

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COUNCIL held in the Burgess Hall, St Ivo Leisure Centre, Westwood Road, St Ives, PE27 6WU on Wednesday, 2 December 2009.

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, K J Churchill, W T Clough,
S J Criswell, D B Dew, P J Downes,
J J Dutton, R S Farrer, J E Garner,
A N Gilbert, P M D Godfrey, P Godley,
J A Gray, A Hansard, P G Mitchell,
M F Newman, D J Priestman, P D Reeve,
Mrs D C Reynolds, T V Rogers, J M Sadler,
M F Shellens, Mrs P E Shrapnel,
L M Simpson, C J Stephens, P A Swales,
R G Tuplin, P R Ward, J S Watt and
R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs K E Cooper, Mrs J A Dew, R W J Eaton, D Harty, C R Hyams, Mrs P A Jordan, L W McGuire, A Monk, T D Sanderson, Ms M J Thomas, G S E Thorpe and P K Ursell.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Taylor, Carbon Reduction Systems Co-ordinator, University of East Anglia

53. PRAYER

The Bishop of Huntingdon, Right Reverend Dr D Thomson opened the meeting with prayer.

54. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Councillor Mrs P E Shrapnel

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Mrs P E Shrapnel to her first meeting of the Council since her election as Councillor for the Huntingdon North Ward at a by-election held on 29th October 2009.

(b) Former Councillor Mrs P Newbon

The Chairman referred to the death recently of former Councillor Mrs P Newbon who had served as a District Councillor for St Ives for twenty years from 1983 to 2003. During that time, Mrs Newbon had served as Chairman of the Council and as Chairman of the Planning Committee. The Chairman and Councillors M F Newman and Mrs D C Reynolds paid tribute to her indomitable spirit and character and to the contribution made by Mrs Newbon to the life of

the District and the community of St Ives in particular.

(c) **Rifleman A I Fentiman**

With regret, the Chairman also drew the Council's attention to the death recently on active service in Afghanistan of Rifleman A I Fentiman of 7th Battalion The Rifles a member of the Territorial Army and an employee of Teamstudio Ltd in Huntingdon. The Chairman reported that he had expressed condolences to Rifleman Fentiman's family on behalf of the Council.

After a prayer by the Bishop of Huntingdon, Members stood and observed a minute's silence in memory of former Councillor Mrs Newbon and Rifleman Fentiman.

(d) **Chairman's Charity Ball**

The Chairman thanked those Members who had attended and supported his Charity Ball which had taken place on 30th October 2009 and indicated that he was pleased to report that it should be possible to make sizable donations from the proceeds to his nominated charities of Macmillan Cancer Relief, St John Ambulance Brigade and Magpas.

55. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 28th October 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject, in the sixth line of the eighth paragraph of Minute No. 46, the deletion of the words "removal of the existing Huntingdon viaduct" and their substitution by the words "reduction in traffic volumes on the realigned A14".

56. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor T V Rogers declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute No. 61, Item No. 43 by virtue of his close family association with an individual involved in the potential retail development of the land as part of the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan.

57. COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

The Chairman reminded Members of the decision made by the Council to suspend Council Procedure Rule 11 (Rules of Debate) to enable headline debates and "white paper" proposals to be discussed by Members in an open manner. The Council therefore

RESOLVED

that Council Procedure Rule 11 (Rules of Debate) be suspended for the duration of the discussion on Minute Nos. 58 and 59, during which time the common law rules of debate be observed by Members and applied by the Chairman.

58. COUNCIL DEBATE

The Chairman invited Councillor P J Downes, Leader of the Opposition to open the debate on –

“How can local councils challenge, encourage and enable residents and businesses to reduce their carbon footprint.”.

In his opening remarks, Councillor Downes commended the Council for the opportunity offered to him as Leader of the Opposition by the new democratic arrangements to choose the subject for the Council debate. As background, Councillor Downes congratulated the Council on its record in recycling and the publication of an Environmental Strategy. However he also stressed the importance of the District Council taking a lead with local councils in encouraging individuals and the business community, in particular, to reduce their carbon footprint.

