

A meeting of the **HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL** will be held in the **BURGESS HALL, ST IVO LEISURE CENTRE, WESTWOOD ROAD, ST IVES, PE27 6WU** on **WEDNESDAY, 28 OCTOBER 2009** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

	<b>Time Allocation</b>
<b>PRAYER</b>	<b>5 minutes</b>
Reverend Mike Jones, an employee of the District Council, will open the meeting with prayer.	
<b>APOLOGIES</b>	<b>2 minutes</b>
<b>CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</b>	<b>5 minutes</b>
1. <b>MINUTES</b> (Pages 1 - 14)	<b>2 minutes</b>
To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd September 2009.	
2. <b>MEMBERS' INTERESTS</b>	<b>2 minutes</b>
To receive from Members declarations as to personal and/or prejudicial interests and the nature of those interests in relation to any Agenda Item. Please see Notes 1 and 2 below.	
3. <b>COUNCIL DEBATE</b> (Pages 15 - 18)	<b>90 minutes</b>
<b>The A14 Ellington to Fen Ditton Improvement Scheme – Public Consultation</b>	
To give preliminary consideration to the publication by the Highways Agency of the proposals for the improvement of the A14 between Ellington and Fen Ditton to assist in the investigation of the implications and preparation of a detailed report for formal consideration at a special meeting of the Council to be held on 22nd December 2009.	
Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport to open the debate.	
Representatives of affected town and parish councils have been invited to express their views for three minutes per council for the first thirty minutes of the discussion.	
A report by the Head of Planning Services is enclosed and Members are reminded that a map showing the proposals is contained in the	

non-technical survey previously circulated.

**4. EXECUTIVE POLICY ISSUES: PROGRESS ON THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK** **15 minutes**

Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport to inform the Council of the current position in respect of the preparation of the new Local Development Framework.

**5. REPRESENTATION OF POLITICAL GROUPS ON DISTRICT COUNCIL PANELS, ETC** (Pages 19 - 24) **5 minutes**

To consider a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services on the representation of political groups on Panels, etc in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the District Council's Constitution and to vary the membership of the Council's Committees and Panels where appropriate.

**6. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, PANELS AND COMMITTEE** **20 minutes**

(a) Cabinet (Pages 25 - 26)

(b) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) (Pages 27 - 28)

(c) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) (Pages 29 - 30)

(d) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) (Pages 31 - 34)

(e) Development Management Panel (Pages 35 - 36)

(f) Corporate Governance Panel (Pages 37 - 38)

**7. ORAL QUESTIONS** **30 minutes**

In accordance with the Council Procedure Rules (Section 8.3) of the Council's Constitution, to receive oral questions from Members of the Council

**8. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: SECTION 85** **2 minutes**

The Chief Executive to report on absences of Members from meetings.

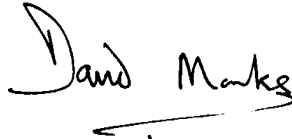
## 9. SPECIAL MEETING

Members are reminded that a Special Meeting of the Council will take place at 7.00 pm on Tuesday, 22nd December 2009 at the Burgess Hall, St Ives.

### CLOSE

It is intended that the meeting will end no later than 10.00pm.

Dated this 28 day of October 2009



Chief Executive

### Notes

1. *A personal interest exists where a decision on a matter would affect to a greater extent than other people in the District –*
  - (a) *the well-being, financial position, employment or business of the Councillor, their family or any person with whom they had a close association;*
  - (b) *a body employing those persons, any firm in which they are a partner and any company of which they are directors;*
  - (c) *any corporate body in which those persons have a beneficial interest in a class of securities exceeding the nominal value of £25,000; or*
  - (d) *the Councillor's registerable financial and other interests.*
2. *A personal interest becomes a prejudicial interest where a member of the public (who has knowledge of the circumstances) would reasonably regard the Member's personal interest as being so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Councillor's judgement of the public interest.*

**Please contact Ms C Deller, Democratic Services Manager, Tel No 01480 388007/e-mail: Christine.Deller@huntsdc.gov.uk if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Council.**

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the District Council's website –  
[www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk](http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk) (under Councils and Democracy).

If you would like a translation of Agenda/Minutes/Reports or would like a large text version or an audio version please contact the Democratic Services Manager and we will try to accommodate your needs.

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# Agenda Item 1

## 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, 23 September 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor J W Davies – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, M G Baker,  
K M Baker, I C Bates, J T Bell,  
Mrs B E Boddington, P L E Bucknell,  
K J Churchill, W T Clough, Mrs K E Cooper,  
S J Criswell, P H Dakers, Mrs J A Dew,  
D B 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,  
L W McGuire, M F Newman, D J Priestman,  
P D Reeve, 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 R Ward and  
R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs M Banerjee, D Harty, Mrs P A Jordan, P G Mitchell, A Monk, Mrs D C Reynolds, P K Ursell and J S Watt.

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Superintendent M Gipp and Mr D L Hall.

### 26. PRAYER

Father P Maddison, Priest of the Church of the Sacred Heart, St. Ives opened the meeting with Prayer.

### 27. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### (a) Councillors P D Reeve and Ms S Kemp

The Chairman welcomed Councillor P D Reeve, newly elected Councillor for Ramsey to his first meeting of the Council.

Having referred to the resignation of Councillor Ms S Kemp as District Councillor for the Huntingdon North Ward with effect from 1st September 2009, the Chairman asked for the Council's appreciation to be placed on record for Ms Kemp's contribution to the Council and the constituents of Huntingdon North over the past two years.

(b) **Charity Ball**

The Chairman reminded the Council that his charity ball would take place at the Burgess Hall, St. Ives on 30th October 2009 and he encouraged all Members to attend. Proceeds from the event would be donated to MacMillan Cancer Support, St. John's Ambulance and Magpas.

(c) **Council Procedure**

Having explained the programme for the evening, the Chairman welcomed Chief Superintendent M Gipp and a questioner from the public, Mr D Lewisohn, to the meeting.

**28. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 24th June 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**29. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillors Mrs K E Cooper, R W J Eaton and G S E Thorpe declared a personal interest in the following items by virtue of their membership of St. Neots Town Council - Minute No. 38 (a), Item Nos. 25 and 36 and Minute No. 38 (c), Item No. 12.

Councillor C R Hyams declared a personal interest in Minute No. 36 by virtue of his membership of Godmanchester Town Council.

Councillor L W McGuire declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute No. 38 (f), Item No. 8 as the owner of a boat at Hartford Marina.

**30. BY-ELECTION - RAMSEY WARD**

The Chief Executive reported that Councillor P D Reeve had been elected to the office of District Councillor at the by-election held on 23rd July 2009 in the Ramsey Ward. In so doing, he extended his appreciation to candidates and their agents for their co-operation during the day.

