

A meeting of **HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL** will be held in the **CIVIC SUITE, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN** on **WEDNESDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2010** 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>
Former Councillor J Garner of Sawtry will open the meeting with prayer.	
<b>APOLOGIES</b>	<b>2 minutes</b>
<b>CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</b>	<b>10 minutes</b>
<b>1. MINUTES</b> (Pages 1 - 16)	<b>2 minutes</b>
To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd June 2010.	
<b>2. 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.	
<b>3. COUNCIL DEBATE</b>	<b>60 minutes</b>
To discuss the implications for the Council and the public of the changes contained in the Government White Paper "Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS".	
The Executive Councillor for Housing & Public Health, Councillor A Hansard will introduce Dr Simon Brown, Chairman of Hunts Health who will address the Council and, together with colleagues, answer Members' questions.	
<b>4. FINANCIAL FORECAST</b> (Pages 17 - 32)	<b>30 minutes</b>
The Executive Councillor for Finance & Customer Services to present a report by the Director of Commerce and Technology on the financial options available prior to the 2011/12 Budget/Medium Term Plan process.	
<b>5. EXECUTIVE POLICY ISSUE</b>	<b>5 minutes</b>
Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy & Transport to update Members on the current position following public consultation on the Gypsy and Travellers DPD.	
<b>6. DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE WORKING GROUP</b> (Pages 33 - 38)	<b>5 minutes</b>
Councillor K Churchill, Executive Councillor for Resources & Policy to present the report of the Working Group.	

**7. FORMAT OF THE COUNCIL'S EXECUTIVE: THE CHOICE OF EXECUTIVE LEADER OR ELECTED MAYOR (Pages 39 - 54) 5 minutes**

Councillor K Churchill, Executive Councillor for Resources & Policy to present a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services.

**8. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, PANELS AND COMMITTEES 20 minutes**

- (a) Cabinet (Pages 55 - 60)
- (b) Standards Committee (Pages 61 - 64)
- (c) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) (Pages 65 - 72)
- (d) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) (Pages 73 - 78)
- (e) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) (Pages 79 - 84)
- (f) Development Management Panel (Pages 85 - 86)
- (g) Employment Panel (Pages 87 - 88)
- (h) Appointments Panel (Pages 89 - 90)
- (i) Corporate Governance Panel (Pages 91 - 92)

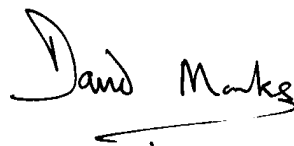
**9. ORAL QUESTIONS 30 minutes**

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

**10. MEMBERSHIP OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND PANELS 2 minutes**

To invite Councillor P D Reeve to vary the membership of the Council's Committees/Panels in respect of the UK Independence Group.

Dated this 21st day of September 2010



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 Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 23 June 2010.

PRESENT: Councillor J J Dutton – Chairman.

Councillors M G Baker, K M Baker,  
Mrs M Banerjee, I C Bates, J T Bell,  
Mrs B E Boddington, P L E Bucknell,  
E R Butler, S Cawley, B S Chapman,  
K J Churchill, Mrs K E Cooper, S J Criswell,  
J W Davies, Mrs J A Dew, D B Dew,  
P J Downes, R S Farrer, P M D Godfrey,  
P Godley, J A Gray, S Greenall, A Hansard,  
D Harty, C R Hyams, Mrs P A Jordan,  
S M Van De Kerkhove, A Monk,  
M F Newman, P D Reeve, T V Rogers,  
T D Sanderson, C M Sanderson,  
M F Shellens, Mrs P E Shrapnel,  
C J Stephens, P A Swales, G S E Thorpe,  
R G Tuplin, D M Tysoe, P K Ursell,  
P R Ward, J S Watt and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors J D Ablewhite, W T Clough, N J Guyatt, P G Mitchell, Mrs D C Reynolds, L M Simpson and Ms M J Thomas.

### 15. PRAYER

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

### 16. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### (a) Royal Visits

The Chairman reported that he had been honoured to join His Royal Highness the Duke of York on a recent visit to Meridian Audio in Huntingdon and would be welcoming His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester to Huntingdonshire in July when he would be visiting Warboys in recognition of that village having been awarded the accolade of Cambridgeshire Village of the Year three times in the past decade.

#### (b) Armed Forces Day

The Chairman thanked colleagues and officers for their assistance in the ceremony to raise the Union Flag to commemorate Armed Forces Day at which he had been proud to officiate.

(c) **Queen's Birthday Honours**

On behalf of the Council, the Chairman announced that he had extended congratulations to Professor M Shirley of Buckden who had been awarded a CBE in the recent Queen's Birthday Honours for services to science.

(d) **Further Recognition**

The Chairman congratulated the Council's Environment Team for the success of the recent World Environment Day exhibition and "Green Heart" Award events.

(e) **Twenty20 Challenge**

The Chairman announced that the annual cricket match between Members and Officers would take place at St Ivo Outdoor Centre on 8th July 2010 and he invited Members to register their interest as players with his PA, Mrs K Pauley.

**17. PETITION**

The Chairman invited Councillor D Brown of Godmanchester Town Council and representative of the Godmanchester Community Association to present a petition containing 1,127 signatories requesting the District Council to reconsider its decision to withdraw funding for the operation of the public conveniences in Godmanchester.

Councillor Brown suggested that the Council's decision would have a greater impact upon Godmanchester than elsewhere as the size of the village and the resources available were insufficient for the Town Council to be able to undertake the running and maintenance of such facilities themselves.

Councillor Brown referred to representations made to the Town Council by local businesses, residents and visitors to the village and made particular mention of two community schemes which would be adversely affected by the consequences of the decision.

On the conclusion of Councillor Brown's address, it was

RESOLVED

that the petition be referred for consideration to the Cabinet.

**18. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 19th May 2010 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**19. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillors B S Chapman, Mrs K E Cooper, D Harty, S M Van de Kerkhove, G S E Thorpe and P K Ursell declared a personal interest in Minute No. 25 (a), Item No. 10 by virtue of their membership of St

Neots Town Council.

## **20. COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES**

The Chairman reminded Members of the decision 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 No. 21 during which time the common law rules of debate be observed by Members and applied by the Chairman.

## **21. COUNCIL DEBATE**

The Chairman welcomed Ms Claire Holloway, Corporate Programme Director at the Local Government Association (LGA) to the meeting. With the assistance of a powerpoint presentation, Ms Holloway addressed the Council on the Association’s perception of the new coalition government’s plans for local government. A copy of the LGA Briefing Note on the budget also was circulated to Members (copies of both documents are appended in the Minute Book).

The presentation described the origins and current role of the LGA and the LGA Group, the latter including other organisations that lobbied for, reported, supported and improved local government. Members were apprised of the Government’s announcements thus far, their general effect and the likely implications for district council services. Ms Holloway further described her understanding of the measures likely to be covered in the proposed De-centralisation and Localism Bill and other draft legislation which potentially might be introduced in the short-term. In concluding her address, Ms Holloway outlined to Members the offer made to the Government on behalf of the sector to secure a programme of savings, greater efficiencies and ideas for devolution which should secure a more streamlined relationship between local and national government.

Councillor P J Downes opened the debate by thanking Ms Holloway for her presentation and by asking for her view on the Government’s intentions in respect of the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and parish council precepts. Although these issues had yet to be clarified, Ms Holloway understood that RSG would be cut and it was the Government’s preference that council tax levels should be frozen. However, she added that this might not apply to parish council precepts and that she would have to seek clarification after the meeting. On the same subject, Councillor T V Rogers suggested that the LGA might consider, in negotiations with the Government, alternative means for calculating RSG.

In response to a question from Councillor P L E Bucknell regarding fortnightly refuse collections, Ms Holloway replied that it appeared that the Government were not moving away from the idea of fortnightly collections but wished to ask local councils to introduce incentives which would encourage residents to further increase the

proportion of household waste which could be recycled.

Regarding the future of the regional spatial strategies, and in answer to a question from Councillor Mrs M Banerjee, Ms Holloway undertook to respond after the meeting on what, if anything, was proposed for RSS.

Mention was made by Councillor G S E Thorpe of performance-related pay and incentive schemes and Ms Holloway confirmed that salary scales negotiated nationally did not include performance-related pay.

Councillor Downes referred to the planning implications of the proposed "free schools" proposals, questioned the source of their funding, their governance arrangements and the role of the District Council in the event for example of a proposal to use a vacant shop unit in a town centre for this purpose. In the absence of further details in this respect, the Chief Executive anticipated that specific planning regulations might need to be formulated to respond to 'free school' applications.

The Leader, Councillor I C Bates commented on several issues which had been raised at the meeting mentioning, in particular, the low level of the District Council's council tax currently, the welcomed decision to abolish quangos and the RSS and the move towards more local democracy. Ms Holloway confirmed that it appeared that powers on housing and planning would be returned to local councils based on the principle that a local area knew best how to deliver local services.

Following questions from Councillor P D Reeve, Ms Holloway confirmed that 70% of legislation formulated by the European Council affected local authorities and that it was her expectation that there would be no increase in nationally negotiated salary scales for 2010/11. She added that, in her view some local councils were sufficiently capable to take responsibility for additional services and confirmed that the LGA was funded by subscription.

On behalf of the Council, Councillor Bates thanked Ms Holloway for attending the Council meeting and for the interesting insight to the Government's further direction that she was able to provide.

## **22. PARISH MEETING FUNCTIONS**

By way of a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Executive Councillor for Resources & Policy, Councillor K J Churchill, advised Members of an approach received from Covington Parish Meeting requesting the District Council to grant additional powers to them.

Having been advised that Covington Parish Meeting had requested additional powers to be able to contribute to the maintenance of the village hall, to pay their clerk and offer grants to local organisations under Sections 112, 133 and 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 and having acknowledged the excellent contribution made by the Parish Meeting to village life, the Council

RESOLVED



that an Order be made under Section 109 of the Local Government Act 1972 to confer upon Covington Parish Meeting the functions contained in Sections 112, 133 and 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

### **23. PARISH ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS**

Having regard to a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Executive Councillor for Resources & Policy, Councillor K J Churchill drew the Council's attention to a situation which had arisen in Little Paxton whereby the election of parish councillors would not coincide with the district elections in the ward in 2011. This had occurred following the review of parish boundaries and electoral arrangements in Huntingdonshire and the subsequent issue of a Statutory Instrument that had brought forward the date for the election of a district councillor for the Little Paxton Ward from 2012 to 2011.

Having been consulted on whether they wished to change the date of their election to coincide with the district ward and thereby save cost, the Parish Council had asked if their election would also be brought forward.

Members were advised that a similar situation had arisen at the St Ives South Ward of St Ives Town Council but that the Town Council had asked to retain the election in 2012 to coincide with elections for the remainder of the town in that year.

#### **RESOLVED**

that an Order be made under the relevant legislation to make provision for the election of all parish councillors for the Parish of Little Paxton to be held in 2011 rather than 2012 to coincide with the elections in the Little Paxton Ward of the District Council and for councillors elected at that election to serve for five years until 2016 when the normal cycle of elections will resume.

### **24. PETITIONS SCHEME**

The Executive Councillor for Resources & Policy, Councillor K J Churchill presented a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking the Council's approval to the establishment of a petition scheme as required under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Regulations under the Act required the handling of written and electronic petitions to be dealt with in a more consistent and coherent way by local authorities. As the Council already had in place procedures to deal with petitions, the Executive Councillor proposed that these procedures should be subsumed within a new petitions scheme in order to meet the legislative requirements.

The Council was informed that as the Order required changes to be made to existing provisions with effect from 15th June 2010 there had

been no opportunity for the Corporate Governance Panel to consider the content of the scheme, nor for the change to stand adjourned to the next meeting as required by Council Procedure Rules. Having been advised that a relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel could review the action taken by the Council in respect of any petition subsequently received, the Council

RESOLVED

that Council Procedure Rule 20.2 be suspended and the proposed changes to the Council Procedure Rules as set out in the appendix to the report now submitted be approved for implementation with effect from 15th June 2010.

## **25. FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2010/11**

By reference to a report by the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), Councillor J T Bell, Chairman of the Licensing and Protection Panel, reminded the Council that the Food Standards Agency required the Council to prepare a Food Safety Service Plan annually in accordance with an agreed framework. A full copy of the Food Safety Service Plan 2010/11 had been made available in the Members' Lounge (an executive summary of which is appended to the Minutes).

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

In terms of performance, the Food Safety Team had inspected 99.6% of high risk and 88.3% of low risk premises, a total of 1,526 inspections and visits in 2009/10 as part of programmed activities and in response to complaints and food alerts. Attention also was drawn to the continued success of the "Huntingdonshire Scores on the Doors" food hygiene rating scheme which had attracted 82,000 searches on the website since its introduction in October 2008.

Members noted that the Pennington Report published in April 2009 had had a significant impact on resources and that all butchers premises in the District had had to be visited and audited. A comprehensive training package now was in preparation and would be introduced in early 2011.

Councillor Bell reminded the Council that, in addition to their enforcement role, the Team also provided specialised training and guidance on food safety and infectious disease control, engaged in partnership working and contributed to joint projects and initiatives.

In 2010/11, Councillor Bell advised Members that the Team would continue to direct their resources towards high risk food premises, explore the use of alternative enforcement strategies and develop healthy eating initiatives for businesses and the community as identified in "Growing Success" and the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Whereupon, after noting the support for the Plan on the part of the

Licensing and Protection Panel, the Council

RESOLVED

that the Food Safety Service Plan 2010/11 be adopted.

**26. 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 22nd April, 19th May and 17th June 2010.

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In connection with Item No. 2 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes regarding the cost implications of the Cabinet's decision which suggested that the provision and management of play facilities should be undertaken at a local level by town and parish councils and community associations, Councillor Bates undertook to respond in writing to the questioner and to confirm whether relevant parish councils had been informed of this decision in view of the effect that this might have on the level of their precept in the following financial year.

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In connection with Item No. 6 and in response to a question from Councillor S J Criswell regarding the action to be taken by the Cabinet to respond to the challenges posed by the requirement for budget cuts, Councillor Bates referred to a statement which Councillor T V Rogers, Executive Councillor for Finance & Customer Services was shortly to make to the Council. However, he prefaced this presentation by remarking that, of the £6.2 billion of cuts announced by the Government, some £2.6 billion was required to be funded by local government which would inevitably have an impact on the services provided by the District Council. Although welcoming the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies and Regional Development Agencies, Councillor Bates suggested that their functions could become the District Council's responsibility presenting an even greater challenge if they were to be resourced and managed properly.

Councillor T V Rogers, Executive Councillor for Finance & Customer Services made a statement to the Council on the Council's financial position. He commenced by referring to the efficiency measures and savings totalling £1.6m which had already been secured and drew attention to the £5m in savings yet to be identified over the next three years. Against this background, Councillor Rogers proposed the following objectives and measures -

- ◆ restructuring of senior management;
- ◆ rationalisation of employees;

- ◆ comprehensive review of the Council's pay scheme;
- ◆ further use of shared services;
- ◆ improved income generated by Leisure Centres;
- ◆ further savings and efficiencies;
- ◆ re-shaping services;
- ◆ reduction in the use of consultants;
- ◆ greater partnership working;
- ◆ curtailment of the Capital Programme; and
- ◆ possible increases in Council Tax in future years.

Councillor Rogers anticipated that these measures could generate potential savings in the region of £7m adding that these proposals would form the basis of extensive consultation with partners, other local authorities and organisations, employees, trade unions and the public via a questionnaire which was currently under construction. In concluding, Councillor Rogers urged the Council to rise to the challenge while continuing to provide good quality services.

Councillor Downes thanked Councillor Rogers for the information that he had conveyed.

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In connection with Item No. 10 and in response to a question from Councillor G S E Thorpe, Councillor Bates acknowledged the questioner's appreciation of the transfer of land at Cemetery Road, St Neots to St Neots Town Council for the purpose of a burial ground.

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In connection with Item No. 11 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes regarding the impact of the delay in the scheme for improvements to the A14 on the Huntingdon western link road, Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy & Transport confirmed that the link road project would continue as planned.

On the same subject and in respond to a question from Councillor M F Shellens, Councillor Bates confirmed that as funding for the link road scheme would still be forthcoming from Cambridgeshire Horizons and Section 106 Agreements it should continue to proceed as planned.

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In connection with Item No. 13 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes regarding the potential performance of funds in 2010/11, Councillor Rogers replied that he was unable to recall the current position but could confirm that income had exceeded borrowing and that the Council would continue to seek to achieve the best return available from its investments.

Accordingly, upon being put to the vote, the recommendation contained in Item No. 13 was declared to be CARRIED.

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In connection with Item No. 16 and in response to a question from Councillor D Harty regarding the opportunity for users of Leisure Centres to enjoy free parking whilst those visiting the riverside park in St Neots could not, Councillor Bates explained that the car parks at Leisure Centres were located on land in the ownership of Cambridgeshire County Council and therefore the District Council had no control over the question of charging for their use.

