

A meeting of **HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL** will be held in the **CIVIC SUITE, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN** on **WEDNESDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 2010** on the rising of the Special Meeting and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

	Time Allocation
PRAYER	5 minutes
Right Reverend Dr David Thomson, Bishop of Huntingdon will open the meeting with prayer.	
APOLOGIES	2 minutes
CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS	10 minutes
1. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 14)	2 minutes
To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 29th September 2010.	
2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS	2 minutes
To receive from Members declarations as to personal and/or prejudicial interests and the nature of those interests in relation to any Agenda Item. Please see Notes 1 and 2 below.	
3. DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE REVIEW - TWELVE MONTHS ON	15 minutes
Councillor K Churchill, Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy to introduce a report by the Working Group following its review of the Democratic Structure after twelve months operation.	
4. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, PANELS AND COMMITTEE	20 minutes
(a) Cabinet (Pages 15 - 18)	
(b) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) (Pages 19 - 22)	
(c) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) (Pages 23 - 24)	
(d) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) (Pages 25 - 28)	

- (e) Development Management Panel (Pages 29 - 30)
- (f) Employment Panel (Pages 31 - 32)
- (g) Licensing and Protection Panel - to follow
- (h) Licensing Committee - to follow
- (i) Corporate Governance Panel (Pages 33 - 34)

5. MOTION ON NOTICE

10 minutes

Councillor M F Shellens to move –

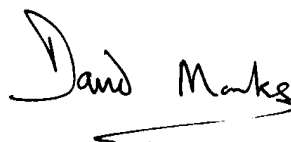
“that, having regard to the unprecedented challenges faced by this Council in setting its budget for the short and medium terms with cuts in funding from central government now expected to exacerbate an already critical situation caused by the Council living beyond its means for many years and plans for possible cuts in revenue expenditure in the range of £6m to £12m per annum by 2014/15, this Council requests the Executive Councillor for Finance & Customer Services to present to the next meeting a matrix of potential expenditure cuts for each year covering the period 2011/12 to 2014/15 setting out the measures that would be taken to meet cumulative budget reductions of £6m, £8m, £10m and £12m per annum”.

6. 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

Dated this 26th day of October 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 (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, 29 September 2010.

PRESENT: Councillor J J Dutton – Chairman.

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

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs B E Boddington, W T Clough, S J Criswell, R S Farrer, N J Guyatt, C R Hyams, Mrs P A Jordan, P G Mitchell, A Monk, Mrs D C Reynolds and P K Ursell.

29. PRAYER

Former Councillor J Garner of Sawtry opened the meeting with prayer.

30. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Merchant Navy Day

The Chairman expressed his gratitude to those Councillors who had supported him at the ceremony to commemorate the Merchant Navy by the raising of the Merchant Navy Flag.

(b) Anglia in Bloom

On behalf of the Council, the Chairman congratulated the various towns and groups in Huntingdonshire on their success in the recent Anglia in Bloom awards. In advising the Council that some award winners would be attending the national ceremony being held that day in Birmingham, the Chairman urged his colleague Members to encourage residents and businesses in their respective wards to take part or sponsor the event in future years.

(c) **Ramsey**

The Chairman congratulated Ramsey following the recent announcement that the town had been awarded Big Lottery funding of £1 million over ten years to help residents address local issues and develop the skills and confidence to change and influence matters in the town.

(d) **Local Democracy Day**

The Chairman encouraged Members to join in the activities planned for Local Democracy Day which were being held in the Civic Suite, Pathfinder House on 13th October 2010.

31. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 23rd June 2010 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

32. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillors B S Chapman, Mrs K E Cooper, D Harty, G S E Thorpe and S M van de Kerkhove declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute No. 38 (a), Item No. 29 and Minute No. 38 (c), Item No. 12 by virtue of their membership of St Neots Town Council.

33. 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. 34 during which time the common law rules of debate be observed by Members and applied by the Chairman.

34. COUNCIL DEBATE

(Councillor J A Gray took his seat in the Civic Suite at 7.15 pm and Councillor Mrs J A Dew left the meeting at 7.55 pm.)

Councillor A Hansard, Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health welcomed Dr S Brown, Chairman and Mrs E Sergeant, Managing Director of the Local GP Consortia: Hunts Health to the meeting to lead a discussion on the implications for the Council and the public of changes proposed in the Government White Paper "Equity and Excellence – Liberating the NHS". Before inviting Dr Brown to address Members, Councillor Hansard reminded the Council that the White Paper proposed a major restructuring, not just of health services but also of Councils' responsibilities in relation to health improvement and the co-ordination of health and social care as well as plans to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and devolve power for the delivery of health services locally.

