

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, 25 June 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor J W Davies – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, K M Baker,
M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, I C Bates,
J T Bell, Mrs B E Boddington, P L E Bucknell,
E R Butler, W T Clough, Mrs K E Cooper,
S J Criswell, D B Dew, Mrs J A Dew,
P J Downes, J J Dutton, R W J Eaton,
R S Farrer, J E Garner, A N Gilbert,
P M D Godfrey, P Godley, J A Gray,
A Hansard, C R Hyams, Ms S Kemp,
L W McGuire, P G Mitchell, I R Muir,
M F Newman, R Powell, D J Priestman,
T V Rogers, J M Sadler, T D Sanderson,
M F Shellens, L M Simpson, C J Stephens,
P A Swales, Ms M J Thomas, G S E Thorpe,
R G Tuplin, P K Ursell and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors K J Churchill JP, P H Dakers, D Harty, Mrs P A Jordan, Mrs D C Reynolds and P R Ward.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D L Hall.

19. PRAYER

The Reverend M Savage, Team Vicar for Huntingdon opened the meeting with prayer.

20. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Mr K Reynolds

Having been advised of the ill health of former Councillor K Reynolds, Members were informed that the Chairman had conveyed, on the Council's behalf, his best wishes for a speedy and complete recovery.

(b) Annual Cricket Match

The Chairman announced that the annual cricket fixture between councillors and staff would take place at St Ivo Outdoor Centre, St Ives on 23rd July 2008 and he encouraged all Members to support the event.

(c) Chairman's Civic Reception

The Chairman announced his intention to hold his Civic Reception at St Ivo Leisure Centre on the evening of 31st

October 2008. Formal invitations would be issued in due course.

21. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillors Mrs K E Cooper, R W J Eaton, G S E Thorpe and P K Ursell declared personal and prejudicial interests in Minute Nos. 22, 23 and 25 by virtue of their appointment as trustees to St Neots Outdoor Swimming Pool and left the Chamber for the duration of the discussion on those items.

Councillor J M Sadler declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute Nos. 22, 23 and 25 by virtue of his membership of the Governing Body of Huntingdonshire Regional College and left the Chamber for the duration of discussion on those items.

Councillor I C Bates declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute No. 25 by virtue of his membership of Cambridgeshire Police Authority and left the Chamber for the duration of the discussions on that item.

Councillor M G Baker declared a personal interest in Minute Nos. 22, 23 and 25 as an employee of Hinchingsbrooke School and as a member of the "Friends of Hinchingsbrooke House".

Councillor P J Downes declared a personal interest in Minute Nos. 22, 23 and 25 as former Headmaster of Hinchingsbrooke School and as Chairman of the "Friends of Hinchingsbrooke House".

Councillor M F Shellens declared a personal interest in Minute Nos. 22, 23 and 25 as Chairman of Brampton Parish Council and as a member of the "Friends of Hinchingsbrooke House".

22. PETITION NO. 1

In conjunction with Item No. 25, the Chairman invited Mr C Osborn, a member of Huntingdon Town Council, to address the meeting and to present a petition of behalf of 180 signatories calling upon the District Council "To leave the (Huntingdonshire) Regional College where it is, not replace it with houses and to refurbish it on the present site where it could best serve those who need it most."

23. PETITION NO. 2

In conjunction with Item No. 25, the Chairman invited Mr M Dixon to address the meeting and to present a petition on behalf of 99 signatories which called upon the District Council to "Reject the move of the (Huntingdonshire) Regional College to Hinchingsbrooke because of the serious traffic implications and the increased danger to cyclists and pedestrians at this busy site."

24. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 14th May 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

25. DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION - DEVELOPMENT OF NEW COLLEGE CAMPUS AND ACCESS WORKS, ASSOCIATED PARKING AND SPORTS PITCHES, PART OF SPORTS GROUND, CAMBRIDGESHIRE CONSTABULARY, HINCHINGBROOKE PARK, HINCHINGBROOKE PARK ROAD, HUNTINGDON

Further to Minute Nos. 22 and 23 and in conjunction with the report of the Development Control Panel (Minute No. 30 (f) refers), the Head of Planning Services introduced a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding an outline planning application for the development of a new college campus, car parking and access, a multi-activity games area and football pitch on land currently in the ownership of Cambridgeshire Constabulary situated west of Brampton Road and north of Hinchingbrooke Park Road, Huntingdon.