On the same subject and in response to a question from Councillor R S Farrer, Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy & Transport undertook to respond to the questioner in writing to explain how use of the thirty eight spaces, which would remain free of charge for two hours in the riverside car park, St Neots would be monitored and enforced and the estimated cost of this management regime. He added that he would copy his reply to all Members.

On the same subject and in response to questions from Councillors S M Van de Kerkhove and G S E Thorpe, Councillor Bates undertook to respond to both questioners in writing with regard to the potential effect, if any, of car parking charges on trade and foot fall in St Neots, the potential displacement of parking to other sites and how he believed that charging for car parking would not adversely affect the vibrancy and vitality of St Neots town centre.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 22nd April, 19th May and 17th June 2010 be received and adopted.

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

Councillor G S E Thorpe presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 15th April, 3rd and 10th June 2010.

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In connection with Item No. 1 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, Councillor Thorpe undertook to convey to the Chairman of the Panel the suggestion that opportunities should be taken to propose even minor savings in 2010/11 as part of the Medium Term Plan process.

On the same subject and in response to a question from Councillor P D Reeve proposing a further review of the decision to close public conveniences in the District, Councillor Thorpe suggested that the question should be properly addressed to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being). In the event, the Leader, Councillor Bates reiterated that the Council had had to make a difficult decision having regard to the Council's budgetary situation and that he would hope that all Councillors would unite in working towards protection of essential services.

On the same subject, Councillor Thorpe concurred with the sentiments of the Leader's statement, was hopeful that all suggestions for savings would be considered seriously and suggested that ultimately any action taken should be agreed in the best interests of the District.

Councillor J A Gray, Executive Councillor for Environment & Information Technology added that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel had previously scrutinised the provision of public conveniences in the District and had concluded that their operation and maintenance should not be funded by the District Council.

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

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In connection with Item No. 3 and in response to a question from Councillor Mrs M Banerjee regarding the future of the Standards Committee, Councillor Thorpe replied that it was the expectation that new legislation published by the coalition government would propose an adjustment to the current standards regime and that all Members would be advised when these changes came forward.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 15th April, 3rd and 10th June 2010 be received and adopted.

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

Councillor P M Godfrey presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 13th April and 8th June 2010.

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In connection with Item No. 5 and in response to disappointment expressed by Councillor P L E Bucknell that Ramsey Market Town Transport Strategy did not encompass the neighbouring villages of Warboys, Bury, Ramsey Mereside and Ramsey St Mary's, the Chairman pointed out that the Strategy had identified key transport issues facing Ramsey and also proposed a programme of schemes to address the transport needs of surrounding villages.

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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 13th April and 8th June 2010 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 1st June 2010.

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In connection with Item No. 2 and in response to a question from Councillor M F Shellens, Councillor Criswell confirmed that the details of the developers with whom Section 106 Agreements had been negotiated would be reflected in future monitoring reports.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) held on 1st June 2010 be received and adopted.

**(e) Development Management Panel**

Councillor P K Ursell presented the Report of the meetings of the Development Management Panel held on 19th April, 24th May and 14th June 2010.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Development Management Panel held on 19th April, 24th May

and 14th June 2010 be received and adopted.

**(f) Employment Panel**

Councillor P A Swales presented the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 25th May 2010.

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In connection with Item No. 5, Councillor Swales drew Members' attention to those employees who were retiring from the District Council's service and having extended his best wishes to the individuals concerned encouraged Members to give a round of applause as an indication of their appreciation for the services they had rendered to the District.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 25th May 2010 be received and adopted.

**(g) Licensing and Protection Panel**

Councillor J T Bell presented the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 16th June 2010.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 16th June 2010 be received and adopted.

**(h) Licensing Committee**

Councillor J T Bell presented the Report of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 16th June 2010.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 16th June 2010 be received and adopted.



## 27. ORAL QUESTIONS

In accordance with the Council's 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 P D Reeve to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates**

In response to a question regarding the District Council's approach to the coalition government's preference for localism in the delivery of services, Councillor Bates confirmed that although supporting the principles involved in "localism", the Council would not consider placing a burden on parish councils. However, Councillor Bates added that parish councils did have the opportunity to raise additional resources by increasing their precepts, that the council tax levels of parish councils were not subject to capping and that in the circumstances he would ask Members to encourage their parish councils to consider taking on additional responsibilities.

### **Question from Councillor M F Shellens to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates**

In response to a question which suggested that parish councils would not have sufficient expertise to undertake additional responsibilities, Councillor Bates replied that parish councils could work in partnership with each other to share expertise and knowledge.

### **Question from Councillor P R Ward to the Executive Councillor for Operational & Countryside Services, Councillor C R Hyams**

In response to a question regarding the implications for the District Council should the Government propose that local authorities return to weekly household waste collections, Councillor Hyams reminded Members that the Council already collected waste on a weekly basis albeit different bins were collected on alternative weeks. He indicated that the Operations Division would consider the implications of any new legislation should this be published.

### **Question from Councillor C M Saunderson to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being), Councillor S J Criswell**

In response to a question regarding car parking charges at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, Councillor Criswell confirmed that despite ongoing discussions between the hospital administrators and the District Council, the decision had already been taken to raise charges for car parking in the hospital car parks.

### **Question from Councillor P L E Bucknell to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates**

In response to a question suggesting that the District Council should abandon the public consultation on the allocation of land for gypsy and traveller sites given the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategies, Councillor Bates reported that he had written to the Member of Parliament for the North West Cambridgeshire

Constituency, Shailesh Vara, MP to explain the reasons why the District Council were continuing with the consultation process. Councillor Dew added that despite the abolition of the RSS, the District Council still required an evidence-base upon which to formulate a policy against which future applications could be determined.

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

In response to a question seeking justification for proposed expenditure of an estimated £3m for a multi-storey car park in Huntingdon, Councillor Bates replied that the facilities were part of proposals for the development of Huntingdon town centre and featured in the Action Plan for Chequers Court which had been in place for some time. Councillor Bates indicated that once constructed the car park could provide a source of income and that should a similar opportunity arise for St Neots in the future this also would be considered favourably.

**Question from Councillor P J Downes to the Executive Councillor for Operational & Countryside Services, Councillor C R Hyams**

In response to a question on progress towards the introduction of glass collections in blue bins, the economic impact and future cost projections of the new arrangements, Councillor Hyams undertook to provide a written reply to the questioner.

**Question from Councillor G S E Thorpe to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy & Transport, Councillor D B Dew**

In response to a question regarding the action being taken by the Council to prevent further deterioration of the Old Falcon Public House, St Neots, Councillor Dew replied that he was aware that the Old Falcon was a fine and imposing listed building that made a significant contribution to the historic character of the Market Square and that in the past Planning Services had provided design and conservation advice to potential interested parties. However, this proactive approach had not yet produced any positive results. He added that the building was on the Buildings at Risk Register and that the Planning Conservation Team was actively in the process of pursuing the owners regarding its condition and future well-being. He indicated that he would ensure that the questioner was kept informed of progress with regard to its condition.

**Question from Councillor Mrs K E Cooper to the Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health, Councillor A Hansard**

In response to a question which suggested that the Residents' Association at Loves Farm Development, St Neots might be experiencing some difficulty in continuing to operate, Councillor Hansard assured the questioner that the District Council would continue to monitor the situation and take any action necessary should it appear that the Association continued to experience difficulties.

**Question from Councillor T D Sanderson to the Executive Councillor for Operational & Countryside Management, Councillor C R Hyams**

In response to a question regarding the District Council's proposals to improve the play facilities at Coneygeare, Huntingdon, Councillor Hyams replied that discussions over plans for the site were underway in which local ward councillors had been involved.

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

In response to a question regarding the objections received to the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) on sites for gypsies and travellers, Councillor Bates assured the questioner that all responses received would be treated sensitively.

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

In response to a question regarding the Princes Street car park in Huntingdon, Councillor Dew replied that the Council had a responsibility as an employer to have regard to the needs of its employees, that there was a maximum of fifteen places that were made available for staff in the car park who might have mobility problems and that these were allocated to staff on the advice of an occupational health specialist and reviewed on a three monthly basis. He added that this did not apply to staff who were blue badge holders and had exemptions under the Car Parking Order.

**28. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: SECTION 85**

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

The meeting concluded at 9.38 pm.

Chairman

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## **Financial Forecast**

### **Report by the Director of Commerce and Technology**

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#### **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 This report aims to stimulate discussion of financial options prior to this year's budget/MTP process. It provides Members with an update of the financial position in the light of the likely deficit for the year, falling revenue reserves, the emerging prospects for lower government funding and government plans to replace Council Tax capping from 2012/13.

#### **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 For a number of years financial forecasts have highlighted the need to substantially reduce expenditure and/or increase income. The Council is in the process of consulting with the public on their preferences regarding cuts in services and increases in Council Tax. The results of these consultations will not be known until the end of September.
- 2.2 The approved Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTP) provided for expenditure of £25m in 2010/11 funded £13m by government, £7m by Council Tax and £5m from reserves. Revenue reserves were, and still are, planned to fall to £12m by March 2011. The financial plan for subsequent years required substantial savings to remove the revenue deficit by 2014/5 when revenue reserves would have fallen to a minimum level.

### 3 SUMMARY

Cuts are expected in the level of government funding. These are likely to amount to over £3m p.a. within 5 years.

The total budget shortfall rises to over £8m p.a. in 4 years time.

Expenditure reductions of £8m p.a. will require Members to approve substantial changes to the scope and nature of services provided by the Council and how they are provided. This could fundamentally change the role of the Council.

Reserves are sufficient to allow changes to be introduced at the rate of £2m in each of the next 4 years. However further delay is not prudent.

The scale of savings, and complexity of the consequences, requires decisions on how the first £5m of savings are to be made during this year's budget/MTP process.

If no action is taken reserves will run out in March 2013.

The budget consultation will indicate the public's relative appetite for council tax rise and service cuts. It will also identify which services have a lower priority.

The Government is consulting on a proposal that Council Tax rises above a predetermined limit would be subject to achieving a majority in a public consultation and wishes to avoid centrally imposed capping. Although the April 2011 Council Tax increase will not be subject to a formal referendum future rises may be subject to such a referendum.

#### **Conclusion**

**In advance of the budget process all Members are urged to give consideration to:**

- 1. The nature of services which the Council should continue to provide.**
- 2. Whether the Council's low tax level should be maintained in preference to the provision of services or vice versa.**
- 3. The extent to which services should be managed by the District Council or devolved to Towns, Parishes or localities.**
- 4. The results of the budget consultation when they become available.**

#### **4 2009/10 OUTTURN**

**The Council has benefited from some one-off windfalls which have allowed a Special Reserve of £1.9M to be set up to fund the up-front costs of achieving savings.**

- 4.1 In 2009/10 the Council managed to keep its spending £1.9M below budget, predominantly due to a high Housing and Planning Delivery grant settlement (£0.6M extra) and a one-off VAT refund (£0.7M). This saving was placed in a Special Reserve to meet the up-front costs of making savings, including the costs of redundancy in line with the updated policy and schemes on which the Employment Panel is consulting the staff side. £3.7M was taken from general reserves to fund spending last year. At 1st April 2010 Revenue Reserves stood at £15.9M.
- 4.2 Capital expenditure was £6.2M lower than budgeted due to savings of £0.8M and timing changes of £5.4M. Most of this was anticipated in the MTP leaving an extra £2M to be deferred to the current year. This results in some interest and MRP (provision for repaying debt) savings for 2010/11.

#### **5 CHANGES TO FUTURE NET SPENDING**

**The impact of changes from the approved forecasts due to inflation, interest rates etc. is modest.**

- 5.1 At this initial stage of the MTP process the changes to net spending are limited in number. They include:
- ◆ revisions to interest rates and the amounts that interest is earned on due to last year's outturn and this year's forecast. Further refinements to the forecasting model have been made to improve accuracy in this area.
  - ◆ inflation adjustments. It has been assumed that changes will be made to the Local Government Pension Scheme such that no further increases in employer's contributions are required after 2014/15. Further changes will be necessary once we get the actuary's revaluation of the scheme towards the end of this calendar year. The previous government proposed a NI increase from April 2011 but the new government is proposing to introduce some changes to the thresholds to reduce the impact. Until the thresholds have emerged it is impossible to forecast the reduction in impact as it will vary with the profile of salary levels within any organisation.
  - ◆ some deferment of capital expenditure.
  - ◆ removal of concessionary fares from April 2011 which is offset by reduced Government Grant (see para. 6 below).
  - ◆ removal of assumption that an extra £250k of specific grants will be received each year due to the cut back in government grants that has already taken place.
  - ◆ introduction of a much more detailed calculation of the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) (statutory provision for repaying

debt). This has resulted in some increases but because of the basis chosen this is significantly off-set by reduced interest costs. Guidance requires formal approval of this basis every year and Annex C provides the explanation of the basis agreed and used last year. This approach is still in the Council's best interests and is recommended for endorsement.

**5.2** The following table shows the variations due to these items:

<b>VARIATIONS</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>
	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>	<b>£000</b>
Interest and Loan repayments	-371	-200	-140	-53	184	387	532	673
Inflation	83	162	258	347	-25	-159	-272	-270
Concessionary Fares	-740	-740	-740	-740	-740	-740	-740	-740
Provision for extra grants removed	250	250	250	250	250	250	250	250
Other Adjustments	407	15	15	15	15	0	0	0
	<b>-370</b>	<b>-513</b>	<b>-357</b>	<b>-182</b>	<b>-316</b>	<b>-262</b>	<b>-230</b>	<b>-87</b>

Based on the 'Government Preference' Council Tax option described in para. 9.4 below. The interest figure and inflation figures will vary for other options due to variations in the speed with which reserves are used and savings requirements due to conversion to current prices.

## **6 GOVERNMENT GRANT**

**Government General Grant will reduce in cash terms for the next few years and the forecast has been based on a 25% cut spread over 5 years. This and some losses from formula changes would result in a loss of £3.3M per year by 2014/15.**

- 6.1 In December 2007 the Government introduced three year grant settlements to give greater planning certainty for local authorities. They kept to this commitment despite the economy being in a difficult position by last autumn when the 3rd year's allocation was confirmed with no changes. There are rumours that this year's announcement may only be for two years.
- 6.2 It is also now clear that the Government intends to reduce public spending and figures of 25%, or even 40%, in cash terms are being suggested. This contrasts with last year's assumption in the MTP that there would be a real terms cut because but no actual cash reduction over the next three years.
- 6.3 It is also expected that District Councils may lose out in the distribution mechanism of this reduced total because of the perceived priorities of Education and Social Services. However, in order to not be too pessimistic at this stage, it has been assumed that grant will fall at 5% per year in cash terms for 5 years.
- 6.4 There are also likely to be changes to the allocation formula and the Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG) have distributed a range of exemplifications indicating possible impacts. The most significant change is the transfer of concessionary fares to County



Councils in April but it appears that the exemplifications on this may have an error. For the purpose of this forecast it has therefore been assumed that the concessionary fares impact will be neutral i.e. the loss of grant will equal the saving in expenditure. This may prove to be optimistic.

- 6.5 There may well still be some form of maximum loss of grant to protect the most significantly affected authorities and, because this will have to be funded by the other authorities, the forecast is based on us still not receiving all of the withheld grant that the Council was entitled to in 2010/11.
- 6.6 The Government are consulting on a new grant to reward Councils that support housing development. It would be based on awarding a grant equivalent to the Council Tax on the new houses for 6 years. It is expected that it will not be new money but top-sliced off of general grant. If 550 extra homes were achieved every year, the grant could grow to about £360k per year after 6 years, assuming it is just the District element of the tax, but it would need to be offset by a share of the reduction in general grant. Whilst we would expect to gain it is premature to model the likely impact until there is more clarity about whether it relates to just the District element of the Council Tax, the expected national scale to judge the offsetting RSG loss and the date it will be introduced. It will be built into the MTP as soon as clarification emerges. Its exclusion at this stage also mitigates the potential downside from a loss relating to the concessionary fares transfer and the possibility of reductions in excess of 25%.
- 6.7 The following table compares this forecast's assumptions with those in the approved MTP:

GRANT* FUNDING	Budget	MTP				FORECAST			
	10/11 £M	11/12 £M	12/13 £M	13/14 £M	14/15 £M	15/16 £M	16/17 £M	17/18 £M	18/19 £M
<b>Current Approved MTP</b>									
2010/11 True Grant	13.4	13.4							
Less Concessionary Fares ##	0.0	-0.7							
Net	13.4	12.6							
<b>Forecast change %</b>		0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%
Forecast True Grant		12.6	12.6	12.6	12.9	13.3	13.6	13.9	14.3
Withheld	-0.4	-0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Grant Receivable</b>	<b>12.9</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>12.6</b>	<b>12.6</b>	<b>12.9</b>	<b>13.3</b>	<b>13.6</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>14.3</b>
<b>This Forecast</b>									
2010/11 True Grant	13.4	13.4							
Less Concessionary Fares ##	0.0	-0.7							
Less Formula Changes		-0.1							
Net	13.4	12.5							
<b>Forecast change %</b>		-5.00%	-5.00%	-5.00%	-5.00%	-5.00%	2.50%	2.50%	2.50%
Forecast True Grant		11.9	11.3	10.7	10.2	9.7	9.9	10.2	10.4
Withheld	-0.4	-0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Grant Receivable</b>	<b>12.9</b>	<b>11.7</b>	<b>11.0</b>	<b>10.3</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>10.7</b>
<b>Reduction this time</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>-0.7</b>	<b>-1.3</b>	<b>-1.9</b>	<b>-2.8</b>	<b>-3.6</b>	<b>-3.7</b>	<b>-3.8</b>	<b>-3.9</b>

\*Grant includes Revenue Support Grant and NNDR which are in aggregate distributed in line with the grant formula.