Councillor Reeve thanked Members of the Council for their warm welcome to him since his election to office.

**31. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: SECTION 84 - HUNTINGDON NORTH**

Further to Minute No. 27, the Chief Executive confirmed the resignation of former Councillor Ms S Kemp with effect from 1st September 2009 and reported that the resultant vacancy in the Huntingdon North Ward would be filled at a by-election to be held on 29th October 2009.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor P J Downes paid tribute to the contribution made by Ms Kemp to the Council's overview and scrutiny process and indicated that, whilst disappointed at her resignation, he had understood the personal reasons for her

decision. Indeed he expressed the hope that she would return to serve as a district councillor again in the future.

### **32. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

In accordance with the Council Procedure Rules, the Chairman invited Mr D Lewisohn to ask Councillor K J Churchill, Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health, the following question -

"What steps have the Council taken to bring privately owned residential properties that have been empty for a significant period, into use as they are surely needed to help alleviate the shortage of houses in the District ?"

A copy of Councillor Churchill's reply is appended hereto.

In response to a supplementary question from Mr Lewisohn which suggested that five properties had remained empty in Hartford over periods extending from 2/3 - 5/6 years, Councillor Churchill replied that whilst he had no knowledge of the properties referred to, the Council could offer assistance to bring properties back into use, that residents were encouraged to report empty properties and that if the questioner could advise either him or the Head of Housing Services of the location of the dwellings referred to he would investigate their circumstances.

### **33. COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES**

By way of a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Council was reminded of the decisions taken recently to change the format of Council meetings which had included the introduction of headline debates and Cabinet "white paper" proposals. To seek to promote a free-flowing discussion and exchange of views, the Council considered the suspension of the formal rules of debate during the Council meeting when these items were being considered. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that Council Procedure Rule 11 (Rules of Debate) be suspended for the duration of the discussion on Minute Nos. 34 and 35 and at such time, the common law rules of debate be observed by Members and applied by the Chairman.

### **34. COUNCIL DEBATE**

The Chairman requested Councillor K J Churchill, Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health and Chief Superintendent M Gipp to open the debate on -

"How successful is the Council and its partners in tackling anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime in Huntingdonshire ?".

In his opening remarks, Chief Superintendent Gipp drew the Council's attention to the percentage of Huntingdonshire residents (11%) who considered that anti-social behaviour was a problem in their local area

in comparison with the national average (20%). He also referred to the statutory responsibility of the Police Authority to co-operate in the formulation and implementation of crime and disorder reduction partnership strategies and their duty to consider the crime and disorder implications of those strategies in partnership with other agencies/authorities.

Chief Superintendent Gipp highlighted the issues perceived by the public to present the biggest problems in the Huntingdonshire area as being "noisy neighbours, people who were drunk or rowdy, teenagers hanging around, and abandoned cars", but he contended that this was largely a matter of perception with evidence suggesting for example that there are now fewer abandoned cars in the streets.

Councillor Churchill drew the Council's attention to the Huntingdonshire Community Safety Plan 2008 - 2011 and the achievements of the community safety partnership during the period. He referred, in particular, to a joint project with Cambridgeshire Constabulary, the County Council and Yaxley Parish Council which had resulted in the installation of three CCTV cameras and the re-opening of the youth centre in Yaxley and to the establishment of "Night Watch" to address issues associated with the night time economy in St. Ives. Councillor Churchill described the new and developing activities under the 2009 - 2012 plan which would seek to address anti-social behaviour including criminal damage in Huntingdon and the intention to seek, in partnership, to reduce criminal damage by 10% by 2011. In closing his address, Councillor Churchill highlighted other initiatives such as safer car park awards, CCTV in town centres and the results of the Place Survey which had demonstrated how the District Council was working with partners to combat anti-social behaviour.

Councillor J J Dutton informed the Council that he had worked in partnership with different agencies in Huntingdon North to reduce crime rates and make the area a better and safer place to live. Much had been achieved by encouraging residents to participate in community days, promoting interest in community activities and supporting parents in taking responsibility for their children.

Councillor G S E Thorpe underlined the importance of engaging young people in sport, voluntary organisations, scouts and guides etc. but accepted that these community activities might not appeal to all youngsters. He considered that careful planning of development could create safe play and meeting areas on new estates for instance. Recent anti-social behaviour surrounding a trim trail in St. Neots had occurred, because of its unsuitable location. He regretted the discontinuation of a youth coffee shop project which had been supported by grant aid from the Town Council and he urged all agencies to work in partnership to re-dress the lack of facilities for young people.

As Chairman of the Licensing Committee, Councillor J M Sadler advised Members that since the District Council had taken over responsibility for licensing from the courts, the Licensing Section had worked closely with the Police and other relevant authorities to tackle complaints of under-age drinking and to remind licensees of their responsibilities not to sell alcohol to young people. He went on to



describe other action taken by the Licensing Section to deal with anti-social behaviour and endorsed the comments already made about the success of the pub watch schemes in the market towns.

Although pleased with the support received from the Police over incidents in Brampton, Councillor M F Shellens pointed out a number of cases where action had not been taken and drew attention to issues such as speeding, litter, dog and horse fouling which appeared not to be addressed at all.

Having thanked Chief Superintendent Gipp for police support for action being taken to reduce anti-social behaviour in Ramsey and welcoming the partnership work he had witnessed over recent weeks, Councillor D P Reeve questioned the funding position of the CCTV Mobile Unit and challenged the assertion that there was a lower crime rate by suggesting that the public were reluctant to report criminal incidents.

Councillor Bucknell also welcomed the support received from the Police which had addressed issues arising in Warboys and praised the working relationship he had enjoyed at the Neighbourhood Policing Panel.

In terms of the contribution of the CCTV Mobile Unit, Councillor C R Hyams reported that it was one of six in the County and together with the Council's 120 CCTV cameras had resulted in the resolution of a number of crimes. He added that the CCTV Team had recently been awarded "Supporter of the Year" for the third year in succession from Huntingdon Business Against Crime.

Referring to the results of the "Place Survey" in comparison with the national average and other districts in Cambridgeshire, the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates highlighted statistics relating to perception of anti-social behaviour, individuals' perceptions of safety in their local area and after dark and how the public considered the District Council were dealing with anti-social behaviour. In welcoming the statistics presented, the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor P J Downes considered that it would be of greater assistance if the figures could be reproduced at ward level as they might reflect a different picture to that of the District overall. He also urged agencies to be pro-active in involving young people in constructive activities and he questioned the effectiveness and desirability, in the long term, of the use of anti-social behaviour orders.

Chief Superintendent Gipp thanked all speakers for their support adding that the Police would only make use of an ASBO as a measure of last resort. He further reported that the Constabulary had agreed to the siting of a satellite receiver on the Police headquarters mast to help enhance the quality of image received by the CCTV Mobile Unit. Above all, he considered that it was essential to maintain quality of life and increase and maintain public confidence in the communities in which they lived.