In the course of his presentation, the Head of Planning Services updated the Council on the representations received from Huntingdon Town Council, the Greater Cambridge Partnership, the Principal of the Regional College and a member of the public since the agenda had been circulated. Mr S Bell, Team Leader Transportation advised the Council of the implications of the development for the local transport infrastructure and confirmed that Cambridgeshire County Council had indicated their satisfaction that the transport assessment had demonstrated that the development could progress without detrimental effect.

Ms A Constantine, addressed the Council on behalf of the applicant, Huntingdonshire Regional College. The Chairman of the Development Control Panel, Councillor P G Mitchell, drew attention to those issues which had led the Panel to indicate its support for the application and to recommend its approval. Principally, these related to the content of the transport assessment, the views of the Highways Authority and the opportunity presented by the development to provide a "state of the art" skills college for Huntingdon and the surrounding area. Whereupon, it was moved by Councillor Mitchell and duly seconded that the recommendation contained in Item No. 1 of the Report of the meeting of the Development Control Panel be approved.

Detailed discussion ensued during which some local councillors expressed their concerns at -

- ◆ the manner in which consultation had been conducted on the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan particularly given the timing of the application under consideration;
- ◆ the potential impact of the proposed development on increased traffic, the local road network and the inadequacy of bus services and cycle links;
- ◆ that there were sufficient higher education facilities in Peterborough and St Neots;
- ◆ that a green travel plan would be ineffective;
- ◆ that the existing college site was more appropriate; and
- ◆ that the proposed site was unsuitable in such close proximity to another large educational establishment.

Alternative views were expressed in support of the application in terms of better accessibility for students, improved transport links, compliance with the emerging strategy for this part of Huntingdon and

sustainability.

Following contributions from a number of Councillors and it having been moved and seconded, the Council

RESOLVED

- (a) that, subject to conditions to be determined by the Head of Planning Services, the application for the erection of a new college campus and access works, associated parking and sport pitches on land that forms part of the sports ground, Cambridgeshire Constabulary, Hinchingsbrooke Park, Hinchingsbrooke Road, Huntingdon be supported;
- (b) that the Government Office for the Eastern Region be requested to consider whether they wish to call-in the proposal; and
- (c) that, in the event that the proposal not being called in by the Government Office, the application be approved subject to conditions set out in paragraph 10 of the report now submitted and the Director of Environmental and Community Services authorised to advertise the application as a departure from the Development Plan.

26. ADJOURNMENT

At 4.28 pm, it was

RESOLVED

that the meeting stand adjourned.

Upon resumption at 4.45 pm.

27. CABINET PROCEDURE RULES - DELEGATION BY THE LEADER

In accordance with the Cabinet Procedure Rules contained in the Council's Constitution and, subject to the replacement of Councillor D B Dew by Councillor Mrs J A Dew in the membership of the Huntingdonshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee referred to in the Appendix to the document, the Council noted the allocation of executive functions for the ensuing municipal year contained in a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book).

28. REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION - CODE OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Further to Minute No. 64 (h) of the meeting of the Council held on 16th April 2008 and in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 20.2, the Council considered a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding a series of changes to the Code of Financial Management contained in the District Council's Constitution. Having been moved and seconded, the Council

RESOLVED

that the Code of Financial Management, as amended, be approved.

29. FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2008/9

By reference to a report by the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), Councillor J M Sadler, Chairman of the Licensing and Protection Panel reminded the Council that the Food Standards Agency required the preparation, on an annual basis, of a Food Safety Service Plan. A full copy of the Food Safety Service Plan 2008/9 had been made available in the Members' Room. (An executive summary of the Plan is appended to the report now submitted.)

Members were reminded of the objectives of the Service Plan in terms of identifying resources, establishing a work programme and providing a means by which to measure and manage performance.

In particular, Councillor Sadler drew the Council's attention to the success of the wide range of promotional events undertaken across the District involving local primary schools and community groups under the Hunts for Good Food project which had culminated in the award of Regional Food Champion status by the FSA.

In terms of 2008/9, Councillor Sadler advised Members that the Team would direct their resources to the inspection of food premises and that they intended to introduce a "scores on the doors" scheme involving the award of hygiene scores to food outlets after routine inspections which would be published on the Council's website. It was hoped that this scheme would encourage food businesses to maintain high hygiene standards.

Having congratulated the Food Services Team for their performance during 2007/8, for their success in achieving the Regional Food Champion award and having noted the support for the Plan on the part of the Licensing and Protection Panel, the Council

RESOLVED

that the Food Safety Service Plan 2008/9 be adopted.

30. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, PANELS AND COMMITTEES

(a) Cabinet

Councillor I C Bates, Leader and Chairman of the Cabinet, represented the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 24th April, 15th May and 12th June 2008.