## Loss of RSG assumed to equal reduction in expenditure so neutral overall.

## 7 CAPITAL

In recent years the Council has maintained a significant capital programme. However as a result of the emerging financial pressures and the conclusion of the Pathfinder House and Depot projects the capital programme is now much diminished. The table below shows the value of the capital programme and that whilst it is currently forecast to fall to around £5m p.a., borrowing will accumulate and the consequent impact of interest and repayment on the revenue budget will continue to rise.

<b>Borrowing Costs</b>	<b>2010/11 £000</b>	<b>2011/12 £000</b>	<b>2012/13 £000</b>	<b>2013/14 £000</b>	<b>2014/15 £000</b>
Forecast Capital Spending	9,079	10,842	4,062	5,540	5,202
Accumulated "Borrowing" EOY (net of MRP)	19,663	29,701	32,619	36,884	40,450
Net Interest and Borrowing Costs					
- total	-58	358	1,173	1,621	2,155
- as % of total net revenue spending	0%	2%	5%	8%	11%

## 8 FORECAST GAP IN FUNDING

Based on the changes explained above, and assuming a 2.5% annual increase in Council Tax from 2012 the forecast gap in our revenue account is as follows.

<b>SHORTFALL</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>MTP</b>			
	<b>10/11 £M</b>	<b>11/12 £M</b>	<b>12/13 £M</b>	<b>13/14 £M</b>	<b>14/15 £M</b>
Net Spending before savings	24.7	24.3	25.2	26.1	27.3
Funded by:					
Government support	-12.9	-11.9	-11.3	-10.7	-10.2
Council Tax	-7.2	-7.3	-7.6	-8.0	-8.5
<b>SHORTFALL</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>8.6</b>

Previous forecasts already predicted a substantial funding gap for 2011/2 and beyond. This updated forecast has increased the gap largely due to the predicted fall in central government funding. Whilst this reduction in funding is not yet certain, the gap in our funding is unlikely to be more than £1m higher or lower than currently predicted.

## 9 FUNDING OPTIONS

- 9.1 The Council currently raises £7.2m through Council Tax by charging the average band D tax payer £124.17. It is the 20th lowest of the 201 District Councils which have an average of £168 and a maximum of £313.

9.2 Recent policy has been to keep the annual Council Tax increase under the predicted capping level. This has previously been forecast at 5% but fell to 4.5% last year. The change in government and consequent change in capping arrangements may give this Council greater scope to determine its preferred level of taxation after consultation with the public. For each £10 rise in Council Tax the savings target would reduce by £0.6M.

9.3 **Council Tax Constraints**

The Council has a very low Council Tax and this is a fundamental cause of its difficult financial situation. Previous Governments, as part of their economic policy, have restricted Council Tax rises by capping rather than relying on local decision-making and accountability. Thus any authority with a low council tax was effectively caught in a “poverty trap” and could not move towards the average position.

The new Government does not support capping and is proposing to replace it with a scheme where Councils that seek a percentage increase of more than a government predetermined amount (subject to de minimis cash increase levels) must obtain local support through a referendum. This cannot be introduced in time for this year’s Council Tax setting.

There have been Government proposals that there should be no Council Tax increases in 2011/12 or 2012/13 with the possibility of extra government support of up to the equivalent of a 2.5% tax rise in the first year.

9.4 **Council Tax Options**

**Whilst the Members can set Council Tax at any particular level, three scenarios have been identified to stimulate the debate on the level of increase.**

<b>Government preference:</b> This is based on no increase next year, 2.5% in 2012/13 and then 5% per year for the rest of the plan period. It assumes we will get extra funding from the Government next year equivalent to a 2.5% rise and results in a Council Tax level of £4.40 per week (£229 per year) in 2024/25.	
<b>Council Tax</b>	<b>Savings still required</b>
No increase in 2011 followed by the maximum increase permitted without requiring a referendum in all subsequent years	£2m p.a. for each of the next 4 years.

<b>Moving to District Council Average:</b> This assumes the Council Tax is increased to the current year’s average next year (an 84p per week rise) and then future increases are constrained to 2.5% per year. It also results in a tax level £4.45 per week (£232) in 2024/25.	
<b>Council Tax</b>	<b>Savings still required</b>
Immediate increase to the national average, but limited rises thereafter.	£2m of savings required for 2011/2, followed by a further £1m in each of the following three years

<b>Slower increase:</b> Based on a 10% rise next year followed by a rise of about 4.1% per year thereafter. This also results in a level of £4.45 per week (£232) in 2024/25.	
<b>Council Tax</b>	<b>Savings still required</b>
£1 per month increase in 2011 followed by 50p per month in subsequent years.	£2m of savings in 2011/2 followed by a further £1.5m in each of the subsequent years.

Annex A provides additional information for each of the above options and Annex B shows the sensitivity of these forecasts to variations in key assumptions.

## 9.5 Impact on Savings Requirements

The November draft budget/MTP report will provide a forecast for the level of savings that can be achieved through efficiencies, including staffing efficiencies, however it is unrealistic to believe that savings of these magnitude can be achieved through efficiencies alone. Members are invited to consider their views on the range of Council Tax increases and hence the extent to which each service should be cut.

## 10 PROPOSED ACTIONS AND TIMESCALE FOR AGREEING SAVINGS

10.1 It is clear that whatever approach the Council takes to taxation, a significant level of savings must be made. The extent of savings required mean that reductions in staffing are inevitable. With this in mind a voluntary redundancy scheme has already been proposed. Compulsory redundancies are most likely to also be required although the extent will depend upon the balance of tax rises and expenditure reductions determined by Members.

10.2 An indication of key dates in the process is shown below:

<b>September</b>	
9	Forecast considered by Overview & Scrutiny
16	Forecast considered by Cabinet
Mid to late	<b><i>COMT forecasts the items and value to be achieved from efficiency saving Consideration of consultation results.</i></b>
27	<b><i>Employment Panel adopt updated Redundancy Policy and agree Voluntary Redundancy scheme.</i></b>
28	<b><i>Voluntary Redundancy scheme advertised to staff.</i></b>
29	Forecast considered by Council
<b>October</b>	
12	<b><i>Voluntary Redundancy scheme closes for senior staff.</i></b>
20	Comprehensive Spending Review Announcement
<b>November</b>	
11	Draft Budget/MTP considered by Overview & Scrutiny
18	Draft Budget/MTP considered by Cabinet
<b>December</b>	
Early	Grant announcement
15	Draft Budget/MTP considered by Council

<b>January</b>	
8	<i>Voluntary Redundancy scheme closes for other staff.</i>
<b>February</b>	
10	Final Budget/MTP considered by Overview & Scrutiny
17	Final Budget/MTP considered by Cabinet
23	Final Budget/MTP considered by Council
<b>March</b>	
31	<i>Decisions made on Voluntary Redundancy requests.</i>

## 11 CONCLUSIONS

- 11.1 Whilst there remains a number of uncertainties, such as the level of reduction in government funding, the size of the Council's current deficit in relation to our now limited revenue reserves and low Council Tax will require the Council to make sizable reductions in the scale of its spending. The level of cuts can be reduced but not eliminated by raising Council Tax.
- 11.2 The results of the consultation exercises will allow the Cabinet to propose an approach to Council Tax increases and the resultant nature and phasing of service reductions.
- 11.3 The next 5 months are therefore critical to the Council's future levels of service delivery in many of its services.
- 11.4 Whatever decisions are taken the Council must make plans to achieve a minimum of £2M of reductions in its net costs next year and also determine where subsequent cuts shall be made.
- 11.5 Cabinet are required to approve the basis for calculating the Minimum Revenue Provision each year. The recommended basis is shown at Annex C.

## 12 RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Cabinet is requested to:**

**Approve** the annuity basis for the calculation of Minimum Revenue Provision as outlined in Annex C.

**Recommend** this report to Council and highlight the challenges that need to be addressed over the coming five months.

## ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT 1985

### Source Documents:

1. Working papers in Financial Services
2. Financial Forecast (September 2009), 2009/10 Outturn, 2010/11 Revenue Budget and the 2011/15 MTP

**Contact Officer:** Steve Couper, Head of Financial Services  
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## COUNCIL TAX SCENARIOS

## OPTION Government Preferred

	Budget	MTP				FORECAST			
	10/11 £M	11/12 £M	12/13 £M	13/14 £M	14/15 £M	15/16 £M	16/17 £M	17/18 £M	18/19 £M
Net Spending before savings	24.7	24.3	25.2	26.1	27.3	28.2	29.3	30.4	31.6
<b>Required Savings</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>-1.9</b>	<b>-3.8</b>	<b>-5.7</b>	<b>-7.6</b>	<b>-9.5</b>	<b>-9.9</b>	<b>-10.1</b>	<b>-10.5</b>
<b>Net Spending after savings</b>	<b>24.7</b>	<b>22.4</b>	<b>21.4</b>	<b>20.4</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>18.7</b>	<b>19.4</b>	<b>20.3</b>	<b>21.1</b>
<b>Funded by:</b>									
Government support	-12.9	-11.9	-11.3	-10.7	-10.2	-9.7	-9.9	-10.2	-10.4
Council Tax	-7.2	-7.3	-7.6	-8.0	-8.5	-9.0	-9.5	-10.1	-10.7
<b>SHORTFALL</b>	<b>-4.5</b>	<b>-3.2</b>	<b>-2.5</b>	<b>-1.7</b>	<b>-1.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
<b>Met from Reserves</b>									
<b>Council Tax</b>	<b>£124.17</b>	<b>£124.17</b>	<b>£127.27</b>	<b>£133.64</b>	<b>£140.32</b>	<b>£147.34</b>	<b>£154.70</b>	<b>£162.44</b>	<b>£170.56</b>
Remaining reserves end of year	11.4	8.2	5.7	4.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0

## OPTION District Average

	Budget	MTP				FORECAST			
	10/11 £M	11/12 £M	12/13 £M	13/14 £M	14/15 £M	15/16 £M	16/17 £M	17/18 £M	18/19 £M
Net Spending before savings	24.7	24.3	25.2	26.1	27.5	28.7	30.0	31.0	32.2
<b>Required Savings</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>-1.9</b>	<b>-2.9</b>	<b>-3.9</b>	<b>-4.9</b>	<b>-5.9</b>	<b>-6.9</b>	<b>-7.9</b>	<b>-8.9</b>
<b>Net Spending after savings</b>	<b>24.7</b>	<b>22.4</b>	<b>22.3</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>22.6</b>	<b>22.8</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>23.3</b>
<b>Funded by:</b>									
Government support	-12.9	-11.7	-11.3	-10.7	-10.2	-9.7	-9.9	-10.2	-10.4
Council Tax	-7.2	-9.9	-10.3	-10.6	-11.0	-11.3	-11.7	-12.1	-12.5
<b>SHORTFALL</b>	<b>-4.5</b>	<b>-0.8</b>	<b>-0.7</b>	<b>-0.9</b>	<b>-1.4</b>	<b>-1.8</b>	<b>-1.5</b>	<b>-0.9</b>	<b>-0.4</b>
<b>Met from Reserves</b>									
<b>Council Tax</b>	<b>£124.17</b>	<b>£168.00</b>	<b>£172.20</b>	<b>£176.51</b>	<b>£180.92</b>	<b>£185.44</b>	<b>£190.08</b>	<b>£194.83</b>	<b>£199.70</b>
Remaining reserves end of year	11.4	10.6	9.9	9.0	7.6	5.8	4.2	3.4	3.0

## OPTION Slower Increase

	Budget	MTP				FORECAST			
	10/11 £M	11/12 £M	12/13 £M	13/14 £M	14/15 £M	15/16 £M	16/17 £M	17/18 £M	18/19 £M
Net Spending before savings	24.7	24.3	25.2	26.1	27.4	28.4	29.5	30.5	31.8
<b>Met from Savings</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>-1.9</b>	<b>-3.4</b>	<b>-5.0</b>	<b>-6.6</b>	<b>-8.0</b>	<b>-9.3</b>	<b>-9.6</b>	<b>-10.0</b>
<b>Net Spending after savings</b>	<b>24.7</b>	<b>22.4</b>	<b>21.8</b>	<b>21.1</b>	<b>20.8</b>	<b>20.4</b>	<b>20.2</b>	<b>20.9</b>	<b>21.8</b>
<b>Funded by:</b>									
Government support	-12.9	-11.7	-11.3	-10.7	-10.2	-9.7	-9.9	-10.2	-10.4
Council Tax	-7.2	-8.1	-8.5	-8.9	-9.3	-9.8	-10.3	-10.8	-11.3
<b>SHORTFALL</b>	<b>-4.5</b>	<b>-2.6</b>	<b>-2.0</b>	<b>-1.5</b>	<b>-1.3</b>	<b>-0.9</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
<b>Met from Reserves</b>									
<b>Council Tax</b>	<b>£124.17</b>	<b>£136.59</b>	<b>£142.25</b>	<b>£148.14</b>	<b>£154.29</b>	<b>£160.68</b>	<b>£167.34</b>	<b>£174.28</b>	<b>£181.50</b>
Remaining reserves end of year	11.4	8.7	6.7	5.2	3.9	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0

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## FINANCIAL PLAN - SENSITIVITY AND RISKS

The financial forecast model has been used to demonstrate the impact that the following variations would result in. The values indicate the annual amount that would need to be added or deducted from the savings target at that time, ***assuming that any intermediate years had been covered by temporary savings.***

	Extra savings needed (+)	
	##:	
	2015/16 £M	2024/25 £M
0.5% less pay award in 2011/12 and 2012/13	-0.3	-0.4
0.5% extra pay award every year	+0.7	+3.0
2% extra reduction in Government Grant per year for 5 years (35% cut rather than 25% cut)	+1.0	+1.2
5% loss in Leisure Centre fees and charges	+0.3	+0.4
0.85% increase in spending every year to cover cost of increased population. There is no provision for demographic growth in the forecast.	+0.9	+3.4
Pension Fund contributions increase after 2014/15 at 1% every year.	+0.2	+2.7

## Outturn prices for relevant year.

Inflation, other than pay, is fairly neutral as long as it is possible to quickly increase fees and charges in line with it.

### Other Potential Variations

***(items more likely to be favourable are in bold italics)***

- ◆ A net loss through changes to the grant formula when Concessionary Fares transfer to the County in April.
- ◆ ***Introduction of reward grant for housing growth.***
- ◆ ***NI increase impact reduced by changes to thresholds.***
- ◆ Increase in interest rates.
- ◆ Future capital programmes have items with shorter asset lives resulting in higher revenue cost for repaying borrowing.
- ◆ Most budgets are based on 97.5% of salary due to the expectation of savings from staff turnover. A temporary adjustment was made to reduce this in last year's MTP until 2013/14. Given that turnover will reduce because of significant cuts in the public service the salary budget may have to become more nearly fully funded.
- ◆ ***Remote possibility of further one-off VAT refunds or receiving compound rather than simple interest on these and the refunds already agreed.***
- ◆ The potential for costs relating to "orphan" contaminated land sites.
- ◆ A "double dip" to the recession.
- ◆ Difficulty delivering the savings already identified or the spending targets inherent in this plan.
- ◆ High priority service developments not already in the MTP and any unavoidable spending requirements not referred to in this report emerging.
- ◆ Repayment of past land charge fees.

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## ANNUAL MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY 2010/11

When a Council finances capital expenditure from borrowing, the resulting costs are charged to the Council Taxpayers over the whole life of the asset so that those who benefit from the asset share the cost. There are two elements to the cost – the interest on the borrowing is charged in the year it is payable, whilst the money to repay the sum borrowed is charged as a “minimum revenue provision” (MRP) to the revenue account each year, starting with the year after the borrowing takes place. Once money is in the MRP it can only be used for repaying borrowing.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has issued guidance on what constitutes prudent provision and this requires the Council to determine an approach and publish this each year.

There are three options for the calculation of the MRP.

### **Equal annual installments**

This is the easiest and simplest approach but the combination of the equal installments of principal and the reducing interest makes the cost high to start with but then reducing year by year.

### **Depreciation basis**

The Depreciation basis is the most complex. It starts by mirroring the equal annual installments method but also requires adjustments every time the life of an asset is varied.

### **Annuity basis**

By setting the rate for the annuity equal to the expected long term borrowing rate the cost is the same for each year like a conventional mortgage. It is only marginally more work than the equal installments approach. This is the basis agreed for 2009/10.