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), Mr M Taylor, Carbon Reduction Systems Co-ordinator at the Low Carbon Innovation Centre, University of East Anglia addressed the Council.

Following the latter's address, Councillor J A Gray, Executive Councillor for the Environment and Information Technology thanked both Councillor Downes for his selection of such an important subject and Mr Taylor for his thought-provoking presentation. Councillor Gray suggested that the Council had been elected to provide leadership to the community, but that he suspected that the majority of District's residents had yet to be persuaded to change their lifestyle and that there were those who remained sceptical with little interest in environmental issues. It was Councillor Gray's contention that a District with clean air and sustainable villages would be one that all residents should aspire to.

Having commended the projects promoted by other local councils as set out in a paper prepared by Councillor Downes and reproduced in the Minute Book, Councillor Gray drew attention to those initiatives being pursued by the District Council which included the Green House (Retrofit) Project to educate and influence the community to introduce affordable energy efficiency, renewable energy and water efficiency measures in their homes. Mention also was made of a number of other initiatives such as the “Go Warm” scheme, the Mayfield Road showcase new build project and the “Watts Going Down in Warboys” scheme.

Councillor Gray accepted that there was still much work for the Council to do and where the Council could lead by example such as the car parking policy, the use of fuel efficient cars and home working. In closing Councillor Gray urged the Council not to be complacent and to continue its commitment to action for climate change.

Councillor Mrs B E Boddington expressed her support for the Council's Greenforce Project and the importance of communicating best “green practice” to parish councils and in parish magazines.

In contrast, Councillor Mrs M Banerjee questioned the evidence that

global warning had been caused by human activity. Although acknowledging recent changes in weather patterns, Councillor Mrs Banerjee remained unconvinced that this was the result of increased carbon emissions. She did indicate her support however for alternative energy sources and the creation of a clean environment, mentioning in particular the possibility of using the Great River Ouse to generate hydro-electric power.

Councillor P J Mitchell suggested that people should be encouraged to make greater use of public transport and he felt that new housing stock should incorporate efficiency measures in their design, with landscaping schemes to include the planting of trees.

Councillor A N Gilbert commended the progress made regionally and nationally on climate change but given that scientists had yet to establish conclusive reasons for the change, he cautioned the Council to consider the wider issues that might arise during any debate on environmental matters. By way of illustration, he referred to a recent planning application for a wind turbine scheme which, although generating sustainable energy, had been refused because of the adverse effects of the scheme in the locality.

Whilst applauding the work of the Environment Team and the Council's achievements thus far in terms of the 10:10 climate change campaign and the Green House "Retrofit" project, Councillor M G Baker suggested that the public should be better advised how to reduce carbon emissions via articles in District-wide. Councillor Baker also considered that Building Control had a role to play in ensuring that energy efficient measures were incorporated in new dwellings.

Councillor R J West concurred with the points raised by the previous speaker in terms of communication with the public and referred to the consumerist society that had developed in recent years with foreign travel and longer journeys..

Councillor P D Reeve felt that the energy crisis was an illusion driven by experts and indicated his regret over the time spent on the issue when the Council had other urgent concerns to address in terms of unemployment and the local economy.

Other contributors to the debate were Councillors Dew, Mrs Reynolds, Rogers, Newman and Shellens.

To conclude Councillor Downes thanked Councillors for their contributions to the debate and following discussion, Councillor Bates undertook to liaise with the Executive Councillor for Environment and Information Technology and the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) to investigate and consider further the points made in the discussion.

59. EXECUTIVE POLICY ISSUES: EAST OF ENGLAND CHARTER FOR MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

Councillor L M Simpson, Deputy Leader of the Council reminded Members that the Council had signed the East of England Charter for elected Members in June 2009. In practice, this would demonstrate

that the Council was committed to developing its Members such that they had sufficient capability and support to undertake their role as councillors either through work in their ward, as partners or during Council meetings.