Although welcoming the statistics presented, Councillor P A Swales expressed a wish to see more policemen, particularly in rural areas to combat the fear of crime on farm properties.

Councillor R J West urged Members to consider carefully the stereotypical views they might hold about young people, illustrating his point by contrasting the impression given by a group of youths around a public bench in a village and the different view which would be held by the public if that group were pensioners.

Councillor J A Gray questioned what action was being taken to dispel the fear of crime particularly in rural areas and urged agencies to continue existing good work, underlining the importance of engaging with the public in debate on these issues at the new Neighbourhood Forums.

Having received further comments regarding the drinking culture, the targeting of individual families by youths and the consequences of ball games on estate greens from Councillors J M Sadler and J E Garner, Councillor Churchill thanked all Members for their contribution to the debate and hoped that the Council and Cambridgeshire Constabulary would continue to work together to reduce anti-social behaviour in Huntingdonshire. He undertook to report the issues raised during the debate to the HSP Thematic Group for Inclusive, Safe and Cohesive Communities.

**35. EXECUTIVE POLICY ISSUES: GAMBLING ACT 2005 - STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES**

Councillor J M Sadler, Chairman of the Licensing Committee, informed the Council that a consultation exercise had begun to review the Statement of Principles under the Gambling Act 2005 to come into effect in January 2010. Members were reminded that the Council was the licensing authority for the purposes of the Gambling Act 2005 and had certain responsibilities under the Act to regulate gambling in Huntingdonshire including the issue of premises licences at Huntingdon Racecourse, betting shops, adult gaming centres and various other forms of establishment where gambling could take place and the issue of permits for gambling machines in pubs, clubs and elsewhere and various other forms of gambling such as the playing of poker and the registration of lotteries. The Council noted that the closing date for comment was 13th November 2009 and that the responses received would be brought to the attention of the Licensing Committee and Cabinet before submission to the Council for consideration on 2nd December. Councillor Sadler urged Members of the Council to raise any concerns about gambling in Huntingdonshire with him or with the Licensing Section who would be co-ordinating replies to the consultation.

**36. HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT CORE STRATEGY 2008 - DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT - THE INSPECTOR'S BINDING REPORT/ADOPTION PROCEDURES**

By way of a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor D B Dew, informed the Council that the Planning Inspectorate had issued its report on the examination into the Development Plan Document - Core Strategy 2008 which had concluded that the Strategy had satisfied legal requirements and was sound.

As the first District in the County to publish a Core Strategy, the Executive Councillor thanked his predecessor, Councillor P L E Bucknell, other Members and Officers for their contribution during compilation of the document.

Regarding the proposed strategic housing development at Godmanchester, Councillor C R Hyams reported that this would be dependant upon the implementation of the improvement scheme to the A14 between Ellington and Fen Ditton and particularly the construction of a new junction at the A1198, Ermine Street. He added that in his opinion, the developer would have to demonstrate that the scheme would not have a detrimental effect on traffic on the A1198 and that, his view was that the construction of 800 houses at Godmanchester could only exacerbate the current situation. In these circumstances, Councillor Hyams indicated that he would not be able to support the adoption of the strategy. Councillor P Godley endorsed the views expressed by Councillor Hyams adding that development in Godmanchester would lead to traffic congestion in the village if pursued in advance of improvements to the A14 and the removal of the Huntingdon viaduct.

In terms of development east of the railway line, St. Neots, Councillor G S E Thorpe welcomed the proposed extension to the town hoping that it would bring with it improved infrastructure and employment to ensure St. Neots remained a healthy and vibrant market town.

Councillor P D Reeve welcomed the proposed adoption of the Core Strategy and in particular those initiatives which promoted employment. In his view, it was essential that decisions on the future development of Huntingdonshire should be made by the District Council and not be influenced by the East of England Regional Assembly.

The Executive Councillor, Councillor Dew concurred with the comments made by Councillors P J Downes and R J West in respect of the requirement for stringent enforcement action if the expectation for strategic housing development was to be achieved and for presentations on the Core Strategy to be made to all town and parish councils. The latter suggestion was endorsed by Councillor J S Watt who also requested training for District Council Members on the Core Strategy and on subsequent development plan documents.

Councillor R G Tuplin raised his concern at the decision of H M Inspectorate to approve, on appeal, an application for development of 190 houses at Sawtry which, in his view, was already contrary to the Core Strategy.

In closing the debate, Councillor Dew reaffirmed that development would only progress in Godmanchester if it was established that there would be no detriment on the A1198 and that development for Ramsey should be balanced and sustainable, bringing forward together new houses and job opportunities.

Whereupon, and having explained that the strategic policies contained within the adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan and Alteration and Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policies would now be superseded, it was

RESOLVED

that the Huntingdonshire District Core Strategy 2008 be adopted.

**37. REPRESENTATION OF POLITICAL GROUPS ON DISTRICT COUNCIL PANELS**

Members considered a report submitted by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the changes required to the constitution of political groups on the Council following recent changes in Council membership. 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 hereto.

**38. 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 23rd July and 17th September 2009.

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In connection with Item No. 26 and in response to a question from Councillor G S E Thorpe regarding the funding of officer time spent on the Great Fen Project, Councillor Bates replied that there was no specific budget set aside for this purpose, that costs were notional and that any contribution arising from the Section 106 Agreement would be required to relate to development arising from the project.

.....  
Councillor T V Rogers, Executive Councillor for Finance presented the report and recommendation referred to in Item No. 29. In response to a question from Councillor P J Downes regarding the opportunity for the District Council to retain some flexibility in setting its Council Tax at the level suggested if circumstances were to change over the next few weeks, Councillor Rogers replied that there continued to be a number of uncertainties in the budget/MTP process but that Officers were continuing to work with the Cabinet to identify further measures to provide additional flexibility should this be necessary.

Having noted the contributions made to the process by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels and on being put to the vote, the recommendation contained in item No. 29 was declared to be CARRIED.

.....

In connection with Item No. 33 and in response to a question from Councillor G S E Thorpe regarding arrangements for the nomination of parish councillors and position of chairman to each of the Neighbourhood Forums, Councillor Bates reminded the Council that forums would be reviewed after twelve months' operation but that at the outset, Councillor A N Gilbert would remain Chairman of St. Neots Forum.

.....

In connection with Item No. 35 and further to the findings of the study by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) regarding the adoption of roads and sewers, Councillor A N Gilbert urged Members of the Development Management Panel to place stringent conditions on planning consents for new development to ensure roads and sewers were completed by developers to adoptable standards and requested Members generally to draw to the attention of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs those construction companies who were failing to meet their responsibilities in this respect.

.....