**The Annuity basis is, by far, the most equitable approach and it is therefore proposed that it continues to be the Council's MRP policy.**

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## **Democratic Structure Working Group**

### **Report of the Working Group**

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#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Democratic Structure Working Group met on Tuesday, 6th July 2010 to consider the membership of Employment Panel, a matter which had been deferred by the Council when considering the Working Group's initial proposals relating to the democratic structure review. The Working Group also considered a proposal to introduce the title of Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen to past Members of the Council and Honorary Freemen and Freewomen to local citizens.
- 1.2 Councillors Mrs M Banerjee, K J Churchill (Chairman), S J Criswell, G S E Thorpe and R G Tuplin were present at the meeting.

#### **2. EMPLOYMENT PANEL AND EMPLOYEE LIAISON ADVISORY GROUP (ELAG)**

- 2.1 In considering the membership of the Employment Panel, the Working Group was reminded that as the terms and conditions of employees and other employee related issues were defined as not being an executive function of the Council, the only means of addressing such matters was either in full Council or by delegating the function to a committee or an Officer. At present, the Employment Panel comprised 8 Members, whom one was a Cabinet Member and was politically proportionate.
- 2.2 In recognising the need for there to be an appropriate forum in which to deal with employment issues, the Working Group concurred with its original suggestion that the present arrangements were working satisfactorily and that any alternative approaches would not be suitable, given that it would be inappropriate for staffing matters to be discussed at full Council meetings or for issues such as the negotiation of an annual salary award to be delegated to Officers. It was therefore proposed that no change should be made to the terms of reference, composition, etc of the Employment Panel.
- 2.3 In noting reservations had been made by the Employment Panel in recent months with regard to the scheduling and membership of ELAG, the Working Group acknowledged that the present arrangements were cumbersome and offered little opportunity for constructive dialogue between Members and employees in advance of Employment Panel meetings.

- 2.4 Having been acquainted with revised terms of reference for ELAG which had been approved at its May 2010 meeting, Members were advised that the Group had increased the employee side representation from 8 to a maximum of 15. Additionally, Members were advised of a recent decision to increase representation on the Group from 4 to 8 Members as it had been felt at the time that it was inappropriate for only half of the membership of the Panel to attend ELAG. However, it was reported that since the new arrangements came into effect, this has further added to the duplication of business being discussed at meetings.
- 2.5 In discussing a way forward, Members suggested that in terms of the membership of ELAG, 4 Members was regarded as being sufficient, irrespective of the number of employee side representatives. With regard to the scheduling of meetings, Members concurred with a suggestion that ELAG meetings should be held approximately 4 weeks before the Employment Panel which would enable issues to be discussed in advance of Panel meetings and allow employees a better opportunity to contribute towards the formulation of any employment related reports.
- 2.6 **The Working Group therefore recommends that no change be made to the terms of reference, composition, etc of the Employment Panel and that with effect from 1st December 2010 the Employee Liaison Advisory Group comprises 4 Members of the Employment Panel, with meetings of ELAG being held approximately 4 weeks before meetings of the Employment Panel.**
3. **HONORARY ALDERMEN AND ALDERWOMEN & HONORARY FREEMEN AND FREEWOMEN**
- 3.1 Following recent changes introduced by The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, the Working Group considered the introduction of the title Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen to past Members of the Council and Honorary Freemen and Freewomen to local citizens. Although the ability to confer the title of Honorary Alderman has existed for some time, the recent change reflects a recommendation by the Councillors Commission to limit the length of service of Councillors and Leaders/Mayors, thereby encouraging new persons to stand for election. One of a range of options to make it easier for Councillors to stand down was a public recognition of past service. Although the recommendation regarding a maximum length of service was not pursued by the previous Government, the promotion of a public recognition of past service was followed up in a subsequent White Paper.
- 3.2 The title of Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen can be conferred on persons who have, in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to the Council as past Members of the authority. It can only be conferred after a person has left the Council. If that person subsequently is re-elected to the Council, he or she is no longer

entitled to be addressed as an Alderman or Alderwoman, nor can they take part in any civic ceremonies in that capacity.

- 3.3 An Honorary Alderman or Alderwoman can attend and take part in such civic ceremonies as the Council may from time to time decide but does not have the right to attend meetings of the Council, other than as a member of the public, nor to receive any financial allowances.
- 3.4 The conferment of the title would be a very public way of recognising the contribution of a former Member to public life. This could be for long service (service with pre-reorganisation authorities before 1974 also would apply), for leadership or chairmanship or for any significant act on behalf of the Council. The honorary title grants no specific rights to an individual, other than to be able to use the title and to attend civic ceremonies by invitation of the Council. The latter are limited in number in Huntingdonshire, but could include the Chairman's Ball, Reception, Civic Carol Service, etc. to which former Chairmen are usually invited at the moment.
- 3.5 The Working Group has expressed its support for the proposal and suggests that the titles of Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen be introduced by the Council. In discussing the criteria to be established to assess the qualifying length of service, the Working Group felt that four terms of office might be appropriate which would equate to a period of say 15 years to allow for by-elections. The Working Group recognised that the honour should be used sparingly. In the context of the Council's current membership, only 3 Councillors currently have attained this length of service, with a further 2 having achieved 14 years.
- 3.6 The option of offering recognition for length of service for chairmanship and leadership has also been discussed but the Working Group felt that such criteria should not be set to avoid any complexity with the scheme. This would not preclude the Council from honouring a retired Member in exceptional circumstances on an ad hoc basis where this was considered appropriate.
- 3.7 The Working Group has also considered whether the titles should be awarded to Councillors who have already left the authority. On balance, the Working Group decided against retrospective awards, having been informed that 5 former Members had in excess of 20 years service each with probably more being eligible if the term was set at 15 years.
- 3.8 **The Working Group therefore recommends that the titles of Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Alderwoman be introduced for current and future Members of the Council who cumulatively have served a minimum of 15 years as an elected Councillor on the District Council.**
- 3.9 With regard to the idea of Honorary Freemen and Freewomen, the Council could confer the honours on such persons of distinction who

have, in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent public service in Huntingdonshire. The criteria for admission would need to be reasonably objective, although clearly some subjectivity would be involved in assessing the eligibility of the person or service. Such titles are distinct from the hereditary rights of other freemen and freewomen that derive from a charter and can be passed on to dependents, such as the Huntingdon Freemen. As with Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen, the same principles apply in that there is no right for Honorary Freemen and Freewomen to attend meetings of the Council or receive any financial allowances. **In the absence of any formal recognition currently for the Council to demonstrate its appreciation publicly to persons who have contributed to public life or the community in Huntingdonshire, the Working Group therefore recommends the introduction of Honorary Freeman and Honorary Freewoman titles.**

- 3.10 A resolution to confer the title of Honorary Alderman and Alderwoman and Honorary Freeman and Freewoman must be passed by not less than two-thirds of the Members voting at a special meeting of the Council specifically convened for that purpose. This must be the only item on the agenda but such a meeting could be convened either immediately before or after another scheduled Council meeting. To enable this to happen effectively, it is suggested that a cross party group or the leaders of the political parties would need to agree informally the identification of suitable individuals to ensure the necessary two-thirds majority at the specially convened meeting of the Council. **The Working Group suggests that the Council Programme meeting, which was introduced as part of the Working's Group's initial proposals for the democratic structure review and comprises representatives of all political parties, would currently serve this purpose and therefore recommends accordingly.**
- 3.11 The legislation makes provision for the Council to spend such reasonable sum as it thinks fit for the purpose of presenting an address or a casket containing an address to a person on whom a title is conferred. The Working Group has discussed the form of memento to be awarded to qualifying individuals. Formal addresses and caskets produced by companies supplying civic regalia are expensive, but the Working Group are conscious of the need to avoid what could be conceived as excessive expenditure in the current financial climate. Although such awards would not occur frequently if the system is introduced and would need to be measured against the contribution to public life that past Members and individuals have made to the authority and the District, **the Working Group recommends that a more modest address or memento should be awarded which can be produced in house by the authority.**

#### **4. REVIEW OF DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE - IMPLEMENTATION**

- 4.1 The Working Group is currently in the process of reviewing the changes to the democratic structure since its implementation in May 2009. Members' views on the changes have already been sought via



an electronic survey conducted over the August period. The Working Group has met on two occasions in September to consider the feedback received, the findings of which will be submitted to the Council's October meeting.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 At the request of the Council, the Working Group has undertaken a review of the membership of the Employment Panel, whilst also taking into account the present arrangements in respect of Panel Members meeting with Employee Side representatives. Whilst the Working Group has expressed their satisfaction with the membership of the Employment Panel, Members have expressed their opinion that some changes would be required in respect of the membership and scheduling of ELAG meetings.
- 5.2 Additionally, the Working Group proposes the introduction of honorary titles which would create a very public recognition of the contribution that recipients have played in public service in Huntingdonshire whilst also helping to promote the profile of the District.

The Working Group therefore

### **RECOMMENDS**

- (a) that no change be made be made to the terms of reference, composition, etc of the Employment Panel;**
- (b) that with effect from 1st December 2010, the Employee Liaison Advisory Group comprises 4 Members of the Employment Panel, with meetings of ELAG being held approximately 4 weeks before meetings of the Employment Panel;**
- (c) that the titles of Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Alderwomen be introduced for current and future Members of the Council who cumulatively have served a minimum of 15 years as an elected Councillor on the District Council;**
- (d) that, in the absence of any formal recognition currently for the Council to demonstrate its appreciation publicly to persons who have contributed to public life or the community in Huntingdonshire, the titles of Honorary Freemen and Honorary Freewoman be introduced by the Council;**
- (e) that the Council Programme meeting, which was introduced as part of the Working's Group's initial proposals for the democratic structure review and comprises representatives of all political parties, be responsible for the identification of suitable**

**individuals to the honorary titles referred to in recommendations (c) and (d) above; and**

- (f) that a modest address or memento be awarded to qualifying individuals of honorary titles and produced in house by the authority.**

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Agenda and Reports of the Democratic Structure Working Group held on 6th July 2010.

**Contact Officer:** Miss H Ali, Democratic Services Officer  
☎ (01480) 388006

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## **Format of the Council's Executive - The Choice of Executive Leader or Elected Mayor**

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

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#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 A review of the democratic structure of the Council was undertaken by a working party chaired by Councillor K J Churchill in the autumn of 2008 which reported to the Council in April 2009. Most of the recommendations were determined at that meeting, although some were deferred until the June meeting of the Council. A review of the changes implemented is currently underway and the working party will be reporting to a meeting of the Council to be held on 3rd November 2010.
- 1.2 One aspect of the working party's review concerned the choice of executive for the District Council with legislative change having narrowed the choice of executive to two – an executive leader or an elected mayor – with the change being required by May 2011. The Council agreed to consult on the options with a view to an early implementation of the final choice. Further examination of the legislation before the consultation took place however resulted in an acknowledgement that the change could not be implemented before May 2011, with a final decision due by the end of December 2010. As a result, the consultation exercise was delayed until this summer with a closing date of 30th July.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to inform the Council of the result of the consultation and to invite Members to determine the choice of executive for Huntingdonshire.

#### **2. CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS**

- 2.1 Before turning to the outcome of the consultation, it may be useful to explain the background to the choices available and the implications of the legislative change.
- 2.2 The Council currently operates under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000 which requires the Council to have one of three types of executive – an elected mayor and cabinet, an elected mayor and council manager, or a leader and cabinet. Under the latter, the cabinet is chosen either by the leader (referred to as the 'strong leader' model) or by the Council (the 'weak leader' model). The Council operated the latter, until the annual meeting in May 2010

when a change was made to the strong leader model. Inclusive of the mayor or leader, a cabinet must have a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 10 councillors.

- 2.3 The vast majority of councils operate under the leader and cabinet model. Despite consistent Government support for directly elected mayors, there are only 12 currently throughout the country. Only one authority operated the mayor and manager model but has reverted back to a leader and cabinet. If 5% of the electorate sign a petition in favour of an elected mayor, the Council must hold a referendum to obtain the public's reaction. In the event of a majority voting in favour of a mayoral system at the referendum, the Council must introduce that form of administration. Once a mayoral system had been introduced, it was not possible, prior to the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, for an authority to return to a leader and cabinet system.

### **3. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH ACT 2007**

- 3.1 The 2007 Act has narrowed the choice of executive arrangements open to local authorities to -
- ◆ an elected mayor and cabinet appointed by him, or
  - ◆ an executive leader appointed by the Council from amongst its membership and a cabinet appointed by that leader.
- 3.2 In either case the cabinet still must comprise between 2 and 10 councillors inclusive of the mayor or executive leader.
- 3.3 The Act has introduced significant changes to the leader and cabinet system which are explained in the following paragraphs.
- 3.4 The executive leader must be elected at the first annual meeting of the Council following the transition to the new executive leader and cabinet executive model in May 2011. He or she holds office until the annual meeting after his normal date of retirement as a councillor. In the case of an authority operating partial-council elections such as Huntingdonshire, that period could therefore be up to 4 years in length or such lesser period when the leader's term of office as a councillor comes to an end. If an executive leader would normally have ceased to be a councillor when his term of office comes to an end (because he has decided not to stand again or is not elected), he nevertheless will remain as executive leader and a councillor until the ensuing annual meeting when a new executive leader is appointed.
- 3.5 The Council can resolve to remove an executive leader from office at any time and appoint a replacement either when the executive leader is removed from office or at a later meeting.

- 3.6 The executive leader must appoint one of the members of the cabinet executive to be the deputy executive leader who shall serve for the same period of office as the executive leader, unless he resigns as either deputy executive leader or as a councillor in the interim or he is removed as deputy executive leader by the executive leader. The deputy executive leader will act in place of the executive leader if the latter position is vacant or the executive leader is unable to act. If both are unable to act or both positions are vacant, the cabinet must act in the place of the executive leader or can appoint a member of the cabinet to do so.
- 3.7 The Act effectively gives the executive leader the same powers as a mayor in terms of the discharge of the executive functions of the Council. The leader can discharge any of those functions himself or can arrange for them to be discharged by the cabinet, by a member of the cabinet, by a committee of the cabinet or by an officer. That choice is his and not the Council's. The Act enables the cabinet, a committee of the cabinet or an executive member to further delegate any executive power delegated to them to an officer but gives the leader a right of veto over any such further delegation.
- 3.8 The Council must decide which form of executive it wishes to operate by the end of the transitional period specified in the Act. In the case of district councils, a resolution to change the governance arrangements must be made no later than 31st December 2010 with the new arrangements coming into effect no later than the third day after the day of elections to the Council in May 2011. If a resolution is not passed by the due date, the Council must implement the executive leader and cabinet executive arrangements. The Council's existing arrangements remain in place until the new arrangements are implemented.
- 3.9 The Council can change governance arrangements subsequently only during a permitted resolution period which extends from the date of the annual meeting in 2014 until the end of that year and a similar period every 4 years thereafter. The change would come into effect on the third day after the day of election in 2015 and any fourth year thereafter. It is open now for an authority to move back from an elected mayor and cabinet system to an executive leader and cabinet executive system.
- 3.10 Before passing a resolution as to which new form of executive to adopt, the Council must take reasonable steps to consult the electorate and other interested parties. The Council must then draw up proposals for change in order to secure continuous improvement in the way in which the Council's functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Council had the discretion to make a decision on the choice of executive the subject of approval by a referendum but chose not to do so.
- 3.11 The change introduced by the Act does not affect the opportunity for the electorate to petition for the introduction of a mayor and cabinet

under the 2000 Act which would not follow the above timetable. However where a change to a mayoral system has been made as a result of a referendum, either as a result of a petition or by choice on the part of the authority, the Council cannot resolve to change governance arrangements again without another referendum being held. If a referendum is held as a result of a petition, another referendum cannot be held until a period of 10 years has elapsed.

#### **4. DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE WORKING PARTY**

4.1 The Council accepted a recommendation from the working party not to hold a referendum on the choice of executive on the basis that this would lengthen the timescale for the consultation exercise and there was thought to be little enthusiasm locally for an elected mayor to justify the cost of a referendum.

4.2 It was the view of the working party -

- ◆ that there was a lack of support nationally for the mayoral model,
- ◆ that the public consultation that was undertaken on the choice of executive in Huntingdonshire when the 2000 Act was implemented favoured the leader and cabinet model,
- ◆ that the County Council (which had to move to the new arrangements earlier in the statutory timescale) had adopted the executive leader model with effect from May 2009 in response to its public consultation on the choice,
- ◆ that there was an apparent lack of enthusiasm both in Huntingdonshire and elsewhere within Cambridgeshire for an elected mayor, and
- ◆ that the Council's existing leader and cabinet arrangements are understood and have been embedded in the organisation since their initial implementation.

4.3 The working party recognised that the mayoral system enables an individual person to become elected, potentially on the basis of a populist electoral campaign or a single contentious issue of concern, without the benefit of support from one of the political parties. This has the potential to lead to tensions between the mayor and elected councillors from whom the cabinet would be chosen and to consequential operational and practical difficulties in terms of working relationships. Members felt that there was little to be gained and potentially much to be lost if a mayoral system was introduced.