With the assistance of a powerpoint presentation, Dr Brown explained that Hunts Health was a pilot organisation tasked with forming a consortia of GP practices which would work with other health and care professionals and in partnership with local communities and authorities to commission NHS services for their patients. He added that NHS Cambridgeshire would maintain statutory responsibility for all PCT functions until new statutory organisations were formed and that, thus far, ten practices were members of the consortia with several expressing an intention to join in the future. It was Dr Brown's view that this approach to health care could generate efficiencies across the NHS and improve social care and public health through stronger joint working.

In closing, Dr Brown welcomed the opportunity offered to address the Council at an early stage in the development of this process and indicated that he looked forward to building on the relationship which already existed between the NHS and the District Council.

Councillor G S E Thorpe asked how the new polyclinics envisaged by the Health Minister, Lord Darzi, would be funded. In response, Mrs Sergeant replied that it was her understanding that there would be a national formula for the allocation of funds based on prescribed criteria which would comprise a variety of measures including deprivation. Dr Brown added, in response to a question from Councillor M F Shellens, that he could not identify any major differences between the consortia proposals and the polyclinic model and although health care would remain free, GP consortia would have experience of patient care with clearer links to Hinchingsbrooke Hospital and social care agencies in the community.

In terms of the future role of the District Council, Dr Brown envisaged that the new approach would encourage GPs to get involved in all aspects of the community including housing, the environment and social inclusion issues all of which would demand the input of the District Council, local strategic partnership and neighbourhood management initiatives. He added that it was important that each organisation should co-operate and work positively together to avoid duplication of services for the health and well-being of all Huntingdonshire residents.

Following a question from Councillor R J West regarding the potential for conflict between the role of GPs in terms of health treatment and finance, Dr Brown accepted that there could be a conflict between the commissioning and service arms of the consortia but that GPs would not necessarily have an involvement in the process nor the decisions taken by the Hunts Health Board in this respect.

Referring to the Yaxley consortia, Councillor Mrs M Banerjee asked whether community care staff would be transferred to the new practice. Mrs Sergeant replied that this would be dependent upon an assessment, by the consortia, of the services they might wish to commission and provide. Furthermore and in response to a question by Councillor T V Rogers in respect of occupational therapy, Dr Brown added that the NHS also had to manage financial constraints imposed by the new Government efficiently and innovatively as possible to effect the levels of services which could be provided

particularly for the elderly and that the occupational therapy service would be one which would be considered at an early stage of the process.

Councillor P M D Godfrey drew attention to a perceived disparity of treatment and standard of health care available around the country which had led to some being more proactive than others in early diagnosis of health problems. He questioned whether Hunts Health would seek to encourage consistency across GP practices and discontinue local rationing to avoid raising patients' expectations about the level of service they may be likely to receive. In reply, Dr Brown acknowledged that there was a requirement to standardise care and, whilst levels of primary care in Huntingdonshire were good he was aware that services in some areas were more variable. He added that the new consortia approach would present an opportunity to improve standards across the District and that this represented one of the objectives of the new organisation.

Councillor Hansard drew attention to the proposal which suggested that the consortia would be required to monitor their own performance. Dr Brown indicated that he was unable to comment in detail on how this would be achieved but it was his expectation that guidance would become available to assist and encourage GPs to participate in a form of appraisal process.

Whilst commending the new approach, Councillor P J Downes raised two concerns relating to the importance of the relationship between GP practices and children's centres and the need to maintain enhanced levels of participation in patient groups. Dr Brown confirmed his support for the retention of both initiatives and reported that there would be a non-executive patient representative on the Hunts Health Board.

As Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates indicated the Council's willingness to engage with the consortia adding that the authority's involvement was essential to improve the health of residents in the District. He suggested that the new proposals represented, in his view, a return to GP group fund holding and that he would hope for their continued involvement in public health prevention so that issues relating to young smokers and obesity could continue to be addressed. Whilst there was some danger that preventative work might be lost, Dr Brown was hopeful that both local authorities and other agencies could progress joint initiatives but this would be subject to further discussions between partners.

Having commended the contents of the White Paper, Councillor P D Reeve asked about the practicalities and risk involved in its implementation. Dr Brown was of the view that the greatest risk to the process was failure, the loss of expertise and the difficulty in managing resources, including staff. However, if the proposal was to succeed it could result in less expensive, accessible and local health services.

To conclude the debate, Councillor Hansard thanked Dr Brown and Mrs Sergeant and colleagues for attending the Council meeting and for answering Members' questions.

35. FINANCIAL FORECAST

With the assistance of a report by the Director of Commerce & Technology (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) and referring to Minute No. 39, Item No. 20 post, the Executive Councillor for Finance & Customer Services addressed Members on the options available to the Council prior to commencement of the 2011/12 budget and medium term process. Mindful also of the outcome of the Government's comprehensive spending review to be announced on 20th October 2010, Councillor Rogers referred to a series of issues in detail.