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that subject to the aforementioned paragraphs, the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 23rd July and 17th September 2009 be received and adopted.

**(b) Standards Committee**

Mr D L Hall presented the Report of the meetings of the Standards Committee held on 9th July and 3rd September 2009.

.....

Further to Item No. 2, Mr Hall thanked both Councillors I C Bates and P J Downes as Leaders of their respective groups for their presentations to the Committee. In turn, Councillor R J West thanked Mr Hall for his attendance at a recent meeting of Offord Cluny and Offord D'Arcy Parish Council which had been appreciated by the parish councillors who had attended.

.....

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Standards Committee held on 9th July and 3rd September 2009 be received and adopted.

**(c) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being)**

Councillor J D Ablewhite presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 16th July and 10th September 2009.

.....  
In connection with Item No. 8 and in response to a question from Councillor M G Baker, Councillor Ablewhite confirmed that the District Council had no plans to re-open the tourist information office in Huntingdon.

.....  
Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 16th July and 10th September 2009 be received and adopted.

**(d) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)**

Councillor P M D Godfrey presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 14th July and 8th September 2009.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 14th July and 8th September 2009 be received and adopted.

**(e) Overview and Scrutiny (Social Well-Being)**

Councillor S J Criswell presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) held on 7th July and 1st September 2009.

In connection with Item No. 15 and in response to a question from Councillor M F Shellens regarding a suggested system to regulate car parking for visitors to Hinchingsbrooke Park, Councillor Criswell reported that the matter was currently being considered by the Members' Car Parking Working Group.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) held on 7th July and 1st September 2009 be received and adopted.

**(f) Development Management Panel**

Councillor D B Dew presented the Report of the meetings of the Development Management Panel held on 20th July, 17th August and 14th September 2009.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Development Management Panel held on 20th July, 17th August and 14th September 2009 be received and adopted.

**(g) Employment Panel**

Councillor Mrs B E Boddington presented the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 15th September 2009.

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In connection with Item No. 10, Councillor Mrs Boddington drew Members' attention to the length of service to the Council of Mr R Probyn who would be retiring shortly and on behalf of the Council she extended her best wishes to him for his retirement.

.....  
In connection with Item No. 11 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, Councillor Mrs Boddington reassured the questioner that Members would be given early notification of the date of the seminar to be arranged on shared services.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 15th September 2009 be received and adopted.

**(h) Licensing Committee**

Councillor J M Sadler presented the Report of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 16th September 2009.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 16th September 2009 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 23rd June 2009.

.....  
Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 23rd June 2009 be received and adopted.

**39. ORAL QUESTIONS**

In accordance with the 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 D P Reeve to the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services, Councillor C R Hyams**

In response to a question regarding the contribution made by the CCTV mobile unit in helping combat anti-social behaviour and the possible threat to the service because of budgetary measures, Councillor Hyams replied that given the economic downturn and the uncertainties that surrounded local government finance, he could not give any undertaking that the mobile unit would be retained but he



acknowledged the valuable contribution that it made in helping to ensure public safety.

**Question from Councillor W T Clough to the Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health, Councillor K J Churchill**

In response to a question regarding the need to consider ways to attract public interest in Council meetings, Councillor Churchill replied that the Democratic Structure Working Group would be reviewing the outcome of the Council meeting and that of the forthcoming Neighbourhood Forum in St. Neots and that the Working Group would address any issues which had arisen at both meetings.

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

In response to a question regarding the potential effect of the economic downturn on the workload of the Planning Services Division, Councillor Dew indicated that in contrast to neighbouring authorities, Huntingdonshire was not experiencing any reduction in activity but that he would continue to monitor the situation.

**Question from Councillor R W J Eaton to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates**

In response to a question regarding the potential for offering one hour's free car parking in the market towns to mitigate the economic downturn and maintain the vitality of the town centres, Councillor Bates encouraged the Liberal Democrat's representative on the Members' Car Parking Working Party to raise the issue for consideration in that forum.

**Question from Councillor Mrs K E Cooper to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates**

In response to a question regarding the transfer of the tourist information centre from St. Neots Museum to the Priory Centre and its effect on the number of visitors and the cost implications, Councillor Bates undertook to reply to the questioner in writing.

**Question from Councillor M G Baker to the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services, Councillor C R Hyams**

In response to a question regarding the progress of works to erect a fence between Hinchingsbrooke School, and the Country Park, Councillor Hyams replied that following consultation with the school, appropriate work would be undertaken by the end of September.

**Question from Councillor P L E Bucknell to the Executive Councillor for Environment and Information Technology, Councillor J A Gray**

In response to a question about the progress of an investigation into the surface water systems following flooding, after heavy rainfall of properties in Fenton Road, Warboys, Councillor Gray undertook to advise the questioner in writing of the current situation.

**Question from Councillor D J Priestman to the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services, Councillor C R Hyams**

In response to a question regarding the number of reports of fly tipping received by the Operation Division in the current year, and the level of fines levied and paid, Councillor Hyams replied that whilst it was difficult to be precise as collection figures related to the County as a whole, the number of incidents were decreasing and he would be pleased to discuss the wider issues with the questioner after the meeting.

**Question from Councillor P J Downes to the Executive Councillor for Environment and Information Technology, Councillor J A Gray**

In response to a question as to whether the Council's Environment Strategy could meet the objectives of the new climate change criteria and whether the District Council would be a signature to the campaign to encourage others to reduce carbon emissions, Councillor Gray replied that the District Council's Carbon Management Plan provided for the authority to reduce carbon emissions by 30% over the next three years which suggested that the Council would fulfil the 10/10 objectives but that he would consider the issues raised after the meeting and respond to the questioner in writing with a view as to the intentions of the Council in this regard.

**Question from Councillor P D Reeve to the Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health, Councillor K J Churchill**

In response to a question regarding the advisability of housing young and elderly people in close proximity given the nuisance problems that could occur, Councillor Churchill replied that although he would raise the questioner's concerns with Luminus, the District Council had no influence over the registered social landlord and their decisions in terms of housing allocations.