#### **5. THE CONSULTATION EXERCISE**

5.1 An extensive consultation exercise has been undertaken, commencing in mid May and with a closing date of 30th July.

5.2 An article was included in the June edition of District Council which is delivered to all households in Huntingdonshire. Information was included on the Council's website and letters sent to a range of

organisations, including town and parish councils, chambers of trade, town centre partnerships, Hunts Forum and other LSP partners. Flyers were distributed at the neighbourhood forums throughout Huntingdonshire in July and an item included on the agenda for the forum meetings, drawing attention to the consultation. The consultation exercise was reported in the local media.

5.3 A copy of an explanatory leaflet which was available on the website and which accompanied the consultation letter is attached as Annex A.

5.4 Subsequent to the start of the consultation, the coalition government has begun announcing their plans for alternative choices for the way in which local authorities take decisions, including 'super mayors' for the largest cities and the option of a return to the committee system which applied before 2000. The government recognises that, until such time as alternative forms of administration are approved in the forthcoming Localism Bill, authorities are required to comply with the timetable set by the 2007 Act. The Government has therefore asked that Councils do not incur any significant expenditure on the consultation exercise, especially in today's economic climate and that this need be no more than a small newspaper advertisement or article and notice on the website. The consultation exercise undertaken by the Council has therefore been more than sufficient under the circumstances.

## **6. OUTCOME OF THE CONSULTATION**

6.1 Few responses were received to the consultation exercise, notwithstanding an editorial by one of the local newspapers earlier in the year advocating the choice of an elected mayor for Huntingdonshire.

6.2 Twelve parish councils replied to say that they had resolved to support the choice of an executive leader, with one town council replying to say that its members had been unable to reach a consensus. Two parish councillors wrote separately to support an executive leader, as did one charitable organisation in the District. Four members of the public wrote in support of an executive leader and four in favour of an elected mayor.

6.3 The clear preference of those who responded therefore was for an executive leader.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

7.1 The government has indicated that it is committed to allowing councils to return to the committee system, should they wish, or have elected mayors. The government also intends to remove the necessity to elect a leader for four years. The changes will be contained in the Localism Bill which may mean that any change that the Council implements in May 2011 may be of short duration and may need to be changed again within a year or so.

- 7.2 Until the Bill is passed, the Council must operate within the existing legislation which requires a decision to be made on the choice of executive leader or elected mayor by the end of December 2010 for implementation in May 2011. It was the view of the Democratic Structure Working Party that the Council should move to an executive leader and this has been supported by the great majority of the comments received in response to the public consultation.

## **8. NEXT STAGE**

- 8.1 Having carried out the consultation exercise, the Council must draw up proposals for the change in executive arrangements which must include a timetable and details of transitional arrangements (if any). Copies of the proposals must be made available for inspection and must be advertised in one or more local newspapers. The proposals are set out in Annex B attached.
- 8.2 A resolution to change governance arrangements must be passed at a meeting of the Council specially convened for the purpose. Once a resolution has been passed, a document setting out the proposals must be made available for inspection and a notice published in one or more local newspapers.

## **9. RECOMMENDATION**

- 9.1 It is therefore

### **Recommended**

**that the Council approves the proposals for a change in governance arrangements in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 as set in Appendix B attached to this report.**



## LEADER OR MAYOR – THE CHOICE FOR HUNTINGDONSHIRE

The following questions and answers are intended to explain the main differences between the new types of executive which will be introduced in local authorities in England and Wales (other than small district and parish councils) and the decision which the council needs to make in choosing which system to adopt.

### **What's in the legislation?**

The Local Government Act 2000 swept away the old committee style of administration in county and larger district councils in England and Wales, replacing it with three types of executive –

- ◆ An elected mayor with a cabinet appointed by the mayor from among the elected councillors or
- ◆ An elected mayor with a council manager who is an officer of the council or
- ◆ A leader and cabinet comprising the councillors elected by the voters for that authority.

The role of the executive, irrespective of whichever form it takes, is to undertake most of the functions and responsibilities of the authority within a policy and budgetary framework adopted by the council as a whole. The principal exceptions are regulatory functions such as planning and licensing which continue to be dealt with by elected councillors.

### **Which system operates in Huntingdonshire now?**

Following public consultation when the Act came into force in 2002, the council has operated with a leader who is a councillor elected each year at the annual meeting by the council as a whole. Three councillors have been leader since that time.

The council also appoints a number of overview and scrutiny panels whose role it is to challenge the leader and cabinet in a constructive way and hold them to account for their decision making.

At any time, a petition signed by 5% of the electorate (currently 6,270 electors) can be submitted asking for a referendum to be held in Huntingdonshire on whether there should be an elected mayor. The result of the referendum is binding on the council.

### **Why consult on change now?**

Another piece of legislation, the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, has reduced the choice of executive to two –

- ◆ An elected mayor with a cabinet appointed by the mayor from among the elected councillors, or
- ◆ An executive leader who is a councillor and who is elected to that position by the other councillors. The executive leader then appoints a cabinet from those councillors.

All authorities (with the exception of smaller districts and parishes) must move to one or other of the new types of executive. In the case of county councils, the change had to be made by May 2009 and Cambridgeshire County Council already has adopted the executive leader and cabinet model. In the case of district councils such as Huntingdonshire, the change must be implemented by May 2011.

Before adopting a new form of executive, the council must consult locally before drawing up proposals to implement the new arrangements. A decision on which form of executive to adopt must be made at a full meeting of the council convened for that purpose by the end of December this year.

### **What's the difference between an executive leader and an elected mayor?**

The principal difference is the way in which they are elected and can be removed from office.

An executive leader would be a councillor who has already been elected for one of the wards in Huntingdonshire. The executive leader is then elected at an annual meeting of the council by the other councillors for a four year period or until his term of office as a councillor comes to a close, whichever is the shorter. The leader then appoints up to nine councillors to form a cabinet. At any time during that four year term, the leader can resign or be removed from office by the council. If that happens, the council will elect another leader for a new term of four years or until he ceases to be a councillor.

By contrast, an elected mayor is directly elected at a district-wide election which may or may not be held in conjunction with another election. The term of office is also four years. Once elected, the mayor appoints up to nine councillors to form a cabinet. The mayor cannot be removed from office during his four year term but if he or she resigns or dies during that period, a further district-wide election will be need to be held to elect a new mayor.

Once elected, the functions and responsibilities of the leader and mayor are broadly similar. Both are responsible for the executive functions and responsibilities of the council and decide who sits on the cabinet to assist them in that role. Both are responsible for formulating policy and its implementation within the broad policy and budgetary framework set by the council. Both are held to account for their actions by the council itself and the overview and scrutiny structure. Neither is responsible for the regulatory functions of the council such as the determination of planning and licensing applications, although they can sit on the relevant committees.

### **So what's the advantage of an executive leader?**

The executive leader is a councillor who has already been elected by voters for one of the wards in Huntingdonshire and who is then elected as leader by the council as a whole. The election of leader does not involve any additional cost, as he or she has already been elected as a councillor in the normal way. If an executive leader proves unpopular, he can be removed from office by the council and a replacement chosen. Whenever a vacancy occurs, whether by removal from office, death in service, resignation or dismissal, no additional election costs are involved, as the successor will already be an elected councillor.

Conversely, the cost of an election for a mayor in Huntingdonshire would be in excess of £125,000 every four years, although this could be less if the election is held jointly with another election being held on that day. Any vacancy would have to be filled by a fresh election but this would be unlikely to coincide with another election, resulting in the full cost having to be met by the council.

An executive leader is likely to be a member of the same political party as the majority of councillors on the council. The leader will therefore have the general support of the majority of the electorate in the district, even if he has not been elected directly by them. The leader is also likely to be able to work with the majority of his fellow councillors and especially those that he has appointed to the cabinet.

### **And what's the advantage of an elected mayor?**

The mayor is likely to be a high profile figure who is popular locally. He or she may be a local politician or may be completely unconnected with local politics. The mayor may be better able to focus decision making in one person and be able to be held accountable for decisions. The Mayor of London is the most obvious example, although the Greater London Authority is not directly comparable with other local authorities. An elected mayor might encourage greater interest in local politics and a higher turnout at elections.

Conversely an elected mayor may deter people from standing as a councillor or cause a reduction in turnout at council elections as people think the role of a councillor has become less important.

The mayor may or may not be a member of a political party and a few that have been elected elsewhere are wholly independent. However once elected, the mayor still has to form a cabinet from councillors with a potential for disagreement and conflict if they are members of a different party. The mayor also has to propose a budget and policies that have to be approved by the council as a whole.

### **What's happened elsewhere?**

Since the option of an elected mayor first was introduced in 2000, it has not proved as popular as some of the political parties nationally had envisaged. To date, there have been 37 referenda in England and Wales on whether to elect a mayor. Of those, 12 have resulted in a majority in favour of a mayor and in 25, the proposal has been rejected. 22 of the referenda were promoted

by councils themselves, 14 were the result of a public petition and 1 was called by the government. The cost of a referendum is roughly the same as a whole district election which in Huntingdonshire is about £125,000.

There are currently 12 directly elected mayors in England. There has been some public reaction recently about what is perceived to be the excessive power of directly elected mayors. Campaigns have been held in four of the twelve areas to hold a referendum to abolish the post and, following a vote in Stoke-on-Trent, that authority has already returned to a leader and cabinet system.

Elsewhere in Cambridgeshire, all of the authorities have a leader and cabinet system. A referendum in Fenland in 2005 resulted in an overwhelming rejection of an elected mayor by a 3:1 majority. Cambridgeshire County Council which had to choose between an executive leader and elected mayor earlier than the districts has already moved to the executive leader arrangements with effect from 2009.

### **What happens to elected councillors?**

The role of the 52 ward councillors in Huntingdonshire remains unchanged, whichever system is chosen. Councillors remain responsible collectively for the budget and policy framework and those functions that parliament has defined as non-executive such as planning and licensing. Councillors also form the basis of the overview and scrutiny arrangements with responsibility to hold the executive and partner organisations to account, not dissimilar to the parliamentary select committees. Some will be appointed to the cabinet to take executive decisions and they all undertake constituency work on behalf of the residents of their wards.

### **Which option does the Council favour?**

Huntingdonshire District Council believes the executive leader and cabinet system is the more easily understood and flexible option. Elected mayors might be confused with the wholly different position of mayors in each of the five town councils in the district. Cambridgeshire County Council has already implemented the executive leader arrangements and none of the other district councils in the County have elected mayors. Leaders can be chosen without the additional cost of a separate election and can be removed from office if they become unpopular. At a time of financial restraint when savings need to be made in the public sector, the cost of electing a mayor every four years at £125,000 is high, even if it's possible that this might be shared with another election from time to time.

### **What's the next step in the process?**

The council is currently consulting the public on which option they think should be adopted. In addition to the council's website, information has been published in District Wide, the council's own in-house magazine, which is delivered to all households throughout the district. The views of other public sector and business interests in Huntingdonshire are also being sought.

The council has rejected the idea of a referendum asking the public for their views on the basis of cost. Although this would have enabled everyone to express their views individually, there is no guarantee of a high turnout and the cost is the same as a whole district election. A yes vote in a referendum followed by a mayoral election would cost £250,000 which could only be funded at the expense of local services.

That doesn't mean that the electorate won't have an opportunity to ask for a mayor in the future. At any time a petition signed by 5% of the electorate can ask for a referendum to be held and the council is obliged to comply.

**Where can I send my comments?**

You can let us have your views either by e-mail to [democratic.services@huntsdc.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@huntsdc.gov.uk) or by writing to the Head of Democratic & Central Services, Huntingdonshire District Council, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN.

The closing date for comments is 31st July 2010.

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HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE IN GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

1. GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

1.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 requires Huntingdonshire District Council to resolve to adopt a new form of executive arrangements by 31st December 2010 that comprises -

- ◆ an elected mayor and two or more councillors appointed to the cabinet executive by the mayor, or
- ◆ a councillor who is elected as executive leader by the Council and two or more councillors appointed to the cabinet executive by the executive leader.

1.2 These proposals have been drawn up by the Council in compliance with Section 33E of the Local Government Act 2000 with respect to the change in governance arrangements of the Council.

1.3 Prior to drawing up these proposals, the Council has taken reasonable steps to consult the local government electors of Huntingdonshire and other interested parties on the choices available to it by way of information on its website, an article in its magazine delivered to all households in the District, information presented at the neighbourhood forums in the District and targeted correspondence to local councils and representative groups.

1.4 Having regard to -

- ◆ the majority of the consultation responses favouring a leader and cabinet executive form of governance;
- ◆ there is a lack of support nationally for the mayor and cabinet executive format;
- ◆ previous consultation in Huntingdonshire when the 2000 Act was implemented having favoured the leader and cabinet model;
- ◆ consultation undertaken by Cambridgeshire County Council in 2008 having resulted in that authority adopting a leader and cabinet executive;
- ◆ the Council's existing leader and cabinet arrangements having been in existence since 2002 with minimal public interest locally in changing those arrangements; -

**Huntingdonshire District Council proposes to change its governance arrangements to an executive leader and cabinet executive.**

- 1.5 In so doing, the Council has considered the extent to which the proposals are likely to assist in securing continuous improvement in the way in which the authority's functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The effect of the proposals will be to -
- ◆ authorise the Council to elect an executive leader from among the councillors that have been elected;
  - ◆ make the executive leader responsible for the discharge of all the executive functions of the authority which he can discharge himself or arrange to be discharged by the cabinet, another member of the cabinet, a committee of the cabinet or by an officer of the authority;
  - ◆ enable the executive leader to appoint a deputy executive leader; and
  - ◆ enable the executive leader to appoint a cabinet comprising between 2 and 10 councillors, inclusive of himself and the deputy executive leader.
- 1.6 The executive leader will be appointed for a period of four years, unless he ceases to be a councillor before the end of that period, he resigns from office or he is removed from office by the Council. If the Council removes the executive leader from office, it will elect another councillor to that position.

## **2. TIMETABLE**

- 2.1 The consultation exercise undertaken prior to the drawing up of these proposals was undertaken from mid May to 21st July 2010.
- 2.2 A report on the outcome of the consultation exercise and the choices available to the Council was considered at a meeting of the Council held on 29th September 2010. These proposals were attached as an annex to that report.
- 2.3 Following approval of the proposals, public notice will be given in a local newspaper circulating in the District and on the Council's website.
- 2.4 A special meeting of the Council will be held on 3rd November 2010 to formally approve the proposals. A report iteming the consequential changes to the Council's constitution will be submitted to that meeting and adjourned in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules without discussion until the meeting of the Council to be held on 15th December 2010.
- 2.5 Public notice of the approval of the proposals will be given in a local newspaper circulating in the District and on the Council's website.
- 2.6 Having been adjourned without discussion at the Council meeting on 3rd November 2010, the report iteming the consequential changes to



the Council's constitution will be considered in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules at the meeting of the Council to be held on 15th December 2010.

- 2.7 The proposals will be implemented with effect from the annual meeting of the Council to be held on 18th May 2011.

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## **Cabinet**

### **Report of the meetings held on 22nd July and 16th September 2010**

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#### **Matters for Decision**

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#### **20. FINANCIAL FORECAST**

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) (Item No 11 of their Report refers) and by way of a report by the Head of Financial Services, reproduced separately on the agenda, the Cabinet has been acquainted with the present position in relation to the Council's financial forecast for the period up to 2018/2019.

The Cabinet has been informed of potential variations in a number of sources of income and other factors that could affect the Council's financial position. Members were advised that there remains a number of uncertainties including the level of reduction in government funding, the size of the Council's current deficit in relation to limited revenue reserves and low Council Tax which will require the Council to make sizable reductions in the scale of its spending.

In acknowledging that if no action were to be taken the total gap between income and expenditure could rise to over £8 million for the financial year 2014/15, Members were of the opinion that radical decisions will need to be taken which will affect all services in some way and could change the Council fundamentally.

Attention having been drawn to a timetable for agreeing savings, Members have acknowledged the need to produce detailed objectives, consult with Town and Parish Councils and other organisations at the earliest opportunity and to involve the Overview and Scrutiny Panels and Members generally in the process. In referring to the updated Redundancy Policy and Voluntary Release Scheme, Members have noted that these will be considered at the next meeting of the Employment Panel prior to their implementation.

Having approved the annuity basis for the calculation of Minimum Revenue Provision, the Cabinet

#### **RECOMMEND**

**that the Council notes the contents of the report now submitted.**

**21. FORMAT OF THE COUNCIL'S EXECUTIVE –  
THE CHOICE OF EXECUTIVE LEADER OR ELECTED MAYOR**

In conjunction with the Corporate Governance Panel and by way of a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services, the Cabinet has considered a change in governance arrangements in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement Act 2007. A separate report appears elsewhere on the agenda for the Council meeting and the Cabinet therefore

**RECOMMEND**

**that the proposals for a change in governance arrangements to an Executive Leader and Cabinet Executive be approved.**

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**Matters for information**

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**22. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING:  
2009/10 OUTTURN AND 2011 BUDGET**

The Cabinet has noted the final outturn for revenue expenditure for 2009/2010 and the variations already identified in the current year. Executive Councillors were advised that £1,913,000 has been transferred to a special reserve to finance any "invest to save" proposals. In discussing the main variations to the programme, Executive Councillors have noted, in particular, a reduction in income from schools using the leisure centre facilities and the impact of the Government's announcements that a number of grants awarded for 2010/11 will now be withdrawn.