Members were reminded that at 31st March 2010, the District Council had £15.9 million in revenue reserves and that £1.9 million had been set aside as a further contingency to meet any costs arising from steps which would be taken to achieve savings. Capital expenditure also was £6.2 million lower than budgeted. Councillor Rogers also explained and commended the continuation of the Council's approach to calculation of the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). Given the uncertainty over the Revenue Support Grant, Councillor Rogers advised that the Council had anticipated a 25% reduction in grant over the next five years which could, with formula changes, result in the loss of grant amounting £2.8 million by 2014/15.

Having regard to the forecast gap in funding, the Executive Councillor described the options available to the Council to increase fees and charges, reduce services or facilities or delete services altogether. More positively, he added that there were opportunities to attract additional grants. Councillor Rogers concluded by referring to the programme for the budget process, which included the implementation of schemes for voluntary and compulsory redundancy, and by pointing out that there might be an opportunity for the Council in 2011/12 to consider raising council tax without the risk of capping or other Government restraints.

Responding to Councillor Rogers' address, Councillor G S E Thorpe indicated his concern that the Council was to embark on a scheme of voluntary redundancy without having a clear plan of the services which the Council wished to retain. Whilst noting the Member's view, Councillor Rogers informed the Council that the enhanced voluntary redundancy scheme would be offered to senior management in the first instance and that thereafter regard would be given to the outcome of the recent public consultation and views expressed by the business sector when reviewing service provision.

Councillor P D Reeve was of the opinion that the shortfall in Government funding to the District Council could be offset by the Government's contribution to the European Union when it should be used to protect jobs and services locally.

Councillor M F Shellens urged the Council not to under-estimate how difficult it would be to achieve £2 million of reduction in net costs in 2011/12 and was of the opinion that urgent consideration should be given by Members to the strategic direction of the Council in terms of the services it could continue to provide in the future.

Whereupon, upon being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED

that the report and challenges to be addressed over the next five months be noted.

36. EXECUTIVE POLICY ISSUE

Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy & Transport updated the Council on the outcome of the recent Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment consultation exercise which had invited private and public land owners to identify land for the provision of future gypsy and traveller sites. Councillor Dew also advised the Council of the Government's latest statement in respect of gypsies and travellers issues.

The Council noted that the consultation had been successful in terms of the interest it had generated and that the events had been well attended. Some 3,000 representations regarding the appropriateness of potential sites had been received. Given the recent abolition of regional spatial strategies, Councillor Dew indicated that Government guidance appeared now to suggest that local authorities would be best placed to determine site provision for gypsies and travellers. The Government also currently was reviewing all relevant regulations and applicable planning policy guidance and pending the outcome of this review, Councillor Dew suggested that it would be inappropriate for the Council to make any decisions regarding site provision. However, he added that in this period of uncertainty, the Council would continue to robustly contest gypsy and traveller planning appeals and determine new proposals for temporary provision.

Having thanked the Executive Councillor for his statement, Councillor P M D Godfrey commented that the continuing uncertainty made it difficult for those Councillors with potential sites in their wards to be able to respond to residents. In acknowledging that the impasse was not helpful, Councillor Dew undertook to write on behalf of the Council to the appropriate Minister of State to request that the Government's review be concluded as quickly as possible. In answer to a similar question from Councillor Mrs Banerjee, Councillor Dew indicated his willingness to respond to enquiries from concerned residents should these be referred to him. In the meantime, he undertook to forward a copy of his statement to all Councillors.

Further to a question from Councillor P D Reeve, the Executive Councillor undertook to advise the questioner how many written representations submitted in response to the SHLAA exercise had been rejected because they were considered to be inappropriate. In conclusion and in answer to a question from Councillor S M van de Kerkhove, Councillor Dew concurred that whilst the current situation could result in an influx of planning applications, these would be determined in accordance with the development management process in the normal way.

37. DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE WORKING GROUP

By reference to a report by the Working Group appointed to undertake a review of the democratic structure (a copy of which is

appended in the Minute Book), Councillor K Churchill, Executive Councillor for Resources & Policy reminded the Council of the details of two aspects of the review which remained to be concluded. These related to the format of the Employment Panel, arrangements for meetings of the Employee Liaison Advisory Group and the way in which former Members and leading citizens of Huntingdonshire could be formally recognised by the Council.

Having regard to the conclusions of the Working Group and the views of the Cabinet, the Council

RESOLVED

- (a) that no change 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 comprise four Members of the Employment Panel, with meetings of ELAG being held approximately four 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 fifteen 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 Freeman and Honorary Freewoman be introduced by the Council;
- (e) that the Council Programme meeting, introduced as part of the Working's Group's initial proposals for the democratic structure review and comprising representatives of all political parties, be responsible for the identification of suitable individuals for the honorary titles referred to in resolutions (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.