Upon being put to the vote, the recommendation contained in Item No. 1 was declared CARRIED.

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In connection with Item No. 2 and in response to a question from Councillor W T Clough, the Leader, Councillor Bates. replied that all Members of the Cabinet received the special responsibility allowance to which they were entitled under the current Members' Allowances scheme.

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In connection with Item No. 7 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, the Leader, Councillor Bates, acknowledged, the complexity in monitoring the new Local Area Agreement (LAA) but indicated that a seminar on the LAA, Local Strategic Partnership, Sustainable Community Strategy and Comprehensive Area Agreement to be held on 24th July 2008 to which all Councillors would be invited, would assist Members' understanding of the process.

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In connection with Item No. 10 and in response to a question from Councillor G S E Thorpe, the Leader, Councillor Bates, undertook to provide an explanation in writing as to the meaning of a "two factor authentication system" as part of the flexible working project for staff.

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In connection with Item No. 13 and in response to a question from Councillor Mrs M Banerjee, the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor P L E Bucknell indicated that he anticipated that regional guidance on the development of additional housing growth in sustainable ways would be issued shortly by the Government Office for the East of England.

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In connection with Item No. 15 and in response to a question from Councillor P G Mitchell, the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor P L E Bucknell, advised that the District Council would seek, through development at Mayfield Road, Huntingdon, to establish a standard for the delivery of high energy efficiency housing schemes.

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In connection with Item No. 20, the Deputy Leader, Councillor L M Simpson, announced that Councillors Mrs B E Boddington and J J Dutton had been appointed to the vacant posts of "Champion" for Training and for Oxmoor respectively.

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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 April, 15th May and 12th June 2008 be received and adopted.

(b) Standards Committee

Mr D L Hall presented the Report of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 5th June 2008.

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Upon being put to the vote, the recommendation contained in Item No. 1 was declared to be CARRIED.

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In connection with Item No. 4 and in response to a question from Councillor C R Hyams, Mr Hall replied that the Monitoring Officer undertook a programme of training for town and parish councils in the District and that he was due to attend a meeting of Little Paxton Parish Council for this purpose at the beginning of July.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 5th June 2008 be received and adopted.

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

Councillor S J Criswell presented the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) held on 3rd June 2008.

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In connection with Item No. 1, Councillor Criswell encouraged Members to identify suggestions for spending adjustments during the August recess period with a view to submitting these to Officers by September 2008.

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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 3rd June 2008 be received and adopted.

(d) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery)

Councillor S J Criswell presented the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) held on 3rd June 2008.

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In connection with Item No. 4 and in response to a question from Councillor R W J Eaton, Councillor Criswell thanked the questioner for his kind words with regard to the conclusion of the Panel's study on disability access.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) held on 3rd June 2008 be received and adopted.

(e) 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 8th April and 10th June 2008.

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In connection with Item No. 6 and in response to a question from Councillor T D Sanderson regarding the allocation of Section 106 funding for transportation initiatives, Councillor Gray advised Members that the Panel had established a study group to examine the Section 106 process in detail and that it was their intention to make recommendations which, hopefully, would secure a Section 106 regime which would more clearly identify where contributions were to be spent in future.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) held on 8th April and 10th June 2008 be received and adopted.

(f) Development Control Panel

Councillor P G Mitchell presented the Report of the meetings of the Development Control Panel held on 21st April, 19th

May and 16th June 2008.

In connection with Item No. 1, it was noted that the recommendations had been considered previously under Minute No. 25 ante.

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In connection with Item Nos. 4 and 5 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, Councillor Mitchell confirmed that the Panel had contributed as a consultee to the preparation of the design briefs for both Primrose Lane and Mayfield Road, Huntingdon.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Development Control Panel held on 21st April, 19th May and 16th June 2008 be received and adopted.

(g) Employment Panel

Councillor Mrs B E Boddington presented the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 3rd June 2008.

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In connection with Item No. 3, the Leader, Councillor I C Bates and Councillor M G Baker paid tribute to the contribution made by Mr P Watkins, Director of Central Services and Monitoring Officer who was due to retire from the Council's service on 27th June 2008.

Accordingly. Members placed on record their sincere gratitude to Mr Watkins for his contribution to the work of the Council and the help and advice he had offered to councillors over his 43 years in the local government service.

In reply, Mr Watkins thanked the Council for their good wishes.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 3rd June 2008 be received and adopted.