**40. 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 ended at 9.50pm.

Chairman

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## **A14 Ellington to Fen Ditton**

### **Report by the Head of Planning Services**

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#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Members will recall that since 2000, the Council have been consulted on a number of occasions by the Highways Agency regarding their emerging proposals for a new A14.
- 1.2 On 30th September 2009, the Agency published its draft Side Road Order process which gives the Council and other sections of the wider community the opportunity to comment on the current proposals, to put forward alternatives or to object to the scheme. All comments have to be submitted by to the Highways Agency by 6th January 2010.
- 1.3 Depending on the nature and number of objections, a Public Inquiry may be held before an independently appointed Inspector. Following its completion, the Secretary of State will consider any recommendations made before making the decision on whether or not to proceed with the Scheme.
- 1.4 Therefore, no official programme is yet approved although if the scheme were to be given the go-ahead, it is expected that works would commence during 2011 with the new route complete by the end of 2015. Any works associated with the removal of Huntingdon viaduct, again if approved, would be unlikely to be completed before the end of 2016.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Council was formally consulted regarding the future of the A14 during the latter part of 2000 when the Council (6.12.00) first considered the emerging issues from the Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-Modal Study (CHUMMS) and the four strategies of relevance to this District. In August 2001, the then Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions published their final report. This was considered by Council on 26th September 2001 when the resolution included that action should be taken as a matter of urgency to address the problems of the A14 and implement solutions.
- 2.2 In February 2005, a statement was made to Council regarding an alternative option being considered by the Highways Agency which did not form part of the CHUMMS strategy. This involved the provision of a new A14 2-lane dual carriageway and the retention of the existing A14 and viaduct through Huntingdon. Public Consultation

followed in during May and June and the Council considered this option on 29th June 2005.

- 2.3 In its response, the Council resolved that any choice of route would have profound and significant effects on Huntingdon and the surrounding area and any decision should not just be based on highway network or environmental effects but to also include economic impact. The resolution also included the need to provide for noise and visual intrusion mitigation measures, issues with the alignment of the A1 west of Brampton, the junction between the new A14 and A1198 and to minimise the impact of any viaduct crossing of the River Great Ouse. Members also supported the removal of the A14 viaduct within Huntingdon in line with the original CHUMMS Study and the resultant reorganisation of local traffic movements through and around Huntingdon and also noted that the CHUMMS recommendations were more aligned to meeting local Air Quality issues rather than the alternative option now proposed.
- 2.4 During December 2006 and March 2007, the Highways Agency undertook further public consultation seeking views on the route that the new road should take between Ellington and Fen Drayton. At their meeting on 21st February 2007, Council resolved to support the 'Orange' route, subject to the Agency consideration of the best alignment and environmental solution for Brampton west of the A1.
- 2.5 In October 2007, the Highways Agency made their 'Preferred Route Announcement' following previous consultation and announced the Secretary of State's decision to confirm that improvements to the A14 should follow the 'Orange' route and to include the removal of the Huntingdon Viaduct. A variation to the previous consultation was also announced with the inclusion of a limited access junction between the new A14 and A1198 with the provision of west-facing slip roads.
- 2.6 Since this time, the Highways Agency and their appointed Consultants have been working on the details of the preferred scheme which culminated in the publication of its 'Draft Side Road Orders' on 30th September 2009. It is this legal process that allows the community to comment on the current proposals, to put forward alternatives or to object to the scheme by 6th January 2010.

### **3. IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 Officers are currently in the process of undertaking in-depth analysis of the relevant documentation supplied as part of this process, including the Environmental Statement. It is currently planned that the results of this work will be presented in a detailed report to a Special Council meeting on 22nd December 2009 in order that Council can formally respond to the Highways Agency within the consultation timeframe.
- 3.2 All Members have previously been issued with a copy of the Ellington to Fen Ditton Non-Technical Summary of the Environmental Statement.


#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 On the basis of the significant impact that this scheme will have on the District, it is suggested that Members may wish to debate issues that they wish to raise in connection with the current Draft Side Road Order process and highlight any issues on which they seek further clarification in order that Officers may look to address these, where possible, in the report to Special Council on 22nd December 2009.

#### **5. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended:

**that Members provide feedback on any issues on which they would seek further clarification for the Special Council meeting to be held on 22nd December 2009.**

**Contact Officer:** Stuart Bell – Transport Team Leader  
 (01480) 388387

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Council Reports – 6th December 2000, 26th September 2001, 16th February 2005, 13th April 2005, 29th June 2005 & 21st February 2007.

CHUMMS Study Final Report – August 2001.

A14 Preferred Route Announcement – October 2007.

A14 Draft Side Road Orders – 30th September 2009.

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## **Representation of Political Groups on District Council Panels, etc**

### **Report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services**

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#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Members will recall that the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and associated Regulations describe arrangements for achieving a balance on Panels etc, to reflect the representation of political groups and independent Members on the District Council. The Act requires the District Council to review the representation of different political groups at the time when the Authority holds its Annual Meeting - or on subsequent occasions when the constitution of political groups on the Council changes for any reason.

#### **2. PRINCIPLES OF PROPORTIONALITY**

- 2.1 In performing the duty to review representation, the Council must, so far as reasonably practicable, only determine the allocation of seats having regard to the following principles -

- ◆ that not all the seats are allocated to the same political group;
- ◆ that the majority of seats are allocated to the political group which forms a majority of the Council's membership; and
- ◆ that the number of seats allocated is in the same proportion as is borne by the number of Members of a political group to the membership of the Council.

- 2.2 Currently it is open to the Council to approve alternative arrangements otherwise than in accordance with the principles of proportionality providing that the alternative arrangements are approved without any Member voting against them.

#### **3. CONSTITUTION OF POLITICAL GROUPS**

- 3.1 Notice has been received from Councillor A Monk that he wishes to resign from the Conservative Group and be regarded as an Independent Member of the Council but not aligned to the Independent Group. To confirm, therefore, the constitution of political groups on the District Council has varied as follows:-

<b>Name of Group</b>	<b>No. of Members</b>
Conservative	37
Liberal Democrat	10
Independents	2

There are two Members of the Council who are not aligned to a political group and one vacancy. Members will be aware that this position will vary again following the by-election in the Huntingdon North Ward on 29th October 2009.

3.2 The membership of groups in proportion to the total membership of the Council is therefore as follows:-

	%
Conservative	72.55
Liberal Democrat	19.60
Independent Members	3.92
Other	3.92

#### 4. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000

4.1 Members are reminded that under the Local Government Act 2000, the proportionality requirements do not apply to the Cabinet and the Standards Committee nor to any Sub-Groups or Sub-Committees, etc which either of them may appoint. It is therefore open to the Council to determine the membership of those bodies, irrespective of the composition of political groups and their membership. However, the Standards for England believe that Standards Committees should include appropriate political representation which has the support of all political parties.

4.2 The following requirements of the Act also need to be adhered to by the Council in determining the membership of Panels, etc -

- ◆ the Cabinet may not include either the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Council;
- ◆ Overview and Scrutiny Panels may not comprise any Member of the Cabinet;
- ◆ the Standards Committee may not include the Leader, although it must include one Cabinet Member within its membership but that person may not Chair the Committee; and
- ◆ the Leader, Deputy Leader and any Member of the Cabinet shall not be elected as Chairman of any Committee or Panel other than any that may be appointed by the Cabinet.

