Rogers, J M Sadler, T D Sanderson, L M Simpson, C J Stephens, G S E Thorpe, R G Tuplin, J S Watt, R J West and Ms M Wheeler.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors A N Gilbert, P G Mitchell, D J Priestman, Mrs D C Reynolds, K Reynolds and J Taylor.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D H Bristow.

27. PRAYER

The Venerable H McCurdy, Archdeacon of Huntingdon and Wisbech opened the meeting with Prayer.

28. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Councillor J A P Eddy

The Chairman paid tribute to Councillor J A P Eddy who had died after a short illness on 3rd August 2006 having served as a District Councillor for 31 years and more recently as Chairman of the District Council. Councillors I C Bates, Leader of the Council and Councillor P J Downes, Leader of the Opposition led tributes to Councillor Eddy on behalf of their respective groups commending his dedication and commitment to Huntingdonshire and Councillors Mrs Boddington, Criswell, Davies, Guyatt and Newman, contributed their own personal memories. Members observed a minute's silence in Councillor Eddy's memory.

(b) Councillor Mrs K P Gregory

The Chairman announced the resignation of Councillor Mrs K P Gregory, District Councillor for St. Neots (Eaton Ford) Ward with effect from 27th September 2006. On behalf of

Members, the Chairman thanked Mrs Gregory for her service to the Council over 10 years and extended his best wishes to her and her family for the future.

(c) **Councillors v Officers Rounders Match**

The Chairman congratulated all those who had contributed to the success of the inaugural Councillors versus Officers rounders match on 12th July 2006.

(d) **Chairman's Reception**

The Chairman announced that his reception would be held at Hinchingbrooke House on Friday 8th December 2006 at 7.30 pm and that formal invitations would be sent out shortly.

29. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 28th June 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

30. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillors M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee and P L E Bucknell declared personal interests in Minute No. 33 (a) (Item No. 43) as the District Council's representatives on Huntingdonshire Housing Partnership.

Councillor C R Hyams declared a personal interest in Minute No. 33(a), (Item No. 43) as the District Council's representative on the Luminus Group.

Councillor C R Hyams declared a personal interest in Minute No. 35 (a) by virtue of a family relationship with an individual who has contributed to the project being undertaken by Marshall Aerospace.

Councillor T D Sanderson declared a personal interest in Minute No. 35 (a) as an employee of the Ministry of Defence.

Councillor Mrs M Wheeler declared a personal interest in Minute No. 35 (c) as an employee of Hinchingbrooke Hospital NHS Trust and left the meeting during discussion thereon.

31. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT: SECTION 87 - CASUAL VACANCY

The Returning Officer reported that a by-election in the Earith Ward would be held on 12th October 2006 and that arrangements would be made to advertise the vacancy in the St. Neots (Eaton Ford) Ward in due course.

32. ANNUAL STATE OF THE DISTRICT ADDRESS

In accordance with paragraph 12 of the Council's Procedure Rules, the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates addressed the meeting on the State of the District (a précis of Councillor Bates' address is appended in the Minute Book).

In his remarks, Councillor Bates indicated that he had chosen to highlight, by reference to the District Council's priorities, the progress made by Huntingdonshire in responding to the challenges inherent in the campaign launched by the Local Government Association entitled "Closer to People and Places: A New Vision for Local Government". Councillor Bates illustrated his address by referring to the results of the annual quality of life surveys undertaken by external consultants RBA Research in February and March 2006.

In response to the Leader's address, Councillor P J Downes, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group commended the Council's continued efforts to develop new affordable housing given that 2,300 households still were awaiting housing accommodation, that 86 households were considered to be homeless and that 21 were awaiting designation as homeless. However, Councillor Downes drew the Council's attention to the possible state of the District in 2050 given the increasing effects of climate change. While applauding the adoption of the Travel Plan, Councillor Downes expressed his disappointment that the Council had not yet signed the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change, given that as an authority, the District was at significant risk through the potential for rises in sea levels.

For the benefit of the Council, Councillor N J Guyatt, Executive Councillor for Environment and Transport advised that he anticipated that authority to sign the Nottingham declaration would be requested from the Cabinet shortly, and that an Environment Strategy, responding to the points raised by Councillor Downes, would be the subject of consultation early in the New Year. Recognising the importance of this subject, Councillor J A Gray, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny (Service Support) Panel indicated that he was looking forward to considering the content of the Environment Strategy at a future Panel meeting.