31. ORAL QUESTIONS

In accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules (paragraph 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 P M D Godfrey to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor P L E Bucknell

In response to a question regarding the wisdom of the decision to release agricultural land for the purposes of the Great Fen Project given the demands on future world food production, Councillor Bucknell invited the questioner to accompany him to an event to be hosted by the Environment Agency and National Farmers Union to discuss "food, fuel and wetlands" and recommended that Council Members listen to a BBC Radio 4 broadcast on the Great Fen Project.

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Question from Councillor P G Mitchell to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor P L E Bucknell

In response to a question regarding the arrangements being made to manage issues arising from the acquisition of land for the Great Fen Project, Councillor Bucknell replied that a meeting would take place with partners to the Project on 18th July 2008 at which it was intended to discuss governance arrangements, land purchase and communication and negotiation issues and that he would be in a position to supply further details after that date.

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Question from Councillor Mrs J A Dew to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor P L E Bucknell

In response to a question regarding the volume and estimated cost of concessionary bus passes, Councillor Bucknell reported that to date 20,894 concessionary bus passes had been issued representing 150 – 200 passes per week, that it was anticipated that a further 4,000 applications might be received – an increase of 20% over that forecasted and that it was estimated that the exercise would cost in the region of £803,000.

Question from Councillor J E Garner to the Leader, Councillor I C Bates

In response to a question regarding the use by the District Council of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, Councillor Bates referred Council Members to details of the recent covert surveillance activities which had been described in a paper circulated at the meeting and appended to these Minutes. Councillor Bates added that the account of activities had revealed that the Council had used the provisions sparingly since the inception of the Act.

Question from Councillor M G Baker to the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Councillor D B Dew

In response to a question regarding the future of the District Council's Leisure Centres, Councillor Dew reported that although the future direction of the Leisure Centres was still under review, it was important to continue to develop and improve existing facilities. There was, however, no intention to privatise the Leisure Service but rather to continue to ensure that the Centres performed effectively and responded to the challenges set by the market.

Question from Councillor Mrs K E Cooper to the Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy, Councillor A Hansard

In response to a question regarding the Electoral Review of Parishes Councillor Hansard undertook to respond to the questioner in writing on the likelihood of the changes made being in place for the 2011 elections.

Question from Councillor Mrs B E Boddington to the Executive Councillor for Planning and Transport, Councillor P L E Bucknell

In response to a question regarding the effect of the rise in world oil prices on the projected cost of the proposed scheme of improvements to the A14 in Cambridgeshire, Councillor Bucknell undertook to seek a response from experts in the field and to reply to the questioner in writing.

Question from Councillor P Godley to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor P L E Bucknell

In response to a question regarding the methodology for street naming in the event of new developments within a ward, Councillor Bucknell replied that it was common practice for a developer to select the name of new roads within a development drawing upon local characteristics or traditions but that town and parish councils could influence this process provided they made suggestions at an early stage.

Question from Councillor G S E Thorpe to the Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy, Councillor A Hansard

In response to a question regarding the accuracy of a suggestion made in a report by a study group of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) that the post of Town Centre Manager to St Neots was funded by the District Council, Councillor Hansard replied that each Town Centre Partnership was awarded annual funding of £19,200 and that, other than St Neots, the other Town Centre Initiatives had chosen to utilise part of these funds to support the employment of a Town Centre Manager.

Question from Councillor S J Criswell to the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Councillor D B Dew

In response to a question regarding the progress made by the Leisure Centres in achieving reductions in their budget, Councillor Dew reported that the service had increased income, made savings,

reduced management and administration costs and utility bills all of which had amounted to a saving in the contribution made by the District Council to the running of the Leisure Centres in 2007/08 of £732,000.

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

In response to a question regarding the timescale for updating the Huntingdon and Godmanchester Market Town Transport Strategy, Councillor Bucknell replied that the Market Town Strategy would be updated in conjunction with the Northbridge, Huntingdon development but that he would write to the questioner to specify when this might be.

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

In response to a question regarding the Great Fen Project, Councillor Bucknell replied that whilst discussion on details of the Project were ongoing there was no doubt that it would continue to progress.

32. 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.

33. MEMBERSHIP OF CABINET, COMMITTEES AND PANELS

RESOLVED

- (a) that Councillor P M D Godfrey be appointed to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) in place of Councillor J W Davies;
- (b) that Councillor G S E Thorpe be appointed to serve on the Licensing and Protection Panel/Licensing Committee; and
- (c) that Councillor A Hansard be appointed to Standards Committee in place of Councillor R S Farrer.

The meeting concluded at 5.55 pm.

Chairman