4.3 The Constitution also provides for the Development Management Panel, Licensing and Protection Panel, the Employment Panel and the Licensing Committee to include the relevant Executive Councillor within their respective membership. Following the recent review of the democratic structure, the membership of the Corporate Governance Panel shall include the Executive Councillors whose portfolios include finance and corporate governance in an ex-officio capacity. **Every Member of the Council shall be appointed to serve on a minimum of one Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Committee or Panel of the Council or the Cabinet.**



**5. PROPORTIONALITY**

5.1 Excluding the Cabinet and Standards Committee the aggregate number of seats on Panels remains at 80, notwithstanding the change in the number of Overview and Scrutiny Panels. Using the proportionality percentage referred to in paragraph 3.2 and rounding up or down as appropriate, produces the following entitlement -

<b>Seats</b>		
Conservative Group	58.04	58
Liberal Democrat Group	15.68	16
Independent Members	3.13	3
Other	3.13	3

5.2 Applying the principles of the Act and, similarly, rounding the figures as necessary, gives the distribution as set out in the Appendix.

5.3 The principles of proportionality apply similarly to advisory/sub-groups appointed or nominated by panels and regard must be given to the following examples of entitlements to seats:-

No. of Members on Sub-Group, etc	Proportion of Members from Political Groups			Other
	Cons	Lib Dem	Indep	
3	2	1	0	0
4	3	1	0	0
5	4	1	0	0
6	4	2	0	0
7	5	2	0	0
8	6	2	0	0
9	7	2	0	0
10	7	2	1/0	0/1

5.4 However, the Cabinet may not delegate any of its functions to non-Cabinet Members. Therefore any Sub-Group of the Cabinet that is exercising any decision-making powers delegated to it by the Cabinet must include only Cabinet Members. This does not prevent any Advisory Group appointed by the Cabinet that has no decision-making powers and whose terms of reference are merely advisory from including non-Cabinet Members. However, if a Member of an Overview and Scrutiny Panel is appointed to an Advisory Group by the Cabinet, that person will have a prejudicial interest and will be required to leave the room in the event of the Scrutiny Panel of which he or she is a member scrutinising any decisions or recommendations of that Advisory Group.

5.5 It should be noted that the 2000 Act requires the appointment of a minimum of one Cabinet Member to a Joint Committee exercising executive functions. Other Members may be appointed to a Joint Committee and the political balance requirements do not apply although circumstances will vary as to whether those Members can vote on executive decisions.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 Although invited to determine the allocation of seats on District Council Panels to political groups and to the non-aligned Members in accordance with the distribution in paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 above, the Council may decide to defer to the next meeting in December, further variation of Panel memberships pending the outcome of the by-election in Huntingdon North Ward.
- 6.2 As the proportionality requirements do not apply to the Cabinet and Standards Committee it is for the Council to determine their membership.
- 6.3 The opportunity otherwise is available currently to allocate seats in accordance with an alternative arrangement, provided this arrangement is approved by the Council with no Member voting against.

**Contact Officer:** Christine Deller, Democratic Services Manager  
☎ (01480) 388007

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Local Government and Housing Act 1989  
Local Government Act 2000  
District Council Constitution

APPENDIX

	No. of Seats*	No. of Ex-officio	Title of Ex-officio	Cons	Lib Dem	Indep	Other	Cons	Lib Dem	Indep	Other
Corporate Governance Panel	7	2 max	Executive Cllrs for Finance and Governance	5.07	1.37	0.27	0.27	6/ 5	1/2	0	0
Development Management Panel	16	1	Not defined	11.60	3.13	0.62	0.62	12/11	3	0/1	0/1
Elections Panel	7	0		5.07	1.37	0.27	0.27	6/ 5	1/2	0	0
Employment Panel	8**	1	Not defined	5.80	1.56	0.31	0.31	6	2	0	0
Licensing & Protection Panel/ Committee	12	1	Not defined	8.70	2.35	0.47	0.47	8/9	2	1/0	1/0
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being)	10	0		7.25	1.96	0.39	0.39	7	2	1/0	0/1
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)	10	0		7.25	1.96	0.39	0.39	7	2	1/0	0/1
Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being)	10	0		7.25	1.96	0.39	0.39	7	2	1/0	0/1
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>			<b>57.99</b>	<b>15.66</b>	<b>3.11</b>	<b>3.11</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>

Standards	7	0		5.07	1.37	0.27	0.27	5	2	0	0
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\* the allocation of these seats must be balanced so that the total entitlement to seats on each group is not exceeded.

\*\* pending further review

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## **Cabinet**

### **Report of the meeting held on 22nd October 2009**

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#### **Matters for Information**

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#### **37. FINANCIAL MONITORING - REVENUE BUDGET**

The Cabinet has noted the expected revenue budget variations already identified in the current year. Whilst welcoming a forecast reduction of £505,000 in the overall budget, the Cabinet has expressed some concern over the increasing cost to the Council of concessionary fares and the likely implications of the guided bus scheme given Cambridgeshire County Council's decision not to charge for parking at the new park and ride site in St Ives. Executive Councillors feel that this could have a detrimental effect on town centre parking with motorists switching to the availability of free parking given the close walking distance of the park and ride site to the town centre. Members have concurred with a suggestion that the Leader and the Chief Executive raise the matter with their counterparts at the County Council.

#### **38. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING - 2009/2010 BUDGET**

The Cabinet has been acquainted with variations in the capital programme in the current year. In discussing cost variations and timing changes to 2010/11, the Cabinet has welcomed forecast savings amounting to £1,423,000 in the current year.

#### **39. HUNTINGDON TOWN HALL**

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the conclusions reached by EW Consultancy (EWC) Ltd. over the long term sustainable use of Huntingdon Town Hall. The Town Hall is a grade II listed building for which the District Council holds the freehold ownership in trust for the "public good" of the people of Huntingdon.

Upkeep and maintenance of the building is being undertaken by the current leaseholder, Her Majesty's Court Service but they vacated the building in 2007 and are in discussions to surrender the lease. Given the importance of the building, the District Council commissioned EWC to undertake a review and to liaise with the various stakeholders involved including Huntingdon Town Council with a view to making recommendations on the building's future.

Having considered the proposals put forward by EWC, the financial implications, the deliberations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel

(Economic Well-Being) (Item No. 20 of their Report refers) and Huntingdon Town Council on the matter, the Cabinet has -

- ◆ agreed to establish a building preservation trust;
- ◆ agreed in principle to the transfer of ownership of the freehold of Huntingdon Town Hall to an appropriate building preservation trust when a viable long-term solution has been identified through an options appraisal;
- ◆ agreed to provide project management support to the building preservation trust until it is established and can provide its own project management arrangements;
- ◆ suggested that possible building preservation trustees be investigated;
- ◆ endorsed steering group arrangements in the short term;
- ◆ endorsed the development of terms of reference for the steering group and the organisations to be invited;
- ◆ agreed to consider initial start-up funding needed for matched funds for the optional appraisal;
- ◆ defer consideration of the question of long-term revenue funding for the building at the present time;
- ◆ defer consideration of a recommendation by the consultants to continue discussions with Her Majesty's Court Service on lease surrender on the basis that this is premature at the present time;
- ◆ supported the possibility of investigating the transfer of the freehold of the building to Huntingdon Town Council in exchange for land currently owned by them; and
- ◆ requested that further reports addressing this matter be submitted to future meetings of the Cabinet.