At the same time, the Cabinet's attention has been drawn to an increase in the total amount of debts written-off during the quarter from April to June 2010 for Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates as a consequence of the downturn in the economic climate.

**23. CAPITAL MONITORING:  
2009/10 OUTTURN AND 2010/11 BUDGET**

The Cabinet has been acquainted with variations in the capital programme in the current year. Executive Councillors were advised that the level of Local Public Service Agreement performance reward grant is now likely to be considerably less than has been budgeted. At the same time, Members have been apprised of plans announced by the Government to abolish Go-East and the possible implications for the Authority.

**24. CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT**

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) (Item No. 7 of their Report refers), the Cabinet has been acquainted with the background to the option of introducing Civil

Parking Enforcement (CPE) as a way of improving the level of on-street parking enforcement throughout the county.

In considering the key aspects of CPE, Executive Councillors have been reminded that the District Council's management of off-street parking is of a high standard but that there is little enforcement of on-street restrictions by the police, with no likelihood of any improvement unless CPE is introduced. The Cabinet has been advised that the Department of Transport prefers a co-ordinated approach to on- and off-street parking enforcement and that initial discussions have been held with Cambridgeshire County Council to explore possible operational scenarios for a joint scheme. Having agreed that these discussions should continue, Executive Councillors have stressed that any change should not be to the detriment of the existing off-street arrangements. The Cabinet's attention also has been drawn to the potential impact of any change on the street ranger service which currently combines parking enforcement with a range of other frontline services, the cost-effectiveness of which may be affected by its separation from parking enforcement.

## **25. PUBLIC CONVENIENCES - RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

The Cabinet has received three petitions from the Shopmobility Group in Huntingdon, Godmanchester Community Association and Ramsey residents regarding the closure of public conveniences across the District. Two of the petitions had been presented to Council on 21st April and 23rd June 2010. The Council decided to refer the petitions to the Cabinet and the person submitting the Ramsey petition which was received too late to be considered by Council in June, agreed that it could be submitted to Cabinet in conjunction with the others on the same subject.

In discussing the petitions, the Cabinet has had the benefit of the views expressed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) which are summarised in Item No. 8 of their Report on the Agenda.

As part of its deliberations, the Cabinet has been reminded of the background to the decision to reduce expenditure on the maintenance of public conveniences, which was taken both on financial grounds and as a result of an acknowledgement that the service should be more appropriately dealt with by town and parish councils.

Mention also was made to -

- ◆ the town councils' ability to raise their precepts in the present economic climate whereas the level of council tax for district and county councils had been frozen for 2011/2012; and
- ◆ the offer of advice and expertise from District Council Officers to those willing to accept a transfer of responsibility.

The Director of Environment and Community Services will be submitting a further report on the future of the conveniences in

Huntingdon Bus Station in October but the Cabinet concluded that the petitions contained no evidence of which the Council was unaware when the decision was taken in February to delete expenditure on public conveniences maintenance from the budget for 2010/11. Under the circumstances, the Cabinet has noted the concerns expressed by the petitions but decided not to reconsider its previous decisions on the matter.

**26. 2009/2010 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Cabinet has reviewed the Council's performance against the targets within the Corporate Plan for the year ending 31st March 2010. The information will be reported to local residents via the District-Wide newsletter and the Council's website.

**27. RISK REGISTER**

In considering the progress being made to identify and manage corporate risks, the Cabinet has approved the actions proposed to deal with four risks identified as very high or red in the risk register. In so doing, Executive Councillors have stressed that the measures to be taken should be met from within existing resources.

**28. APPOINTMENT OF HEAD OF OPERATIONS – ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DIRECTORATE**

*(The following item was considered as a confidential item under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).*

Having been acquainted with the requirements of paragraph 4(e) of the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Cabinet confirmed that there was no material or well-founded objection to the Panel's proposal to offer the vacant post of Head of Operations, Environmental Services to Mr E Kendall who was previously employed by Hambleton District Council.

**29. FORMER FIRE STATION SITE AND WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE, HUNTINGDON STREET, ST. NEOTS**

*(The following item was considered as a confidential item under paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).*

Following a tendering exercise, the Cabinet has authorised the Director of Central Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillors for Finance & Customer Services and for Leisure, Law, Property and Governance, to approve the terms for the disposal of land at the former fire station site and waste recycling centre, Huntingdon Street, St. Neots. In so doing, Executive Councillors noted the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) regarding the importance of complying with the planning brief for the site and securing St. Neots Town Council's agreement over the release of land in that authority's ownership to facilitate the

development proposed. The Cabinet has also agreed that any future assignment of the lease to the successful tenderer should be subject to a condition that this should be restricted to future leisure uses only.

### **30. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

The Cabinet has reviewed the Council's performance against targets within the Corporate Plan - "Growing Success", together with a summary of achievements, service performance, progress against the council's improvement plan and the deliberations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels (Social Well-Being, Environmental Well-Being and Economic Well-Being) on the matter.

### **31. THE REVOCATION OF THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY - IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HUNTINGDONSHIRE CORE STRATEGY 2009 AND THE JOINT CAMBRIDGESHIRE APPROACH**

The Cabinet has noted the content of new national planning guidance which clarifies the status of adopted Local Development Documents following the Government's decision to revoke the Regional Spatial Strategy. The guidance strongly advocates that planning authorities should continue to prepare and bring forward appropriate development plan documents (DPDs) and confirms that adopted DPDs will continue to provide the statutory planning framework. Having regard to the Council's own DPDs, Executive Councillors have noted that the adopted Huntingdonshire Core Strategy 2009 will remain as the Council's primary planning policy document.

The Government's guidance also clarifies that local planning authorities will continue to be responsible for establishing the right level of local housing provision for their area and therefore should continue to identify enough viable land to meet their local housing needs. Whilst the guidance also stresses that local councils are best placed to assess the needs of Gypsies and Travellers and having referred to a recent consultation exercise on the Strategic Housing Land Availability (SHLAA) for this group, Members noted that no decision will be made on the possible location of any potential future sites until further clarification has been received from the Government regarding the applicable legislative framework.

At the same time, Executive Councillors have been advised of a joint response by Cambridgeshire Authorities to the changes and the work undertaken to review the current strategic policy position for the County. In that respect, the Cabinet has endorsed a joint statement made by the Cambridgeshire Authorities which sets out their current position and the effects of the recession on the delivery of key development sites. Once adopted the statement will be used to inform development decisions.

### **32. SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME**

The Cabinet has been updated on progress made to date on the delivery of actions and targets set out in the Corporate Equality Action Plan and have endorsed a new Single Equality Scheme which

streamlines the Council's equality scheme and policy into one document which implies transparency and reduces monitoring and reporting costs in line with emerging government policy. The Scheme sets out the Council's aims and objectives and the accompanying action plan details how they will be addressed.

**33. DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE WORKING GROUP**

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the findings of the Democratic Structure Working Group regarding the membership of the Employment Panel and the proposal to introduce the title of ordinary Aldermen and Alderwomen to past Members of the Council and Honorary Freemen and Freewomen to local citizens. The report and recommendations themselves are dealt with by way of a separate item on the Agenda for the Council meeting, where the report can be found in full.

Following consideration and endorsement by the Cabinet, the report will be submitted to a meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel and their recommendations will be reported to the Council meeting.

I C Bates  
Chairman



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## **Standards Committee**

### **Report of the meetings held on 8th July and 9th September 2010**

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#### **Matters for Information**

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#### **1. APPOINTMENT AND REPORTS OF SUB-COMMITTEES**

The Committee has appointed the Sub-Committees required under the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008 to undertake the initial assessment of allegations, to respond to any review of decisions requested by complainants and to hear cases referred for investigation. Each Sub-Committee is chaired by an independent Member.

The Chairman of the Referrals (Assessment) and Consideration and Hearing Sub-Committees regularly update the Committee on the business they have dealt with in general terms and report on the outcome of each case. In total six allegations of misconduct have been considered by the Assessment Sub-Committee of which one had been referred to the Monitoring Officer for investigation. No further action was recommended in the other five cases.

Following an earlier investigation, the Consideration and Hearing Sub-Committee had accepted a recommendation from the Investigating Officer that there was a breach of the Code of Conduct in a case involving a complaint against a Member of St. Ives Town Council which resulted in the suspension of that Member from the Town Council for a period of one month with effect from 9th July 2010.

#### **2. STANDARDS FOR ENGLAND - THE FUTURE**

The Committee has been informed of the Government's intention to abolish the Standards Board regime. This statement was included in Section 4 of the document "The Coalition: Our Programme for Governance" published in May 2010.

Although very little further information has emerged since that announcement, indications suggest that the Decentralisation and Localism Bill, to be published at the end of October, will provide for the abolition of not just Standards for England, but of the Code of Conduct for Members and of the Standards Committee. This inference has been given further credence by the decision of Standards for England to cancel the Annual Assembly 2010, to discontinue both their monitoring reviews and the requirement for the submission by Monitoring Officers of quarterly and annual returns.

Notwithstanding the nature of the announcement in October, the Committee has noted that, in all likelihood, a draft Bill might not be enacted before Summer 2011 which could mean that the Council retains the duty to continue the ethical standards regime until early 2012.

Therefore, against this background of uncertainty, the Committee was interested to note the conclusions published in the annual review and report of the Committee On Standards In Public Life which suggested that an effective local standards framework should comprise -

- ◆ a clear code of conduct which specifies what behaviour is acceptable and what is not;
- ◆ an independent mechanism for dealing with the most serious breaches under the Code; and
- ◆ some over-arching mechanism to ensure that the regime is effective and consistent in upholding standards.

### **3. APPOINTMENT OF PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES**

Consideration has been given to the proposed methodology for the appointment to the vacant post of Parish Council representative on the Committee. The Committee has agreed to seek a nomination to the vacant post directly from town and parish councils and an invitation inviting expressions of interest has been circulated. Interested parish councillors have been requested to submit a statement in support of their applications to the Monitoring Officer by 20th September 2010. The Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Monitoring Officer and an existing Parish Council representative have been authorised by the Committee to make the final selection.

### **4. ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10**

The Committee has been given the opportunity to consider the content of a draft 2009/2010 Annual Report and, subject to some minor amendment in relation to the use of resources on standards issues, has approved the report for publication. In accordance with the Committee's instructions that the document be produced and circulated in a cost-effective way, the Annual Report has been published on the District Council's website and distributed electronically to Members of the Council and to all town and parish councils. An article on the Annual Report also will feature in the October edition of District-Wide magazine.

### **5. WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT**

Having made some suggestions on content and phraseology, the Committee was pleased to note that a document comprising a series of frequently answered questions (FAQs) on the Code of Conduct will be published on the Standards and Conduct pages of the District Council's website. The Committee also has suggested that the FAQs be distributed electronically to town and parish councils as a training aid. As part of further development of the web pages, the District

Council's web team are now creating an on-line form to allow for Code of Conduct complaints to be completed and submitted on-line.

## **6. APPLICATIONS FOR DISPENSATION**

The Committee has considered two applications for dispensation received from Great and Little Gidding and Southoe and Midloe Parish Councils. Having been satisfied that approval of the applications in the circumstances described was required to prevent the business of those authorities from being impeded, the Committee agreed to grant dispensation to five Members of Great and Little Gidding Parish Council to enable them to speak and vote on the Village Hall and Recreation Field and the Great Gidding Charity for the period ending 30th April 2012. Similarly, four Members of Southoe and Midloe Parish Council were granted dispensation to enable them to speak and vote on the provision of allotments within the Parish area for the period ending 30th April 2014.

## **7. TRAINING UPDATE**

The approach to training activity on the Code of Conduct proposed by the Monitoring Officer for the Autumn has been endorsed by the Committee. However, in view of the uncertainty over the future of the standards regime and given the suggestion that the Code of Conduct requirements may be discontinued by the soon to be published Decentralisation and Localism Bill, the Committee considered it imprudent currently to make arrangements for training sessions which might involve expenditure and resources which ultimately might prove to be unnecessary.

The Committee has decided to await the publication of the Bill but in the meantime, has asked the Monitoring Officer to respond positively to any requests for training received from individual parish councils.

The question of training will be reconsidered at the next meeting in the light of the Government's proposals for "Standards".

## **8. LOG OF CODE OF CONDUCT ENQUIRIES**

The Committee has noted the nature of the Code of Conduct enquiries recently recorded by the Monitoring Officer and has been reminded that the area of the Code which appears to cause the most concern related to the declaration of personal and prejudicial interests.

The Committee was hopeful that the distribution of the FAQs on the code of conduct and the reference therein to a fact sheet, published by Standards for England, on personal and prejudicial interests might help in this respect.

## **9. CASE SUMMARIES AND ADVICE**

For learning purposes, the Committee has noted the content of a guide on "blogging" and details of cases recently published by

Standards for England following complaints considered by Fenland District and Hyndburn Borough Councils.

Mr D L Hall  
Chairman

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

**Report of the meetings held on 15th July and  
9th September 2010**

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### **Matters for Information**

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#### **11. FINANCIAL FORECAST**

In conjunction with the Cabinet (Item No. 28 of their Report refers), the Panel has been acquainted with the present position in relation to the Council's financial forecast for the period to 2018/19. To assist them in their deliberations, all Members of the Council were invited to attend and take part in the discussions.

Members have been informed of potential variations in a number of sources of income and other factors that could affect the Council's financial position. The Panel has acknowledged the uncertainty surrounding the current forecast and a number of assumptions which will be clarified over the next few months.

The Panel has acknowledged the severity of the situation facing the Council and the problems created by current economic and political conditions, together with the likely deficit for the year, falling revenue reserves, the emerging prospects for lower government funding and government plans to replace Council Tax capping from 2012/13. Members have also acknowledged that the total shortfall is likely to rise to over £8 million per annum in four years time. As a result, the Panel has recognised that radical decisions will need to be taken by the Council which are likely to affect most services in some way.

Attention having been drawn to the potential for changes in the level of Government grant the Council will receive in the next few years, the Panel has been advised that the forecast has been based on a cash reduction of 25% in grant over 5 years but this could increase to 40% and, importantly, does not include inflation. It is envisaged that the authority will be afforded an element of protection as any reductions should not be greater than the average for similar authorities. Having examined the options and the constraints that are likely to exist in relation to the level of Council Tax, it has been suggested that any proposals which are developed that might require a referendum, this should not be undertaken in conjunction with the County Council, whose proportion of the Council Tax represents a much larger element of local taxation.

The Panel's attention has been drawn to the recent budget consultation exercise, which has generated almost 2000 responses and will be used to gauge public views on changes in services and what local priorities are. Members have suggested that they would like to see the responses analysed by source as this could affect the overall findings.

On the subject of the Council's financial planning process, Members have discussed whether the Council should take steps in preparation for the anticipated reduction in Government grant, which is expected to be announced on 22nd October 2010. Some Members are of the opinion that the Council should start to make plans at the earliest opportunity for likely budgetary reductions, while others think that decisions can only be made once the level of grant and the situation with regard to potential changes in the Council's responsibilities are known.

Comment has been made on the possible devolution of services to towns, parishes or localities. With the recent decision on public conveniences in mind, the Panel has recommended that if these organisations are to be invited to take on board other additional responsibilities, consultation should be undertaken with them at the earliest opportunity to enable them to incorporate the need for any additional funding into their budget setting processes. The Panel has further suggested that the District Council might engage with towns and parishes about opportunities for other budgetary savings.

The Panel has discussed the extent to which the Council is statutorily required to provide services. Members have suggested that it is not possible to make recommendations on possible changes in service levels and functions without sufficient knowledge of the Council's statutory responsibilities and the non statutory services it provides. Whilst the Panel has acknowledged the inherent difficulties in producing such information, the Panel has asked for details to be circulated, together with an indication of the number of employees who are currently employed to undertake wholly non statutory functions.

Having noted that the Council's basic statutory functions are limited, the view has been expressed that the Council's priorities should be taken into account when planning reductions in services. Comment has also been made that the Council provides some services which were not classified as statutory under UK Parliamentary Law but nevertheless are subject to other influences arising from, for example, European Union Legislation, such as recycling targets. At the same time consideration should be given to facilities which are provided on a joint or shared basis and the contractual arrangements and obligations which exist. It will also be necessary to consider the effect of any changes to services and functions on the Council's reputation.

The Panel has strongly recommended that the Council should adopt a strategic approach to planning changes to its services. In doing so, Members have suggested that the current challenges might provide an opportunity to refocus the Council through an overarching vision.