Although disappointed at the attendance by Members at a recent presentation on the subject, Councillor Simpson informed the Council that a cross party working group had been formed which was meeting regularly to monitor implementation of the action plan required by the Charter. This working group also would oversee the production of a Member Development Policy, the organisation of more comprehensive skills analyses and the undertaking of Personal Development Plans (PDPs) for which Members were asked to volunteer.

It was anticipated that the Council would have sufficient evidence in place to demonstrate compliance with the Charter by 2011. At that point, South-East Employers would undertake an on-site assessment to decide whether to award the Charter.

The Deputy Leader urged all Members to commit to the Charter and to participate in the skills analyses which would commence in January.

60. GAMBLING ACT 2005 - STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

Further to Minute No. 35 and by reference to a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), Councillor J D Sadler, Chairman of the Licensing Committee, reminded Members that the Council had been consulting the public, various public authorities and those involved in the gambling industry on a new Statement of Principles under the Gambling Act 2005 to come into effect on 31st January 2010.

RESOLVED

that the Statement of Principles under the Gambling Act 2005 as appended to the report now submitted be approved to come into effect on 31st January 2010 for a period of three years' duration.

61. REPRESENTATION OF POLITICAL GROUPS ON DISTRICT COUNCIL PANELS, ETC

A report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) reflecting the outcome of a review of the membership of the different political groups on the Council following the by-election in the Huntingdon North Ward on 29th October 2009. Having regard to the principles of proportionality to be applied to the appointment of Panels and in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and Part II of the Local Government Act 2000, it was

RESOLVED

that the allocation of seats on Panels and Committees to political groups and non-aligned Members be determined as

set out in the report now submitted and the membership of Panels varied in accordance with the schedule appended in the Minute Book.

62. PARISH ORDERS

The Chairman of the Elections Panel, Councillor Mrs M Banerjee, introduced a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) drawing to a close the review of parishes in Huntingdonshire originally approved by the Council in December 2007 following the outcome of the Parish Review.

Members were informed that the Department for Communities and Local Government had issued a Statutory Instrument – The Huntingdonshire (Parishes) Order 2009 - to come into effect on 1st April 2010. Arising from the changes to parish boundaries, Members were advised that it was now necessary for local Orders to be made, where appropriate, in respect of the parishes affected by the boundary changes to change the size of various parish councils' membership, to alter the number of councillors to be elected for wards of parishes and to establish new parish councils.

To formalise the conclusion of the Parish Review, the Council

RESOLVED

that Orders be made under the relevant legislation to -

- (a) reduce the membership of Fenstanton Parish Council from 15 to 13 councillors for the election of parish councillors on 5th May 2011;
- (b) increase the membership of Huntingdon Town Council from 16 to 19 councillors of whom 8 shall be elected by the East Ward, 4 by the North Ward and 7 by the West Ward for the election of councillors on 5th May 2011;
- (c) reduce the membership of The Stukeleys Parish Council from 13 to 9 councillors for the election of parish councillors on 6th May 2010;
- (d) increase the membership of St. Ives Town Council from 16 to 17 councillors of whom 7 shall be elected by the East Ward, 7 by the South Ward and 3 by the West Ward for the election of councillors on 3rd May 2012;
- (e) increase the membership of St. Neots Town Council from 18 to 21 councillors of whom 5 shall be elected by the Eaton Ford Ward, 4 by the Eaton Socon Ward, 7 by the Eynesbury Ward, 4 by the Priory Park Ward and 1 by the East Ward for the election of councillors on 5th May 2011;
- (f) establish a Parish Council of 7 councillors for the parish of Wyton-on-the-Hill and arrange for an election for the new Council on 6th May 2010, the councillors to

hold office until the normal date for election in 2015 and elections held every four years thereafter;

- (g) retain a Parish Council for the parish of Houghton and Wyton of 9 councillors;
- (h) establish a Parish Council for the parish of Offord Cluny and Offord D'Arcy of 11 councillors and for an election for the new Council on 6th May 2010; and
- (i) establish a Parish Council for the parish of Waresley-cum-Tetworth of 5 Councillors and arrange for an election for the new Council on 6th May 2010 with elections every four years thereafter.

63. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, COMMITTEES AND PANELS

(a) Cabinet

Councillor I C Bates, the Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Cabinet presented the Report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th November 2009.

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In connection with Item No. 42, Councillor T V Rogers, Executive Councillor for Finance, reaffirmed the decision of the Cabinet to review the level of expenditure proposed for Huntingdon Bus Station as requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) and advised Members, that together with the Director of Commerce and Technology, he had presented the Council's budgetary position at meetings held recently with representatives of the five Town Councils in the District.

In presenting the draft Budget and Medium Term Plan (MTP), Councillor Rogers reminded Members of the Council's current financial position which had involved the use of revenue reserves in 2008/9 to meet the deficit between income and expenditure. As these reserves would continue to reduce to approximately £11 million by 2011, Councillor Rogers drew attention to the Council's decision to embark upon a strategy to identify savings of £500,000 in 2010/11 and further reductions in subsequent years. Key elements of the approach taken by the Cabinet in the preparation of the budget were described to the Council. At the same time Councillor Rogers made it clear that there were a number of uncertainties remaining which might require changes to be made to the budget before its final approval at the Council meeting in February 2010. Councillor Rogers commended the recommendations of the Cabinet on the draft Budget and MTP 2010 – 2015 to the Council.

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor P J Downes, acknowledged the contribution made by the Overview and

Scrutiny Panels to the budgetary process and suggested that the District Council had found itself in a difficult financial position for five reasons. These were the external influence of the recession, local government financial technicalities that had disadvantaged the authority, the loss of interest from the use of reserves, the imposition of capping on tax levels and the probable reduction in public expenditure by Government. In his view, the Council had to consider seriously the prospect of shared services and the opportunities which might arise from the "Making Cambridgeshire Count" exercise.

On the same subject Councillor I C Bates, Leader of the Council, contended that the Council Tax charge for a Band D property still represented good value for money and that the District Council continued to provide excellent services. He added that the authority would seek to work increasingly with partners to reduce expenditure and pursue the possibility, where appropriate, to share services.

On the same subject and in response to questions from Councillor M F Shellens on the possibility of the District Council caretaking/investing Parish Councils' funds to maximise interest which could be generated from reserves, Councillor Rogers replied that he would seek the advice of the Director of Commerce and Technology and respond to the questioner in writing.

Whereupon, having been moved and seconded and put to the vote, the recommendation contained in Item No. 42 was declared to be CARRIED.

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In connection with Item No. 43 and in response to questions by Councillor Mrs M Banerjee and P J Downes regarding the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan, Councillor Dew assured the questioners respectively that any difficulty arising from the surface water drainage system would be addressed by individual development applications as part of the planning process and that he had noted the concern expressed about the adequacy of the proposed road network to meet the expectations of development in that area.

Whereupon, having been moved and seconded and put to the vote, the recommendation contained in Item No. 43 was declared to be CARRIED.

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In connection with Item No. 49 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, Councillor J A Gray, Executive Councillor for the Environment and Information and Technology indicated that a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Cabinet on the initiatives proposed to promote the 10:10 climate change campaign in the District.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th November 2009 be received and adopted.

(b) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being)

Councillor J D Ablewhite presented the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 12th November 2009.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 12th November 2009 be received and adopted.

(c) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)

Councillor P M D Godfrey presented the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 10th November 2009.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 10th November 2009 be received and adopted.

(d) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being)

Councillor S J Criswell presented the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) held on 3rd November 2009.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) be received and adopted.