38. FORMAT OF THE COUNCIL'S EXECUTIVE: THE CHOICE OF EXECUTIVE LEADER OR ELECTED MAYOR

Having regard to a report by the Head of Democratic & Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), Councillor K Churchill, Executive Councillor for Resources & Policy reminded the Council of the requirement, under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, to consider a new form of executive arrangement with effect from May 2011.

Councillor Churchill explained that the District Council had consulted

on two options – an executive leader or an elected mayor and that under both formats, the person elected or appointed would become responsible for the discharge of the Council’s executive functions. In accordance with the requirements of the Act, an extensive consultation exercise had been undertaken using a variety of measures from mid-May to the end of July. Whilst this had not attracted much interest, those who had responded had indicated a clear preference for an executive leader.

The Executive Councillor reminded the Council that it had previously 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 in the absence of any interest locally for an elected mayor, not justify the estimated cost of a referendum of approximately £125,000.

Having been satisfied that the consultation arrangements had been sufficient despite the poor response from the public, the Council

RESOLVED

that the proposals for a change in governance arrangements in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 as set out in Appendix B attached to the report now submitted be approved and a formal resolution to change the governance arrangements submitted to a Special Meeting of the Council convened for the purpose.

39. 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 July and 16th September 2010.

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In connection with Item No. 20, it was noted that the recommendation had been considered previously under Minute No. 35 ante.

On the same subject, and in response to a question from Councillor G S E Thorpe, the Leader, Councillor I C Bates undertook to consider the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) on the employment of external consultants at a future meeting of the Cabinet.

.....

In connection with Item No. 21, it was noted that the recommendation had been considered previously under Minute No. 38 ante.

.....

In connection with Item No. 24 and in response to a question from Councillor P L E Bucknell, Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy & Transport reported that Cambridgeshire County Council had taken a decision to delete £2 million from its transport budget which would have a consequential effect on the progress towards the introduction of civil parking enforcement. Councillor Dew indicated that he would keep the Council informed of developments in this regard.

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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 July and 16th September 2010 be received and adopted.

(b) Standards Committee

Mr D L Hall presented the Report of the meetings of the Standards Committee held on 8th July and 9th September 2010.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Standards Committee held on 8th July and 9th September 2010 be received and adopted.

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

Councillor J D Ablewhite presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 15th July and 9th September 2010.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 15th July and 9th September 2010 be received and adopted.

[In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No. 14.5, Councillor M F Shellens requested that it be recorded in the Minutes that he had abstained in the vote on the Motion.]

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

Councillor P M D Godfrey presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 13th July and 14th September 2010.

.....

In connection with Item No. 12 and in response to a question from Councillor G S E Thorpe, Councillor Godfrey reported that the Panel had not yet received a response from the Cabinet on the possibility of offering a package of help and guidance to town and parish councils to enable them to provide public conveniences if they chose to do so.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 13th July and 14th September 2010 be received and adopted.

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

Councillor R J West presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) held on 6th July and 7th September 2010.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) held on 6th July and 7th September 2010 be received and adopted.

(f) Development Management Panel

Councillor D B Dew presented the Report of the meetings of the Development Management Panel held on 19th July, 16th August and 20th September 2010.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Development Management Panel held on 19th July, 16th August and 20th September 2010 be received and adopted.

(g) Employment Panel

Councillor P A Swales presented the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 26th July 2010.

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In connection with Item No. 6, Councillor Swales expressed his appreciation to those Employees' Side representatives who had been involved in negotiations on the pay award for 2010/11 particularly given the difficult financial climate in which negotiations had taken place.

.....

In connection with Item No.7, Councillor Swales reported that the revised redundancy policy would now be sufficiently robust to be able to respond in the event that it was required to be used during the current legislative and economic climate.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 26th July 2010 be received and adopted.

(h) Appointments Panel

Councillor L M Simpson presented the Report of the meeting of the Appointments Panel held on 22nd July 2010.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Appointments Panel held on 22nd July 2010 be received and adopted.

(i) Corporate Governance Panel

Councillor T D Sanderson presented the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 30th June 2010.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 30th June 2010 be received and adopted.

40. ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Question from Councillor P J Downes to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates

Councillor Bates undertook to respond at the earliest opportunity to a question first asked by the questioner at the previous Council meeting in connection with the savings which had been achieved from the introduction of the doorstep collection of glass recyclables in the period 29th March - 4th May 2010.