Councillor Mrs M Banerjee reminded Members of the restraints placed on the Council's ability to develop housing and their success in attracting £7m from the Housing Corporation to fund new affordable housing over the next two years.

Although welcoming the Leader's address, Councillor Mrs S A Menczer suggested that it was unlikely to have any significant impact on Huntingdonshire residents. Councillor Mrs Menczer was of the view that the Council should take the opportunity to open the annual debate to increase contributions from various disabled and young peoples' groups, for instance, and by encouraging the development of the debate as an important community event.

33. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, PANELS AND COMMITTEES

(a) Cabinet

Councillor I C Bates, Leader and Chairman of the Cabinet presented the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 29th June, 20th July and 7th September 2006.

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Upon being put to the vote, the recommendation contained in Item No. 19 was declared to be CARRIED.

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In connection with Item No. 20, Councillor Downes moved and it was duly seconded that -

the words "for 2006/07 only and the remaining proposals be subject to further investigation by the relevant officers and scrutiny by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels" be added after the word "supported" in recommendation (a).

Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was LOST. Whereupon, on being put to the vote, recommendations (a) – (c) were CARRIED

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In connection with Item No. 44 and in response to questions from Councillors K Churchill and D Harty, the Leader welcomed the support given by Little Paxton Parish Council to the proposals to extend Little Paxton Pits Nature Reserve and anticipated that the planning conditions associated with the consent for the extended reserve would resolve the concerns expressed by local residents.

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In connection with Item No. 47 and in response to a question from Councillor C R Hyams, the Leader also welcomed the publication for consultation of Conservation Area Draft Management Plans for Post Street and Earning Street in Godmanchester.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 29th June, 20th July and 7th September 2006 be received and adopted.

(b) Standards Committee

Mr D H Bristow presented the Report of the meetings of the Standards Committee held on 6th and 24th July and 14th September 2006.

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Mr D H Bristow paid tribute to Councillor J A P Eddy and expressed his appreciation for the support and assistance he had received from him as the first independent Chairman of

the Standards Committee.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Standards Committee held on 6th and 24th July and 14th September 2006 be received and adopted.

(c) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery)

Councillor S J Criswell presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) held on 4th July and 5th September 2006.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) held on 4th July and 5th September 2006 be received and adopted.

(d) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support)

Councillor J A Gray presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) held on 11th July and 12th September 2006.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) held on 11th July and 12th September 2006 be received and adopted.

(e) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework)

Councillor J A Gray presented the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) held on 5th September 2006.

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In connection with Item No. 2 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, Councillor Gray confirmed that he had received details of the proposals for savings

identified by the Liberal Democrat Group.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) held on 5th September 2006 be received and adopted.

(f) Development Control Panel

Councillor D B Dew presented the Report of the meetings of the Development Control Panel held on 17th July, 21st August and 18th September 2006.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Development Control Panel held on 17th July, 21st August and 18th September 2006 be received and adopted.

(g) Employment Panel

Councillor Mrs B E Boddington presented the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 20th September 2006.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 20th September 2006 be received and adopted.

(h) Elections Panel

Councillor D Harty presented the Report of the meeting of the Elections Panel held on 22nd August 2006.

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Councillor Harty explained that the Report represented the Panel's deliberations on the results of an initial consultation exercise and that a subsequent report would contain further details of the consequential changes proposed to the electoral arrangements in the parishes affected.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Elections Panel held on 22nd August 2006 be received and adopted.

(i) Corporate Governance Panel

Councillor C J Stephens presented the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 27th June 2006.

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Councillor Stephens expressed his gratitude to those Members who had contributed to the meeting given the nature and length of the business which had been conducted.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 27th June 2006 be received and adopted.

(j) Licensing Committee

Councillor J M Sadler presented the Report of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 24th August 2006.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 24th August 2006 be received and adopted.

34. 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 J A Gray to the Executive Councillor for Environment and Transport, Councillor N J Guyatt

In response to a question regarding the content and purpose

of the proposed Environment Strategy, Councillor Guyatt replied that the strategy would focus on the effect of carbon emissions and the contribution that individuals and the Council could make to the environment, the influence of natural causes on the provision of housing, water levels and flooding, the possibility of the use of carbon “offsetting”, recycling and the promotion of local projects at Paxton Pits, the Great Fen and on the Great Ouse Way. Councillor Guyatt expressed his optimism that the Council could become a Beacon Council for local government and other businesses on these issues.