(e) Development Management Panel

Councillor P G Mitchell presented the Report of the meeting of the Development Management Panel held on 16th November 2009.

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In connection with Item No. 17 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, Councillor Mitchell explained that the application for the erection of a wind farm and ancillary infrastructure on land north of Toseland village, west of Graveley in the Offords Parish has been refused principally because of the adverse affect the proposed development would have on the Grade 2* listed building of Toseland Hall.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Development Management Panel on 16th November 2009 be received and adopted.

(f) Licensing and Protection Panel

Councillor J D Sadler presented the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 27th October 2009.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 27th October 2009 be received and adopted.

(g) Licensing Committee

Councillor J D Sadler presented the Report of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 27th October 2009.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 27th October 2009 be received and adopted.

64. ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Question from Councillor R J West to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates

In response to a question regarding the protocol for undertaking visits to the CCTV Room at Eastfield House, Councillor Bates replied that any Member wishing to visit the CCTV area should firstly ask for guidance from the Head of Operations about the process for making such a visit.

Question from Councillor R S Farrer to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates

In response to a question regarding car parking charges at St Neots Riverside Park, Councillor Bates replied that the Members' Car Parking Working Group would be considering the imposition of charges at the Riverside Park during their current review and in doing so, would bear in mind its use by families and for leisure purposes. In response to a supplementary question, Councillor Bates added that any decision not to charge for car parking in Ramsey would take into account the need to encourage people to shop in and visit the town and he urged the questioner to make his views known on issues relating to car parking at a forthcoming Working Group meeting.

Question from Councillor Mrs B E Boddington to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor D B Dew

In response to a question regarding the progress of proposed schemes for a footway across the railway line at St Neots Station and for the dualling of the A428, Councillor Dew replied that the proposed new St Neots Railway Station bridge, providing an important link to the Loves Farm development, had now progressed to the third stage of the Network Rail design and delivery process and that further meetings would take place in the New Year in order to continue to progress the scheme through the Network Rail procurement processes. In terms of the A428, Councillor Dew urged all Councillors to lobby for its essential upgrading through the emerging Cambridgeshire Transport Plan and the Regional Transport agenda given the unacceptable constraint on development that the road represented in its current condition.

Question from Councillor D J Priestman to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor D B Dew

In response to a question regarding the effect on the Huntingdon Riverside Park of the proposed contraflow on the Huntingdon Ring Road arising from the Chequers Court Urban Design Framework, Councillor Dew replied that whilst Cambridgeshire County Council's adopted Local Transport Plan and Market Town Transport Strategy

had envisaged changes to the road structure along Hartford Road, Huntingdon, it was unlikely that this option would be pursued given the proposed changes to the A14. He expressed his hope that all Members and authorities could work together to deliver the A14 replacement that would alleviate traffic problems in Huntingdon.

Question from Councillor M F Shellens to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor D B Dew

In response to a question regarding the adequacy of traffic modelling for highway changes Huntingdon, Councillor Dew replied that the traffic modelling scheme had taken into account both committed and known potential "trip generators" including the planning consent for employment use on the former airfield at Alconbury and the potential quantum of development envisaged by the emerging Huntingdon West Area Action Plan. As planning consent had not been granted for residential development at Alconbury nor was any envisaged within the recently adopted Core Strategy it would be inappropriate for any such development to be considered in respect of current traffic models.

Question from Councillor P D Reeve to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates

In response to a question regarding the CCTV Service, Councillor Bates indicated that he was pleased to concur with the questioner in commending the excellent service offered by those working in the CCTV Room but he was unable to offer any reassurance to any of the Council's services that there would be no reductions in budget in the coming years.

65. 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.

66. SPECIAL MEETING

Members were reminded that a Special Meeting of the Council would take place at 7.00 pm on Tuesday, 22nd December 2009 and that this would be preceded by a Civic Carol Service commencing at 5.00 pm at the Parish Church of All Saints, St. Ives.

The meeting ended at 9.44 pm.

Chairman