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

In response to a question regarding a requirement to review planning guidance on wind turbines and wind farms, Councillor Dew reported that it was not his intention to update the Council's current policies given that policy CS1 relating to applications of this nature, contained in the District Council's Core Strategy, had been adopted in September 2009 and that supplementary planning guidance was published in 2006. Both documents were available on the intranet/internet.

Question from Councillor M F Shellens to the Executive Councillor for Finance & Customer Services, Councillor T V Rogers

In response to a question regarding the Council's position in the table of authorities with the lowest council tax level in England and Wales, Councillor Rogers replied that Huntingdonshire was placed in twentieth position with a band D council tax of £124.48 with West Dorset District Council in twenty-first place with a band D council tax of £124.42.

Question from Councillor R J West to the Deputy Leader, Councillor L M Simpson

In response to a question regarding the importance of Member development, Councillor Simpson concurred with the questioner and added that consideration was being given to extending the training available in those specialist areas expected of the role and responsibilities of a Councillor.

Question from Councillor M G Baker to the Chairman of the Council, Councillor J J Dutton

In response to a question regarding the content of an article contained in the periodical "Private Eye", Councillor Dutton reaffirmed how privileged he felt to be able to fulfil the position of Chairman of

the Council.

Question from Councillor B S Chapman to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates

In response to a question regarding the level of investment recently made by the District Council in St Neots, Councillor Bates concurred with the questioner that recent investments had demonstrated the District Council's commitment and that work would continue to address existing and emerging issues in the town.

Question from Councillor G S E Thorpe to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates

In response to a question regarding support for farmers markets in Huntingdonshire, Councillor Bates replied that he would verify his understanding of the support given to farmers markets by both the District and Town Councils and town centre initiatives and respond to the questioner in writing.

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

In response to a question regarding the benefit to Members of a training session on planning design and conservation issues, Councillor Dew undertook to look into the possibility of arranging such an event in the future.

Question from Councillor D M Tysoe to the Executive Councillor for Environment and Information Technology, Councillor J A Gray

In response to a question regarding the steps being taken by the District Council to expedite the connection of Hamerton village to main sewerage, Councillor Gray replied that he was aware that the existing system was not working satisfactorily but that the scheme of improvement was being progressed by a private company, albeit slowly, and that he and his colleague Executive Member, Councillor Dew, would seek to lobby for the scheme to be implemented as priority.

Question from Councillor M F Shellens to the Chairman of the Council, Councillor J J Dutton

In response to a question regarding the content of his letter to all Members dated 29th July 2010 concerning standards of behaviour and dress at Council meetings, Councillor Dutton confirmed that he had no intention of withdrawing the sentiments he had expressed in the letter at that time.

41. MEMBERSHIP OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND PANELS

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor P D Reeve indicated his wish to vary the membership of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) and accordingly, it was

RESOLVED

that Councillor P D Reeve be appointed to replace Councillor A Monk in the membership of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) with immediate effect.

The meeting concluded at 9.50 pm.

Chairman

Cabinet

Report of the meeting held on 21st October 2010

Matters for Decision

34. DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE REVIEW – 12 MONTHS ON

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the findings of a review by the Democratic Structure Review Working Party on the impact of changes made to the Council's democratic structure since its implementation in September 2009. A separate item appears elsewhere on the agenda for the Council meeting where the report can be found in full. The Cabinet has noted that the outcome of a consultation exercise with Members indicates support for the changes introduced by Council.

As the original remit of the Working Party has now been fulfilled, the Cabinet has agreed to retain the Working Party in its current format to consider and report, on an ad hoc basis, on legislative and other changes that may have an impact upon the Council's democratic structure such as the Decentralisation and Localism Bill, the possibility of a return to the Committee system, the Department of Health White Paper on changes in the delivery arrangements of health services, the localism and big society agenda and the outcome of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review. The Cabinet therefore

RECOMMEND

that no change be made to the current democratic structure of the Council as a result of the review of the measures approved by the Council at its meetings held in April and June 2009.

35. EXECUTIVE LEADER AND CABINET FORM OF EXECUTIVE

Pursuant to Item No. 29 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 29th September 2010, the Cabinet has considered the implications for the Council of its decision to change its executive arrangements to the Executive Leader and Cabinet model in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. A separate item appears on the agenda for the Special Council meeting where the report can be found in full. The Cabinet therefore

RECOMMEND

- (a) that the Council changes its form of executive with effect from 8th May 2011 to an Executive Leader and Cabinet in accordance with Section 11(2A) of the Local Government Act 2000; and
- (b) that changes to the Constitution listed in the Appendix to the report be approved with the exception of the changes to the Council Procedure Rules which should stand adjourned without discussion, after being moved and seconded, to the ensuing meeting of the Council to be held on 15th December 2010.