The Strategy should demonstrate what the Council will do in future and how it will get there. Similar concerns have been voiced at a recent meeting of the Corporate Plan Working Group who have suggested that a clear vision of Council services is required in advance of any organisational changes. The Council will need to know what it is seeking to achieve and which positions it will need to retain to do so before it proceeds with implementing the Voluntary Redundancy scheme.

With regard to the need to make savings, a Member has suggested that a business approach should be adopted and Heads of Service invited to identify ways in which savings might be made as part of an action plan. In addition, a flexible approach should be taken towards the salary differentials between levels in the Council's organisational structure and, generally, the salary assigned to posts should be reduced as employees leave.

The Panel will be formally invited to consider proposals for variations in the budget in due course, Members have emphasised the need to develop a clear plan outlining possible proposals for reductions and to involve all Members of the Council in these discussions at an early stage. It will not be possible to make any decisions before the results of the public consultation have been considered but it is intended to hold initial discussions with Members prior to the formal discussion of proposals for changes at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) in November 2010. The Panel is of the opinion that Overview and Scrutiny has an important role in the development of the financial plan and an additional meeting will be convened for Members to undertake the necessary preparatory work to enable them to fulfil this role.

As part of their deliberations a number of suggestions for possible savings have been made by individual Panel members and other members of the Council in attendance. A list of the suggestions has been submitted to the Cabinet for consideration. The suggestions include the need for a comprehensive approach to reviewing all services that could potentially be delivered through collaborative working, a review of the Council's Management Structure, the introduction of Zero based budgeting from a statutory perspective over 5 years and a review of services in comparison with other authorities.

Having recognised the significant financial challenges which face the authority in future years, the Panel have emphasised the need to highlight the challenges which need to be addressed over the coming months to all Members of the Council.

The Panel has endorsed the recommendations with regard to the annuity basis for the calculation of Minimum Revenue Provision for submission to the Cabinet.

**12. FORMER FIRE STATION SITE AND WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE, HUNTINGDON STREET, ST NEOTS**

*(The following item was considered as a confidential item under paragraph 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).*

Prior to their consideration by the Cabinet, the Panel has reviewed the details of the four applications received for the leasehold of land at the former fire station site and waste recycling centre, Huntingdon Street, St Neots. The site had been marketed following the approval of a planning brief earlier in 2010.

As part of their deliberations, the Panel has discussed the merits of the applications received and acknowledged the need to strike a balance between the financial return and the potential benefits any development might bring to the local community. With this in mind, the Panel has asked for further details of the bids to be presented to the Cabinet.

Having endorsed the proposals within the report, the Panel has suggested that a number of additional terms and conditions are included in any future agreement to ensure that the objectives within the planning brief are achieved.

This matter was considered by the Cabinet at their meeting on 22nd July 2010. Item No. 27 of their Report refers.

**13. ANNUAL REPORT ON ORGANISATIONS SUPPORTED BY GRANTS VIA SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS**

Details of the performance of voluntary organisations in Huntingdonshire who receive funding from the Council via service level agreements have been presented to the Panel. An annual report on this subject had been requested at a previous meeting following the conclusion of a detailed study into grant aid.

By way of background, the Panel has been reminded of the Cabinet's previous decisions to move from a system of open applications for grant aid to a commissioning model and to introduce agreements for a 5 year period. Members have been acquainted with the current performance framework, which is designed to link the funding provided to local organisations to the priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan – Growing Success and the objectives of the Cambridgeshire Local Area Agreement. With regard to the management of the agreements, Members have been informed that all organisations are monitored against a set of agreed performance indicators and other organisational criteria on a quarterly basis. The targets are based on performance in the previous three years and have been increased by 10% since last year.

The Panel has discussed a number of specific performance figures and, in doing so, Members have noted the success of some



organisations in securing additional funding. However, the view has been expressed that these organisations would not be able to do this if the District Council's "Core Funding" is reduced.

The Panel has discussed the terms of the agreements between the District Council and the voluntary organisations and, in light of the ongoing Government Spending Review, queried whether three year agreements should be introduced. In response, Members' attention has been drawn to recent proposals by Cambridgeshire County Council and NHS Cambridgeshire to introduce a single funding agreement for the Councils of Voluntary Services across Cambridgeshire. However, the model developed by the District Council has been identified as a good practice by both District Audit and Go-East. The Council will consider changing to three year agreements when the negotiations take place on their renewal.

#### **14. CUSTOMER SERVICES**

The Panel has received a presentation by the District Council's Customer Services Manager on the development of customer services within the Council. The presentation followed the Panel's previous decision to carry out a review of customer services. This decision was the result of proposals by the Liberal Democrat Group for amendments to the 2010/11 Budget.

As part of the presentation, the Panel has been acquainted with the background to the establishment of the Council's Contact and Customer Services centres, together with details of the range of services currently provided and statistical information on customer enquiries. The Panel has also received details of customer feedback, demand for services and the challenges facing customer services within the District. Members have noted details of the savings which have been achieved in Customer Services to date, together with a series of options for changes to service provision and the level of savings these might achieve. Officers will continue to review the service with a view to achieving savings.

The Panel has discussed the introduction of new requirements designed to improve the Council's data security and the impact they might have on the way services are provided. The Code of Connection poses a number of specific problems for the authority with regard to remote access and home working. Having been advised of the likely cost of complying with the standard and in noting that the Authority is to be inspected in October 2010, Members have been advised that representations had been made to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to request that the inspection is delayed to enable further work to be undertaken.

With regard to staffing arrangements at the Contact and Call Centres, the Panel has discussed the contingency arrangements which were in place to cover for Officers who are absent through sickness. The service is augmented by a small team of contract staff and there has been a good response by Officers at all locations to high demand and the need to cover for absences. However, some advisors are now

accruing high levels of flexitime. In the longer term consideration will need to be given to issues relating to staff recruitment and retention.

The Panel has also discussed a number of other issues including the potential for sharing back office costs with other authorities and whether there is the potential to provide a customer services function on behalf of other authorities.

Having considered the Customer Service Quarterly Performance Report for the period April to June 2010 on the levels and standards achieved by the Service, the Panel has recognised the importance of Customer Services to the delivery of the Council's Services and has decided not to pursue this area of study any further at this time.

## **15. RISK REGISTER**

The Audit and Risk Manager has attended a Panel meeting to discuss the addition of 44 new entries to the Council's Risk Register during the period 1st September 2009 to 28th February 2010. Members have been acquainted with the background to the establishment of the Risk Register, together with details of the process through which risks are added and the monitoring mechanisms that are in place. The 44 new entries were the result of Activity Managers being asked to identify risks within their service areas for the first time.

The Panel has discussed a number of specific issues with regard to the risks within the Register and the measures that are taken to mitigate these risks. Members have, in particular, reviewed the method of assessment and classification of individual risks and the cost of the commercial package for monitoring risk. They have also discussed the information that is submitted to the Council's Panels and Committees and they have made a number of suggestions for changes to the way the information is presented in the future.

## **16. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP SCRUTINY**

In conjunction with the Panels for Social and Environmental Well-Being and to comply with the requirements of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the Panel has considered their approach to scrutinising the partnerships in which the Council is involved. To assist them with this responsibility, the Panel has agreed to consider the Action Plan of the Economic Prosperity and Skills thematic group and its regular monitoring report at a future meeting.

The Overview and Scrutiny Panels have also been advised of recent developments concerning joint scrutiny between Cambridgeshire Councils. In commenting on the proposals presented to them, the Panel has outlined their support for the principle of joint scrutiny provided that no additional organisational structures are created, that savings can be clearly identified and that matters are addressed on an issue by issue basis.

## **17. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

In conjunction with the Panels for Social and Environmental Well-Being, the Panel for Economic Well-Being has reviewed the Council's performance against the targets within the Corporate Plan "Growing Success" that fall within its remit. Members have noted responses to a number of questions raised by the Corporate Plan Working Group and been advised of the current situation with regard to the submission of proposals to form a Local Enterprise Partnership for Greater Cambridge – Greater Peterborough. Recommendations by the Corporate Plan Working Group designed to enhance the Council's approach to its strategic budget planning and performance management have been endorsed for submission to the Cabinet.

The Panel has discussed the deliberations of the Corporate Plan Working Group on the Council's use of external consultants. The Working Group had reiterated their intention to undertake further work on this subject with a view to satisfying themselves that the use of consultants is subject to appropriate controls, management and justification. The Panel has clarified that the term "consultants" includes the use of contractors. Having noted that expenditure on consultants had amounted to £1.8 million in the previous year and was likely to increase in the current year, in order to contribute towards the savings that the Council needs to identify, the Panel has recommended that the amount the Council spends on employing external consultants should be reduced by £1.5m in the current financial year.

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### **Other Matters of Interest**

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## **18. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL – REMIT AND WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies and considered its work programme for the forthcoming year.

## **19. SCRUTINY**

The Panel has discussed the latest editions of the Decision Digest and discussed the matters contained therein. Arising from their discussions details of the measures the Council takes to protect the data it holds on the District's residents has been circulated to Members.

J D Ablewhite  
Chairman

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

**Report of the meetings held on 13th July and  
14th September 2010**

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### **Matters for Information**

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#### **10. THE GREAT FEN**

Following a tour of the Great Fen which was hosted by Project partners, the Panel has been reminded that the Council has entered into a five year agreement with a £20,000 per annum contribution towards project management costs. Members have been advised that the collaboration agreement is renewable after five years, although the income from the 4,700 acres owned by the project will assure its future should the agreement not be renewed. Members have been informed that the Council has a broader interest than other partners and will benefit by having influence over the project's future. The Panel has noted that the Council's involvement has played a major part in enabling the project to secure lottery funding.

Having regard to plans for a visitor centre, Members have been advised that a temporary information point at Halfway Farm will be opened later in the year while plans for a permanent centre that can be extended and adapted as visitor numbers increase is developed.

The Panel found the visit and opportunity to meet representatives of Project Partners to be very useful in understanding the long term aims and structure of the partnership and has welcomed an offer by the Director of Environmental and Community Health Services for updates to be presented to the Panel at six monthly intervals on progress.

#### **11. CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT**

The Panel has considered a report outlining the options open to the Council for pursuing civil parking enforcement (CPE) in a co-ordinated approach as encouraged by the Department for Transport. The potential for a county-wide CPE operation has been discussed between the County and District Councils and various service delivery options have been considered.

Members have been informed that while there is a general view that better enforcement, particularly with respect to on-street parking, would be beneficial, further work is required regarding the financial impact on the authority before any decisions can be taken regarding

the concept of extending CPE. This would also be subject to an application to Government for the delegation of the necessary powers.

Members have been reminded that the enforcement of both charged and non-charged car parks is currently carried out by the Council's street ranger service along with small areas of charged on-street parking managed via an agency agreement with the County Council. It is likely that a move to CPE within Huntingdonshire will result in a need to significantly increase on-street parking charges which could have an effect in increasing the demand for off-street parking provision. Conversely it could have implications for the cost effectiveness of the street ranger service.

Members have been acquainted with the different scenarios available, with the County Council indicating their preference for managing both on and off-street arrangements which will have the potential drawback of requiring the transfer of some district council staff. The Panel has been advised that whichever method of administration is adopted, the difference in terms of income will be an approximate loss of £37,000, although this might be offset by the potential for increased revenue for the District Council from the increased use of off-street car parks.

The Panel therefore has recommended that the Cabinet supports the continuation of negotiations with the County Council regarding the possible introduction of CPE in Huntingdonshire.

## **12. PUBLIC CONVENIENCES**

The Panel has considered a report providing an update on the Council's position with regard to public conveniences following the submission of petitions in response to the Council's decision to reduce expenditure on their maintenance. Members have been reminded that the decision to close the public conveniences or transfer maintenance to the town councils was taken by the Council when the budget was approved for the current year.

The Panel was updated on the position with regard to the implementation of the Council's decision. Of the nine public conveniences owned and maintained by the Council, with the exception of those at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park and Paxton Pits Visitor Centres, some of the conveniences in St. Neots are being transferred to the town council with the District Council continuing to maintain the facilities at St. Ives and Huntingdon Bus Stations. The other facilities have been closed as the town councils have been unwilling to accept a transfer in responsibility. The only exception is a temporary facility at Ramsey funded by the town council pending the redevelopment of the Grand Cinema site.

The Executive Councillor for Environment and Information Technology has reminded Members that facilities are not funded by the District Council elsewhere in Huntingdonshire, with public conveniences having been removed from the larger villages some

years previously. Attention has been drawn to the facilities available in public buildings and retail outlets in the market towns and the view has been reiterated that the Cabinet feels that the provision of public conveniences is best dealt with at a local level by town and parish councils. The Executive Councillor has indicated that he is prepared for staff to facilitate negotiations with venues to make facilities available to the public, on the understanding that any financial incentive has to be provided by the town and parish councils concerned. As ward councillor, Councillor C Hyams has acquainted the Panel with details of complaints he has received in respect of the closure of the public conveniences in Godmanchester and he has suggested that other cost-cutting measures should be considered prior to the closure of the public conveniences.

The Panel's attention had been drawn to the receipt of three petitions from the Huntingdon Shopmobility and residents of Godmanchester and Ramsey about the closure of public conveniences in those towns. However the Panel did not consider that any new information or evidence was contained in the petitions which was not available when the budget was set by the Council for the current year. Under the circumstances, the Panel did not consider that the earlier decisions on closure or transfer should be revisited.

Nevertheless the Panel requested the Cabinet to consider the possibility of exploring a package of help and guidance to town and parish councils to enable them to provide conveniences available for use by the public if they choose to do so.

### **13. JOINT SCRUTINY**

The Panel has been acquainted with recent developments concerning the introduction of the greater joint scrutiny between Cambridgeshire Councils.

In considering the benefits that can be derived by focusing on a geographic basis, linking scrutiny to leadership of place and the key outcomes of importance to local communities, the Panel has agreed that the scrutiny of subject areas should be adopted which would involve greater multi-agency working as opposed to focusing on services provided by the District Council.

### **14. REVOCATION OF THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY**

The Panel has considered a report on the revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy and the implications for strategic planning locally. Members have been reminded that Huntingdonshire remains very much at the forefront in terms of the delivery of the sustainable growth strategy for Cambridgeshire and the sub-region which is reflected in the Council's Core Strategy.

The Panel was encouraged to note that the District Council is one of a minority of local planning authorities in the Region that has an adopted Core Strategy which sets out a positive and robust framework to deliver sustainable development. Moreover the Strategy

has been tested at a public inquiry and found by a Planning Inspector to be sound. The Panel is pleased that the ambitious targets for development in Huntingdonshire mooted by the defunct East of England Regional Assembly for the review of the East of England Plan to 2031 have now been abandoned. However Members have noted that, with guidance from the Secretary of State calling for local planning authorities to identify a fifteen years supply of land for housing, the Core Strategy which extends until 2026 may soon need to be re-visited.

Issues that remain a concern to Members are the need for employment provision to cater for the housing growth and infrastructure improvements in advance of developments taking place. Members have drawn particular attention to the A428 which is under increasing pressure from housing development in St. Neots.

The Panel has welcomed the apparent change in direction over the provision of gypsy and traveller sites which will enable the District Council to assess its own need for additional pitches as opposed to this being determined regionally. Having been informed by the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport that further guidance will be awaited before progressing with the gypsy and traveller site DPD, the Panel has suggested that the Cabinet should make a public announcement on the present situation having regard to the magnitude of the public response to the recent SHLAA exercise on the identification of potential sites.

The Panel requested that the Cabinet note their support for the recommendations within the report and consider their comments as part of its deliberations on the revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy.

## **15. COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION**

Councillor J Davies has addressed the Panel on his concerns over the scale and timing of the felling of a large number of trees on the former St. Ives Golf Course and along Houghton Road, St. Ives in advance of the residential development which is to take place on the site. He also drew attention to instances elsewhere where developers have felled trees in advance of obtaining permission. As the loss of mature trees was of concern to many people, Councillor Davies asked if improvements could be made in the way that the Council dealt with the problem, either by more rigorous enforcement or by means of improved communication with land owners, developers and the public generally.

Having regard to the particular development at St. Ives Golf Course, the Panel has been advised that it was made clear before permission was granted for development at this site that a significant number of trees would be lost, although they should not have been felled in the nesting season. The Head of Planning Services has confirmed that no trees have been removed from the site without prior permission and that re-planting will be required under the planning permission, with other trees protected by conditions attached to the permission.



The Panel has accepted that unauthorised works to trees is an issue within Huntingdonshire which is exacerbated by the smallness of the team in the Planning Division. While commending the work of the officers in the Team and those involved in the parish planting scheme, the Panel suggested that that a strategy for the retention and planting of trees would be of assistance in raising the profile of this issue and encouraging good practice and public awareness.

Having been advised by the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport that work on such a strategy has commenced and that Member involvement would be welcome, Councillors Banerjee, Davies and Godfrey have agreed to form a Working Group to work with the Tree Officers for this purpose.