#### **40. NEW STARTER UNITS, CAXTON ROAD, ST. IVES**

The Cabinet has agreed to release the funding from the Medium Term Plan for the development of the former depot at Caxton Road, St. Ives as new industrial and commercial premises. The scheme will provide a flexible, mixed development of work spaces and small offices for new and small businesses and will achieve the targets set out in the Council's corporate plan and the Environmental Strategy.

At the same time, the Cabinet has authorised the Director of Central Services to accept an offer of capital funding from Cambridge County Council amounting to £150,000 for the scheme, subject to the agreement of the partnership terms.

#### **41. SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP**

Councillor P H Dakers has been replaced by Councillor P L E Bucknell on the Safety Advisory Group.

I C Bates  
Chairman

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## **Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being)**

**Report of the meeting held on 15th October 2009**

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### **Matters for Information**

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#### **20. HUNTINGDON TOWN HALL – THE WAY FORWARD**

The Panel has been acquainted with the conclusions reached by E W Consultancy Ltd following investigations into the future use of Huntingdon Town Hall. In so doing, Members have made reference to the ownership of the building, current leasing arrangements for its occupation and liability for its maintenance.

Members have concurred with the suggestion that the Town Hall should be used for public good but, at the same time, generate revenue to meet the ongoing cost of maintenance. In noting the financial implications of the proposals, potential sources of funding and possible transfer of the building to a Building Preservation Trust, the Panel has raised the possibility of a potential transfer of the Town Hall to Huntingdon Town Council in the form of an asset swap. In that respect the Cabinet has been requested to accept the recommendations made in the report in principle subject to this option being fully investigated.

#### **21. THE PLACE SURVEY**

In conjunction with the Panels for Social Well-Being and Economic Well-Being, the Panel for Economic Well-Being has reviewed the findings of The Place Survey. Members have been informed of the particular results that are relevant to their remit. While the Survey presents a positive picture compared with the results for Cambridgeshire and nationally, the focus of the discussion has been on the areas where the public feel improvements are required.

The provision of activities for teenagers is one area where the Council might be able to contribute towards improvements. The need for better shopping facilities is another area for improvement, which Members have expressed an interest in pursuing as a study area. A scoping report has been requested for this purpose.

Links have been made between the Survey results and the Cambridgeshire Local Area Agreement improvement targets. The Panel will monitor progress in these respects as part of its extended remit to scrutinise the Council's partnership working.

**21. LOCAL PROCUREMENT**

Pursuant to Item 16 of the Report to the meeting of the Council on 23rd September 2009, the Panel has referred two reports of meetings of the Local Procurement Working Group to the Local Strategic Partnership's Economic Prosperity and Skills Thematic Group.

**22. APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS**

The Panel has authorised the Head of Democratic and Central Services to convene a Panel from amongst its Membership to sit on an Appointments Panel to select potential candidates to be co-opted on to the Panel in the capacity of independent members. Having noted the contents of a Scheme of Co-option, Members have been acquainted with the interest that has been received in becoming independent members following initial efforts to promote the initiative locally and agreed that publication in Districtwide was essential in order to reach a wider audience.

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**Other Matters of Interest**

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**23. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 – FORWARD PLAN**

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions.

**24. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING) - PROGRESS**

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies.

**25. WORK PLAN STUDIES**

The Panel has reviewed its work plan and received details of studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

**27. SCRUTINY**

In considering the latest edition of the Decision Digest Members noted that lessons had been learned from the recent Neighbourhood Forum pilot held in St Neots that would help shape future forums.

J D Ablewhite  
Chairman



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## **Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)**

**Report of the meeting held on 13th October 2009**

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### **Matters for Information**

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#### **17. THE PLACE SURVEY**

Together with the Economic and Social Well-being Panels, the Panel has received a presentation on the findings of the Place Survey, a statutory exercise that is undertaken by all authorities every two years. The survey has replaced the Best Value User Satisfaction Survey which local authorities previously were required to undertake and has been designed to capture local people's views, experiences and perceptions about the area that they live in.

The survey was sent to 3,000 randomly selected households in Huntingdonshire and 1,177 completed questionnaires were returned.

The Panel was pleased to note that the performance of the majority of local indicators exceeded both the county and national averages. As the survey did not allow explanations for people's responses, focus groups are being established in order to identify what action needs to be taken to improve residents' perception of the District's performance against the indicators.

The Panel has asked for the results to be broken down to ward level in relation to both activities for teenagers and public transport which were identified by respondents as those aspects most in need of improvement in the District. Members have also asked for the results at ward level for NI4 - the percentage of people who agreed they can influence decisions in their locality. The Policy and Strategic Services Manager will be supplying this information to the Panel at a future meeting.

#### **18. APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

The Panel has endorsed a scheme of co-option to each of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels. A programme of publicity is being undertaken to generate expressions of interest from members of the public and the Head of Democratic and Central Services has been authorised to convene a politically balanced panel of Members to comprise an appointments panel who will make recommendations on the recruitment of the two independent persons to each Panel.

**19. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 - FORWARD PLAN**

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the forward plan of forthcoming decisions prepared by the Leader of the Council.

**20. WORKPLAN STUDIES**

The Panel has been advised of progress made to date on its programme of studies. Members will be considering possible topics for future studies at their next meeting.

**21. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) - PROGRESS**

The Panel has been advised of progress on issues that had been previously discussed. With regard to the problems of flooding at St Audrey's Lane in St Ives, the Panel has been invited to raise questions for consideration by Anglian Water, who have indicated that they are no longer prepared to attend a meeting of the Panel in person on this subject.

**22. SCRUTINY**

The Panel has considered the latest edition of the Decision Digest and discussed the matters contained therein.

P M D Godfrey  
Chairman

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## **Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being)**

**Report of the meeting held on 6th October 2009**

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### **Matters for Information**

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#### **20. THE PLACE SURVEY**

In conjunction with the Panels for Environmental Well-Being and Economic Well-Being, the Panel for Social Well-Being has received a presentation on the findings of The Place Survey. It is a statutory requirement that all local authorities undertake the survey every two years. It replaces the Best Value User Satisfaction Survey and is designed to capture local people's views, experiences and perceptions about the area in which they live. The form of the Survey in terms of its timing and the questions asked are closely prescribed by the Department for Communities and Local Government. Respondents are selected from a random sample across the District, all aged 18 years or above, and the responses have been weighted to reflect the local population.