Matters for Information

36. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Pursuant to Item No. 30 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 29th September 2010, the Cabinet has reconsidered a report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels on their deliberations and proposals in response to the Council's performance against its priority objectives. The comments of the Corporate Plan Working Group concerning expenditure on the employment of external consultants and the need to address the strategic and future direction and development of the Council have also been drawn to the Cabinet's attention.

A review of the Council's policy framework and performance management system is currently underway to take account of Government announcements on the national performance arrangements. This review will also include measures to improve the understanding and transparency of the Council's performance and activities. A Redundancy Policy and Voluntary Release Scheme recently adopted by the Employment Panel contains clear guidance on the criteria to be used in determining proposals or applications for the release of employees.

The Cabinet has noted the Panels' comments. The Council's expenditure on the employment of external consultants has been referred back to the Corporate Plan Working Group for further review to include the criteria used in the appointment of consultants together with an assessment of the cost and value gained from using them. Contributions from opposition groups, all Members, employees, local businesses and the public have been and currently are being sought in identifying financial savings and a review of the Council's priorities, aims and objectives is being undertaken. The review will impact upon consequent service provision and levels and is being considered in the context of budget preparations for 2011/12 and future years. The views of the Corporate Plan Working Group, the Overview and

Scrutiny Panels and those expressed during the consultation exercises will be taken into account as part of the review process.

37. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING - 2010/11 BUDGET

The Cabinet has been acquainted with variations in the capital programme in the current year and has discussed cost variations and timing changes for 2011/12. Clarification has been received on the appropriate level of borrowing when compared to revenue which is projected as being 22% of the Council's total net spend in the year 2024/25 in accordance with the relevant financial rules and regulations.

38. FINANCIAL MONITORING – REVENUE BUDGET 2010/11

The Cabinet has noted the expected revenue budget variations already identified in the current year. Whilst welcoming a forecast reduction of £966,000 in the overall budget, the Cabinet's attention has been drawn to a number of uncertainties surrounding the actual expenditure incurred by the Council in respect of concessionary fares.

39. LAND ADJOINING 4 KINGSBROOK, ST IVES

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

The Cabinet has approved the disposal of Council owned land at Kingsbrook, St Ives and has authorised the Director of Central Services, or in his absence, the Head of Law, Property and Governance, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Leisure and Law, Property and Governance, to approve land sale transactions up to the value of £50,000.

40. HUNTINGDON TOWN CENTRE RE-DEVELOPMENT

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

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) (Item No. 20 of their Report refers) the Cabinet has been updated on progress with the redevelopment scheme in Huntingdon town centre.

Details of the economic benefits and opportunities arising from the proposed redevelopment have been noted. Updates were delivered on a number of matters, including negotiations concerning land ownership, funding of the Huntingdon West Relief Road and the financial and commercial risks arising from the proposals. Funding arrangements for the new link road have been discussed and the view expressed by Executive Members is that it would be preferable for the County Council to be party to meeting the funding gap pending the receipt of Section 106 monies.

The Director of Environmental & Community Services has been authorised to negotiate and conclude development agreements with Sainsbury's, Churchmanor Estates and Cambridgeshire County Council, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy, on the basis of heads of terms currently being considered and to agree funding arrangements for the Huntingdon West Relief Road until the future Section 106 receipts have been received. Additionally, the Cabinet has agreed to the release of Medium Term Plan funding for the construction of the multi-storey car park and the Huntingdon West Relief Road.

I C Bates
Chairman

Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being)

Report of the meeting held on 14th October 2010

Matters for Information

20. HUNTINGDON TOWN CENTRE RE-DEVELOPMENT

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

Prior to its consideration by the Cabinet, the Panel has considered a report on proposals to redevelop Huntingdon Town Centre. Members have been advised that the local economy is driven by the market towns through service, employment and retail provision. Although Huntingdon is regarded as the District's economic linchpin, its retail footprint (CACI) ranking has recently declined. It has been noted that retailers have raised particular concerns about low levels of trade occurring on Saturdays. Existing units in the town are too small to attract the higher quality retailers that residents require yet, owing to its location, there would be little difficulty in attracting this kind of retailer to Huntingdon.

The Panel has acknowledged that there is a need to protect and develop the local retail market, particularly as Huntingdonshire has significant exposure to the potential contraction of the public sector given that it provides approximately one third of local employment. The retail sector is known to create jobs. As well as protecting existing jobs, the proposals could create a significant number of new jobs. While Members have acknowledged that the required construction works will create employment, concerns have been raised that the works could have an adverse impact on trade levels. In this respect the Panel has recommended that the Council should seek to influence the sequence of developments in order to minimise disruption to trade.