Question from Councillor R G Tuplin to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Councillor P L E Bucknell

In response to a question requesting the Executive Councillor to expedite a reply from the County Council on the process for the use of Section 106 receipts from the development at Yaxley for educational purposes at Stanground, Councillor Bucknell undertook to pursue the matter with the County Council.

Question from Councillor J E Garner to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Councillor P L E Bucknell

In response to a question regarding the current position in respect of proposed development on the former airfield site at Alconbury, Councillor Bucknell replied that discussions were continuing on the future of all military sites in the District.

Question from Councillor T D Sanderson to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Councillor P L E Bucknell

In response to a question regarding the likelihood of proposals emerging for managing HGV traffic on St. Peter's Road, Huntingdon and for the establishment of pedestrian links at Flamsteed and Kingfisher Drives, Huntingdon using the proceeds of Section 106 Agreements, Councillor Bucknell replied that he was aware that several schemes had been accorded greater priority than those mentioned by the questioner but that he would make enquiries and respond to the specific points made in due course.

35. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

Before proceeding to the Motions on the Agenda, the Chairman announced his intention to invoke the discretion available to him under paragraph 9.5 of the Council Procedure Rules and to rule that Motions (a), (b), and (c) on being moved and seconded would be dealt with at the meeting in the interests of the convenient and conducive despatch of the Council's business.

- (a) It was moved by Councillor D B Dew and duly seconded –

"that, in recognising –

- ◆ the continued retention of RAF Wyton on the shortlist for the possible relocation of Marshall's Aerospace;
- ◆ the importance of the Wyton site in the economic and social life of Huntingdonshire;
- ◆ the advantages offered by the site in terms of its existing facilities and excellent transport links, which may enhance the proposed guided bus service; and
- ◆ the potential for relocating to the District many highly skilled jobs involved in the key strategic activities of this important family-owned company

- the Council agrees that every avenue should be explored to assess the merits of RAF Wyton as a mutually beneficial site for Marshalls, the District and St Ives in particular".

Whereupon, on being put to the vote, the Motion was declared to be CARRIED.

(b) It was moved by Councillor P J Downes and duly seconded -

"that in response to the Department of Health's consultation on Under-Age Sale of Tobacco, this Council supports the Government's recommendation that the legal age for the purchase of tobacco be raised to 18 and that sanctions against offending retailers should take the form of 'negative licensing', as outlined in the consultation document".

Whereupon, on being put to the vote, the Motion was declared to be CARRIED (nem.con).

(c) It was moved by Councillor P J Downes and duly seconded -

"that in the light of the growing population of Huntingdonshire and of Huntingdon's pivotal position in a growing road network, this Council opposes any plans to close Hinchingsbrooke Hospital and calls on the Strategic Health Authority to maintain good levels of health care at the hospital, including an Accident and Emergency unit".

The following amendment to the Motion was moved by Councillor S J Criswell and duly seconded –

"that all the words after "opposes" in the third line be deleted and the following words inserted –

"any reduction in health services at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital and calls upon the Strategic Health Authority to recognise that Huntingdonshire is one of the fastest growing areas in the country and requires an increase in health care provision to meet future needs.

Furthermore, the Council demands that Central Government

honours its commitment to the NHS by providing sufficient funding to allow the Strategic Health Authority and Cambridgeshire Primary Care Trust to meet that need. In so doing, it emphasises that without the full range of services currently provided at the key location of Hinchingsbrooke, the added burden to the travelling public and increased risk to life would be totally unacceptable.

This Council also urges Huntingdonshire residents to support the Members of Parliament for the Huntingdon and North-West Cambridgeshire Constituencies in petitioning on this crucial issue.”

On being put to the vote, the amendment was declared to be CARRIED.

On being put to the vote, the Motion as amended, was declared to be CARRIED (nem.con).

36. MEMBERSHIP OF CABINET, PANELS, COMMITTEE, ETC

RESOLVED

that Councillor J D Ablewhite be appointed to the Standards Committee.

37. 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 6.03pm.

Chairman