#### **16. CARBON MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

The Panel has considered a report providing an update on progress against the targets set in the Carbon Management Plan. The Panel has been pleased to note that the District Council is on course to meet the 10:10 Campaign objectives with an 11% reduction in carbon emissions and a 9% reduction in energy costs being achieved over the past year. Members have been advised that works are ongoing to determine which efficiency saving measures are the most appropriate for each District Council site to ensure the most cost-effective systems are put into place.

Although Members have agreed that the progress made against targets in the Carbon Management Plan is encouraging, the Panel has questioned the energy efficiency of Pathfinder House. The Executive Councillor for Environment and Information Technology has advised that the Environmental Management Team are assuming responsibility for the management of the premises and a report on the performance of the building is due to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny (Economic Well-Being) Panel in October.

Having regard to the Green House Project, the Panel has been advised that a provisional launch date for the opening of the properties has been set for 29th October 2010 which coincides with National Energy Saving Week. A visit to the properties for members of the Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-Being) Panel will be arranged in due course.

#### **17. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

The Council's performance against the environmental well-being targets within the Corporate Plan "Growing Success" has been reviewed by the Panel.

#### **18. WORK PLAN STUDIES**

The Panel has been advised of progress made to date on its programme of studies.

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

The Panel has been advised of progress on issues that had been previously discussed. The Chairman advised that the Joint Accountability Committee had requested the attendance of the Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council to its next meeting to question her about the performance of Cambridgeshire Together.

The Panel has been informed that the review of cycling priorities has been put on hold due to funding shortages and the Vice-Chairman has undertaken to make enquiries with the County Council regarding the audit trail for Section 106 transportation contributions generated from development in Huntingdonshire.

**20. SCRUTINY**

The Panel considered the latest edition of the Council's decision digest summarising the Council's decisions since the previous meeting.

P M D Godfrey  
Chairman

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

**Report of the meetings held on 6th July and  
7th September 2010**

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### **Matters for Information**

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#### **10. MONITORING OF SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS (PLANNING OBLIGATIONS)**

The Panel has been updated on the receipt and expenditure by the Council of money negotiated under Section 106 Agreements. Additional information, which was previously requested by Members, has now been included within the report. However, Councillor P G Mitchell has suggested that further information is still required and he has met with the Chairman of the Section 106 Advisory Group to discuss the monitoring process. They have suggested that a project plan should be developed for each scheme to include the scheme's objectives, total cost, developer contributor(s), other funding sources and its trigger points. This proposal has been endorsed by the Panel and will be submitted to the next meeting of the Section 106 Agreement Advisory Group for consideration.

#### **11. STRATEGIC/PARTNERSHIP SCRUTINY**

##### **(a) Scrutiny of Partnerships**

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panels for Environmental Well-Being and for Economic Well-Being, the Panel for Social Well-Being has considered its future role in scrutinising the partnerships in which the Council is involved. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on the Council to scrutinise the Local Strategic Partnership. The Panel will, therefore, focus in this area and, to assist them in this, Members have requested information on the thematic groups that are involved in areas of work that are within their remit. This information has been circulated to Panel Members.

##### **(b) Joint Scrutiny**

Recent developments relating to joint scrutiny between the Cambridgeshire Councils has been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels. Whilst the Social Well-Being Panel has endorsed the principle of introducing joint scrutiny arrangements across the County, Members are mindful that

such a move could have cost implications for the District Council. They also are of the view that this approach will work best if it is conducted through issue based task and finish groups and does not result in new organisational structures being created.

In view of the complexity of the framework in which they operate, Members have asked for background information on the Cambridgeshire Joint Accountability Committee (JAC) and the Cambridgeshire Together Board. The Panel has discussed the future role of the JAC should joint scrutiny be adopted by all Cambridgeshire authorities.

**12. UPDATE REPORT WITH REGARD TO ISSUES RAISED IN RELATION TO HILL RISE PARK, ST IVES**

Pursuant to Item No. 45 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 18th February 2010, the Panel has received a report on the action taken to address nuisance caused by anti-social drivers late at night in Hill Rise Park, St Ives. This matter was originally raised through a petition signed by local residents, which was presented to the Panel at its meeting in February 2010. Members have been encouraged to learn that a series of actions have resulted in a very low number of instances of nuisance occurring in the intervening period. The Panel has requested Officers to report on the actions taken and the outcome to the next St Ives Neighbourhood Forum meeting and to continue to monitor the situation over the next six months.

**13. ENHANCED CLEANSING SERVICES – PROPOSALS FOR MARKET TOWNS**

The Panel has been updated on the latest position with regard to proposals for enhanced Sunday cleansing services in St Ives, Huntingdon, St Neots, Ramsey and Godmanchester. A cleansing service is now provided on Sundays in the four market towns covering the main shopping areas. As very few complaints have been received about the cleanliness of the towns, the Panel has concluded that there is no need to expand the current Sunday cleansing regime.

The Council will in the future consider this subject in the context of the whole cleansing service taking into account the current financial position of the authority and anticipated budget announcements. Members have commented that they would not wish to see service reductions in the future as this would be detrimental to the vibrancy of the town centres. The Panel has received assurances that should a review of the cleansing service be undertaken, then appropriate discussions will be held with the Towns Councils.

**14. PROVISION OF PLAY FACILITIES IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE**

Pursuant to Item No 3 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 23rd June 2010, the Panel has considered a report on

recommendations, which were endorsed by the Cabinet, that the Council should investigate the feasibility of co-ordinating on behalf of parish councils a group insurance scheme and combined safety inspections. Advice has been received that for legal reasons it is not possible for the District Council to organise group insurance for third tier authorities. In addition, an analysis of the costs involved and potential savings that might be achieved indicate that it would not be possible to make any significant reductions in cost to town or parish councils for safety inspections.

The Panel has discussed whether to revisit its previous recommendations regarding the maintenance of outdoor youth facilities. Before proceeding further, Members have requested details of what the Council spends on such facilities, together with details of where the funds have been allocated.

#### **15. SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME**

The Panel has been acquainted with progress towards the achievement of the Corporate Equality Policy Action Plan. Of the 18 actions contained in the Plan, 12 have been completed and six are ongoing. The Policy identifies two outcomes and associated measures relating to the diverse needs of local people, the way the Council's services meet those needs and whether they are provided in a fair and accessible way. Members have noted trends in residents' perceptions in these respects, though they are mindful that the data captured reflect individuals' perceptions of all local public services and not just those provided by the District Council. Members have discussed how this information will be collected following the decision not to continue with the Place Survey.

The Panel has been acquainted with the legislative background to the decision to introduce a Single Equality Scheme, which now brings together all equalities matters into a single framework. Following external assessment the Council has attained Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

Members have been advised that all Equality Impact Assessments should be completed in the course of the current year. The Panel has questioned what impact potential service reductions will have on the monitoring of equalities issues and in response, has been reminded of the statutory duty to comply with legislation in this area. Following a question on employees' attitudes towards equalities matters, comment has been made on the need to embed equalities across the Council and that individuals are responsible for ensuring that they comply with their equalities responsibilities. The Action Plan appended to the Policy will assist with achieving this requirement.

#### **16. STUDY: CONSULTATION PROCESSES**

The Panel has identified the Council's consultation processes as an area for investigation, with a view to determining whether the approach taken to consultation is consistent across the authority. The Panel has been acquainted with the role of the Policy and

Research Team in offering advice and guidance to internal service departments on consultation and research methodologies. Members have been informed of the terms of the Consultation and Engagement Strategy and received details of the consultation calendar and database, which is located on the Council's intranet. Officers are encouraged to use these resources during any consultations they undertake.

Members have discussed a number of matters, including the cost and role of Market Research UK in assisting the Council with its various consultations, the level of responses to postal surveys together with the cost of different survey methods and how the results are interpreted, the value of undertaking consultation exercises and public perceptions of the consultation process. At the conclusion of discussions, Members have expressed a wish to pursue this study as a full Panel investigation and they have requested that further information is made available at a future meeting.

#### **17. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panels for Environmental Well-Being and for Economic Well-Being, the Panel for Social Well-Being has reviewed the Council's performance against its priority objectives, which are contained in "Growing Success" - the Corporate Plan. The Panel has endorsed the views of the Corporate Plan Working Group, particularly with regard to the objectives where targets have not been achieved.

The Panel has noted the responses to a number of questions raised by the Corporate Plan Working Group on the number of users visiting leisure centres, exercise classes for older people and alternative types of affordable housing. Members also have endorsed suggestions by the Corporate Plan Working Group designed to enhance the Council's approach to its strategic budget planning and performance management.

#### **18. CAMBRIDGESHIRE ADULTS WELL-BEING AND HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Panel has received updates on matters currently being considered by the Cambridgeshire Adults Well-Being and Health Scrutiny Committee, including Addenbrooke's Hospital nursing staff, the future closure of day services for older people, proposed changes to dermatology services and the Scrutiny Annual Report for 2009/10.

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#### **Other Matters of Interest**

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

The Panel has reviewed its work programme at each of its meetings. During this work, Members have been informed that the

Hinchingbrooke Hospital Stakeholder Panel Sub-Group has undertaken site visits to facilities managed by three bidders for the contract to manage the Hospital. Interviews have also been held by the Sub-Group after which the final two bidders were assessed against pre-determined criteria. The Strategic Health Authority will use the results as part of their deliberations on which organisation will be awarded the contract.

The outcome of a meeting held between the Chairman and the Head of Facilities at Hinchingbrooke Hospital on car parking at the Hospital has been reported to the Panel. Members have noted that a new pricing structure together with car parking concessions was introduced on 1st July 2010. A review of the new arrangements will be conducted by the Hospital in six months time and the Panel will be involved in this process.

**20. WORK PLAN STUDIES**

The Panel has reviewed its work plan and received details of studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels. Councillor R J West is now a co-opted Member on the Environmental Well-Being's study on Planning Conservation.

The Panel has requested a scoping report on Gypsy and Traveller Welfare. Background work is currently being undertaken on this subject.

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

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions. Members have requested sight of the Open Space Strategy prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

**22. SCRUTINY**

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

S J Criswell  
Chairman

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## **Development Management Panel**

**Report of the meetings held on 19th July, 16th August  
and 20th September 2010**

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### **Matters for Information**

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#### **6. STRATEGIC FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT**

An updated Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) for Huntingdonshire has been published by the District Council. Already approved by the Environment Agency, the SFRA will provide an accurate assessment of all sources of flooding in the District and flood maps which are compliant with Planning Policy Statement No. 25. The assessment has been formulated using the most up to date hydraulic modelling and topographic data available. The flood maps can be viewed on the District Council's website.

The Panel will take account of the Environment Agency Flood Risk Zones and the SFRA 2010 in determining future land use and development applications.

#### **7. MONITORING OF SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS (PLANNING OBLIGATIONS)**

Having noted information on the receipt and expenditure of Section 106 funds, the Panel has suggested that the schedules presented also might prove useful to town and parish councils and have requested that they should be forwarded to them for information.

In their consideration of this item, it was noted that the Chairman of the Section 106 Agreement Advisory Group had written formally to the Leader of the Council, to request his support in seeking an assurance from Cambridgeshire County Council, in the absence of any clear audit trail, that Section 106 receipts for transport and education schemes were being used in connection with the projects/sites for which they were originally intended.

#### **8. DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT: PROGRESS REPORT – 1ST APRIL - 30TH JUNE 2010**

The Panel has undertaken its regular review of the activities of Development Management Services over the period 1st April - 30th June 2010 in comparison with the preceding quarter and the corresponding period in 2010.

Having drawn attention to an apparent disparity between an increase in the applications received during the quarter against a reduction in fee income, the Panel was informed that this position was due largely to the receipt of minor applications or those which did not generate high fee income in the period. It was, however, the expectation that several major applications would be registered in the autumn and that the pattern of the previous quarter should not continue.

## **9. DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS**

At three meetings, the Panel has determined a total of 37 applications, of which 28 were approved, one deferred and 7 refused. The majority of applications submitted to the Panel have related to minor development schemes but the Panel has indicated its support to the Secretary of State for proposals to erect two wind turbines at Hamerton Zoo Park, Hamerton and for an extension to the dining room and reinstatement of chimneys at Kimbolton School, Kimbolton.

Subject to a variety of conditions, approval also has been given to an application for a new 18 hole golf course, clubhouse and maintenance building on land south of Low Road, High Street, Great Paxton. The Panel was assured that the conditions also would ensure the removal of imported material to be used to re contour the landscape should the course not proceed.

In circumstances whereby an appeal had been received against the non determination of an application involving a small single storey building on the Great Whyte, Ramsey, the Panel also has indicated that it would have been minded to approve the application for change of use from retail to B2 (general industry) and B8 (storage and distribution) but refuse the element of the application which would have varied the use to A5 (takeaway).

P K Ursell  
Vice-Chairman

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## **Employment Panel**

### **Report of the meeting held on 26th July 2010**

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#### **Matters for Information**

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#### **6. ANNUAL PAY AWARD 2010/11**

*(The following item was considered as a confidential item under paragraph 4 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972).*

Having regard to the findings of a study by the Employment Advisory Group regarding current remuneration practices which also had taken into account other local and national factors, the Panel has concluded their negotiations with Employee Side representatives concerning the 2010/11 pay award.

Accordingly the Panel has agreed to make the following award to Council employees for the year commencing 1st April 2010:-

- ◆ no increase in pay for staff on Grades 1 - 9;
- ◆ £91 for staff on Grades 10 - 11; and
- ◆ £182 for staff on Grades 12 - 15.

#### **7. REDUNDANCY POLICY**

As part of its programme of review of the Council's human resources policies and procedures, the Panel has considered the content of the Redundancy Policy. This was particularly pertinent given the current legislative and economic climate. It is essential that that the Council has robust and transparent processes in place to ensure it can respond with confidence to future change and challenge. With this in mind, the Panel has approved for the purposes of consultation with employees, a revised Redundancy Policy which makes provision for compensatory payments for compulsory redundancy. The draft Policy also seeks to balance both Council and employee interests, capture best practice and incorporate the legislative change which has occurred since the last policy was approved.

It is the objective of the Policy to -

- ◆ maintain the transparency of the processes undertaken by the Council where redundancy is considered;
- ◆ outline the process necessary in terms of formal consultation and alternative actions that should be followed through the consultation process with employees and their representatives where redundancy arises;

- ◆ confirm the responsibility of employees, Managers, Heads of Service, Chief Officers and the Human Resources & Payroll Service throughout the process; and
- ◆ highlight the legal obligations the Council has as an employer and prompt consideration of the effect any decision taken under the policy might have in terms of the provision of services.

Having regard to the Council's ongoing savings and efficiency programme, the Panel also has endorsed the principles of a time limited Voluntary Release Scheme which has been designed to encourage employees to apply for voluntary redundancy.

Consultation with employees and their representatives on the revised Policy and the proposed enhanced release scheme ended on 2nd September 2010. It is proposed that the outcome will be considered by the Employment Panel at its next meeting on 27th September 2010.

P A Swales  
Chairman

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## **Appointments Panel**

**Report of the meeting held on 22nd July 2010**

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### **Matters for Information**

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1. **APPOINTMENT OF HEAD OF OPERATIONS,  
ENVIRONMENTAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTORATE**

*(The following item was considered as a confidential item under paragraph 1 of part 1 of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).*

Having interviewed the shortlisted candidates for the post, the Panel has appointed Mr E Kendall as Head of Operations at a salary within the range for Local Grade 3.

L M Simpson  
Chairman

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## **Corporate Governance Panel**

### **Report of the meeting held on 30th June 2010**

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#### **Matters for Information**

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#### **1. FINAL ACCOUNTS 2009/10**

The Panel has approved the draft Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2010, subject to a series of amendments circulated at the meeting and minor textual amendments.

Members' attention has been drawn specifically to a series of issues arising from the accounts, including variations relating to income, the treatment of capital, the collection fund and the pension fund.

Other matters that were discussed included the clawback of claims payments by the Council's previous insurers and the level of audit and inspection fees. The latter will be kept under close scrutiny in the light of changes to the external inspection regime.

#### **2. EXTERNAL AUDIT – PROGRESS REPORT**

The Panel has received a progress report from the Council's external auditors explaining the current situation with regard to the Use of Resources Assessment and the audit of the Financial Statement for 2009/10.

#### **3. INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE**

Changes to the Internal Audit Terms of Reference and Strategy have been approved by the Panel.

The Panel also has approved the Internal Audit and Assurance Plan for the twelve months period commencing 1<sup>st</sup> August 2010.

#### **4. ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION FRAMEWORK**

The Panel has noted the outcome of a review of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Framework and endorsed the content of a revised Action Plan.

The Panel has approved changes to the Money Laundering Avoidance Policy which will be incorporated within the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy.

## **5. COMPLAINTS**

### **(a) Annual Complaints**

An analysis of the Council's internal complaints and a summary of complaints involving the District Council which have been determined by the Local Government Ombudsman in 2009/10 has been received by the Panel.

### **(b) Local Government Ombudsman: Local Settlement of Complaint**

The Panel has been apprised with details of a complaint against the Council by a member of the public and the terms of a compensatory payment negotiated by way of a local settlement.

T D Sanderson  
Chairman