It has been noted that work on developing Huntingdon has been ongoing for approximately ten years and that the implementation of the proposals cannot commence without the involvement and input of the District Council. Having examined at length the financing arrangements for the proposals, the Panel is of the view that a formal analysis of the risks involved should be undertaken and contingency plans then devised. Members are keen that the proposals should succeed and, following extensive discussions, they have outlined a number of concerns about them as they stand and made suggestions to mitigate risks to the Council.

This matter was considered by the Cabinet at their meeting on 21st October 2010. Item No. 40 of their Report refers.

**21. NEW HEADQUARTERS AND OTHER ACCOMMODATION:
CLOSING REPORT**

The Panel has considered a report reviewing the New Headquarters and Other Accommodation Project, which identifies lessons learnt that would be transferable to the inception, development and delivery of future projects.

The Panel has been advised that there are plans to sell Castle Hill House and the site originally proposed for Building 'A' once the property market shows signs of recovery. Members have also noted that although there is no demand at present for the sub-letting of part of Pathfinder House, if this is necessary in the future then the building could easily be subdivided.

22. ONE LEISURE FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE 2009/10

The Panel has reviewed the financial performance of One Leisure in 2009/10. There has been an improvement in the forecast financial position but the Council's forthcoming budgetary decisions could have an impact on the forecast. Efforts are made on an ongoing basis to reduce costs and staffing structures are constantly under review.

Members have indicated that the preparation of more detailed financial reports would be of value and could assist when considering future proposals and recommendations. In particular, it has been suggested that a distinction needs to be made between those areas of activity that compete with the private sector and others that have a purely "social" benefit, such as swimming, which are subsidised by the Council. One Leisure represents the largest and most complex division within the Council and the Council's accounting systems are not able to produce information on individual activities. It will, however, be possible to present the information that has been requested.

The Panel has noted that each Centre has a five year business plan for both the "social" and financial aspects of their operations, which are constantly updated. There is also an overall business plan for One Leisure.

Members have requested further information separating out the "social" services provided by One Leisure from those services that compete with the private sector. It will include key business indicators, reference to the business plans, the calculation of recharges and a breakdown of the staff structure at the Leisure Centres. The Panel has also requested an annual report on the performance of One Leisure.

23. LEISURE CENTRES HOSPITALITY PERFORMANCE AND FUTURE PLANS

The Panel has received a report on the financial performance of the hospitality section of One Leisure. Overall trends in hospitality have improved in recent years and in 2010/11 a profit of £45k is projected. However, the bars continue

to make a loss. Members have emphasised that both the bars and Impressions are competing with the private sector and as such should be run as businesses with clear business plans. Although action has already been taken to address the current situation, further measures need to be taken to reduce the deficit.

The Panel has questioned whether the Leisure Centres should have bars given that one of their objectives is to improve the health of the local population. In response, Members have been advised that there is continued demand for alcohol and sweets at the Leisure Centres, though there is a growing demand for healthier options. The Centres endeavour to cater for both tastes. Members feel that an assessment of the degree to which the bars attract customers to the Leisure Centres will assist their discussions when they receive further detailed reports on the overall performance of One Leisure.

Other Matters of Interest

24. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000 – FORWARD PLAN

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions. Members have been advised that the draft MTP will be presented to the Panel for consideration as a matter of course.

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

The Panel has reviewed its work progress. In the context of the study on the impact of the Licensing Act, Members have accepted the Alcohol Harm Reduction Co-ordinator's offer to attend a future meeting of the Panel to discuss the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy.

Members have been informed that arising from their recommendations on the Financial Strategy a meeting will be held with Town and Parish Councillors on 1st November 2010.

26. WORKPLAN

The Panel has reviewed its work plan and received details of studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels. Members have been advised that the review of performance development for employees is ongoing and that the outcome will be submitted to the Panel in due course.

The Panel has requested a report on the implications for Huntingdonshire of the abolition of the East of England Development Agency and its replacement by Local Enterprise Partnerships. Members have also suggested that the implications for the local economy of the Government's decision not to proceed with improvements to the A14 should be considered at a future meeting of the Panel.

27. SCRUTINY

The Panel has considered the latest edition of the Decision Digest and discussed matters contained therein. In light of recent Government announcements regarding the future of the Standards Committee, the Panel has questioned whether the appointment of Parish Council representatives to the Committee is necessary. Clarification of this matter will be circulated to Panel Members.

J D Ablewhite
Chairman

Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)

Report of the meeting held on 12th October 2010

Matters for Information

21. FLOODING IN ST IVES

The Panel has been updated with the ongoing problems being encountered by residents in St Audrey's Lane, Warren Road and Pig Lane in St Ives arising from the flooding of the foul sewerage system. The matter had first been raised in February 2008 when a petition signed by 26 people had been presented to a meeting of the Panel. Attention was also drawn by Councillor J W Davies to the problems being experienced by residents in West Street, St Ives as a result of unpleasant odours emanating from the sewers, together with his concerns about the capacity of the pumping station at Broadleas to deal with the impact of new developments in the area.