The Panel has noted that for a majority of National Indicators, Huntingdonshire exceeds the figures for both the County and for the National context. Attention has been drawn to areas identified by respondents as having the most need of improvement in Huntingdonshire, namely activities for teenagers, road and pavement repairs, public transport, traffic congestion and shopping facilities. In addition, Members have been acquainted with the Survey results in respect of the improvement targets in the Cambridgeshire Local Area Agreement. In acknowledging the limits of the information presented on the improvement areas, the Panel has noted plans to obtain further qualitative data in these areas through a series of focus groups. The Panel will consider a report on the findings from the focus groups in three months time.

#### **21. REVIEW OF ONLINE PETITIONS**

The Panel has been acquainted with details of online petitions received since the facility was introduced to the Council's website via the Modern.Gov software system in July 2008. Whilst it has been evident that the launch of the facility generated initial interest in the use of online petitions, the Panel has registered concern at the low level of use of the facility. Nevertheless, Members are of the view that it will become a more popular method of public engagement in the future. In the meantime, it has been suggested that online

petitions might be used proactively by the Council for consultation purposes. The feasibility of this is to be investigated.

**22. APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS**

The Panel has been acquainted with progress towards the appointment of independent Members to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels. Having noted the terms of a Scheme of Co-option, the Head of Democratic and Central Services has been authorised to convene a Panel of Members of the Social Well-Being Panel to sit on an Appointments Panel who will be responsible for making recommendations on the recruitment of two independent Members to the Panel. A programme of publicity designed to generate expressions of interest in joining the Panels from members of the public is currently being undertaken.

**23. PROVISION OF PLAY FACILITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

The Provision of Play Facilities Working Group has submitted preliminary findings on its work to the Panel. Members have been reminded that the Working Group had previously been tasked with making recommendations on achieving an even distribution of play facilities across the District and on how the ongoing revenue costs associated with such facilities might be met.

The Panel has considered a number of options identified by the Working Group, which might achieve the study's objectives. These include the transfer of ownership of facilities in towns to Town Councils and the subsequent redeployment of the maintenance budget associated with them to provide a District-wide service; offering a maintenance agreement to Parishes for the upkeep of their facilities; splitting responsibility for maintenance costs between the District Council, Town or Parish Councils and users of facilities, and employing an additional member of staff within the Operations Division to conduct a twice weekly inspection of facilities. These will only be viable provided there is sufficient take-up by Parishes. Following discussions on the options identified, the Working Group has been requested to meet with the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services to discuss them before proceeding with their study.

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**Other Matters of Interest**

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**24. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL-BEING) - PROGRESS**

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies. Councillor R J West has been appointed as the Panel's representative to meet with the local branch of the Care Quality Commission to discuss Members concerns about the Commission's Enforcement Policy.

The Panel will consider NHS Cambridgeshire's consultation on Primary Care Out of Hours Services at their December meeting. A local event hosted by NHS Cambridgeshire will be held on 30th November 2009, details of which have been circulated to all Members. Following this event, the Panel will formulate its comments for submission to NHS Cambridgeshire.

**25. WORK PLAN STUDIES**

The Panel has reviewed its work plan and received details of studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

**26. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 – FORWARD PLAN**

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions. Items entitled Older Persons Housing Strategy Update and St Ivo Leisure Centre – Proposals for Development will be considered at the Panel's meetings in November and December respectively.

**27. SCRUTINY**

The Panel has considered the latest edition of the Decision Digest.

S J Criswell  
Chairman

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## **Development Management Panel**

**Report of the meeting held on 19th October 2009**

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### **Matters for Information**

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**11. DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS**

The Panel has considered a total of 18 applications of which 12 were approved and 6 refused.

**12. MONITORING OF SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS (PLANNING OBLIGATIONS)**

In accordance with the outcome of the Overview and Scrutiny Study on Section 106 Agreements, the Panel has noted, for the first time, information on the receipt and expenditure of Section 106 funds and an overview of benefit expected from development which has yet to commence and where trigger points for collection have yet to be reached. This report had previously been submitted to the Section 106 Agreement Advisory Group where enquiries in relation to the progress of specific schemes had been raised.

P G Mitchell  
Chairman

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## **Corporate Governance Panel**

**Report of the meeting held on 22nd September 2009**

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### **Matters for Information**

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**8. AUDIT COMMISSION PROPOSAL FOR CHANGE OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS**

The Panel's attention has been drawn to a proposal by the Audit Commission to change the Council's external auditors from Grant Thornton UK to Pricewaterhouse Coopers. The proposal will result in all Cambridgeshire local authorities being audited by the same firm which will assist with the move towards the Comprehensive Area Assessment.

**9. REVIEW OF HOUSING BENEFIT FRAUD INVESTIGATION ACTIVITY AND THE COUNCIL'S WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

The Panel has been acquainted with the activity of the Benefits Fraud Investigation Team over the period from 2006 to 2009 and is encouraged to note that a 69% success rate for all cases investigated over the 2008/09 financial year has been achieved.

In terms of the annual review of the whistleblowing policy and guidance, the Panel has been advised that no changes are required.

**10. REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE PANEL**

The Panel has been apprised with the progress made against the 2008/09 action plan which was compiled to enhance the Panel's own effectiveness. The plan has been produced against CIPFA's best practice guidance for audit committees.

**11. RISK REGISTER**

Changes made to the Council's Risk Register between the period March to August 2009 inclusive have been received by the Panel.

**12. INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE: INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT**

The Panel has been acquainted with the progress made against the 2008/09 annual audit plan and the performance standards achieved. Members were informed of the Audit & Risk Manager's opinion that limited assurance was provided by the Council's internal control environment in terms of the effective exercise of its functions.

Attention also has been drawn to occasional breaches by Officers of the Council's Code of Procurement and a report summarising the steps taken to ensure compliance with the Code in future is to be submitted to the Panel's December meeting.

**13. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SYSTEM OF INTERNAL AUDIT**

The outcome of a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal audit has been received by the Panel which is a requirement of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003. The review has confirmed that the Council's Internal Audit service meets the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Audit Practice.

**14. GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

The Panel has approved the Governance Statement which summarises the corporate governance work carried out in 2008/09 and identified matters to be addressed during 2009/10. The Panel has been assured by the Council's external auditors that they are satisfied that the Council's system of internal control is being adhered to.

**15. APPROVAL FOR PUBLICATION OF THE 2008/09 ACCOUNTS**

The Panel has approved the report and accounts for the year 2008/09. Having endorsed the Council's Letters of Representation, Members have been informed by the Council's external auditors that an unqualified opinion will be provided on the accounts. Matters contained in the action plan to the auditor's reports have also been noted.

C J Stephens  
Chairman