Having regard to the ongoing discussions with Anglian Water which had yet to produce a satisfactory conclusion to these issues, the Panel has agreed to establish a local drainage liaison group to offer local Members the opportunity to meet with Anglian Water and other relevant agencies to try and establish a way forward in tackling the problems. Councillor P M D Godfrey has been appointed as the lead member of this Group which will meet on an ad hoc basis.

As there may be similar problems experienced in other Wards within the District, it has also been agreed that concerns raised by other Members should be addressed to Councillor P M D Godfrey in the first instance who will decide whether a local liaison group for that area may be an appropriate way of addressing the issues raised.

22. CABINET FEEDBACK

The Panel has considered the Cabinet's response to their recommendations on the revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy and performance management and has been pleased to note that their recommendations with regard to the Spatial Strategy were accepted. Those relating to the Council's performance against its priority objectives will be considered as and when discussion takes place on the Budget, Corporate Plan, Community Strategy and systems of performance management.

23. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000: FORWARD PLAN

The Panel has been acquainted with details of the current Forward Plan of Key Decisions, which has been prepared by the Leader of the Council. Members have asked to see the report on the Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan prior to its consideration by the Cabinet in December 2010. Reports on the St Neots Urban Design Framework and the Environment Strategy are expected at the Panel's November and December meetings respectively.

24. WORK PLAN STUDIES

The Panel has been advised of progress made to date on its programme of studies and has received a report on the investigations being undertaken by the Working Group tasked with reviewing the role of the Planning Conservation Team.

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

The Panel has been advised of progress on issues that had been previously discussed and been updated on the discussions of a recent meeting of the Joint Accountability Committee, the future role of which is currently under review.

26. SCRUTINY

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

P M D Godfrey
Chairman

Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being)

Report of the meeting held on 5th October 2010

Matters for Information

23. STUDY: CONSULTATION PROCESSES

The Panel has begun a study on the Council's consultation processes. The purpose of the study is to determine whether the approach taken to consultation is suitable and consistent across the authority.

Details of the Council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy have been received, together with associated guidance and a list of consultations already undertaken by the Council. A consultation undertaken through District Wide earlier in the year found that half of respondents feel the Council does not listen to or consider the views of local residents; though doubt has been cast on whether this is representative of views generally in the District.

The Panel has discussed a number of matters including the role of pressure groups during consultations and public perception of the consultation process. It has been suggested that the Council should publicise its expectations of consultations prior to their commencement and that steps should be taken to explain why a chosen course of action has been taken following a consultation exercise. Other matters that have been discussed include the structure of questions posed within consultation documents and the importance of using consultation to support the role of Councillors in their decision making and in engaging with their constituents.

The Panel has suggested that the Neighbourhood Forums could be utilised more effectively to promote current and future consultations. The importance of communication, its ability to ensure consultations incorporate all sectors of the community including those in isolated rural areas, the prescriptive nature of some consultations and the need to analyse data on a Ward specific basis are matters that will be pursued in the course of the study. A copy of the Council's Communications Strategy has been circulated to Members for this purpose. The view also has been expressed that rigorous assessments should be undertaken into whether consultations are justified prior to their commencement and that when they have been concluded the effectiveness of consultations should be reviewed.

Finally, the Panel has discussed District Wide with a view to considering whether its format might need to be reconsidered in the future.

**24. HUNTINGDONSHIRE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP:
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES THEMATIC GROUP**

The Panel has been acquainted with the work of the Children and Young People Thematic Group of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership and with details of how it intends to achieve its objectives. The latest progress report by the Thematic Group, which includes its terms of reference, membership and current matters being considered, has also been received together with details of its achievements to date and the risks that have been identified that might prevent its objectives from being achieved.

The Panel has suggested that some priority should be accorded to reviewing the Council's role in shaping new residential developments. There is a perceived shortfall in the availability of facilities for some sectors of new and developing communities; for example, children. Lessons might be learnt in terms of the housing mix and of access to or provision of facilities.

To aid their understanding of its work, Members have requested further background information on the Thematic Group. It has also been decided to invite the relevant Executive Member to a future meeting to discuss its work.

A Member led review is being undertaken by the County Council's Children and Young Peoples Services Committee on integrating children and young people's services and social infrastructure provision into the County's new communities. A copy of the report will be circulated to Panel Members for information purposes.

**25. NHS CONSULTATION:
PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICES IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

Members have made a series of comments in respect of NHS Cambridgeshire's current consultation on pharmaceutical services in Cambridgeshire. These comments will be forwarded on to NHS Cambridgeshire. The consultation seeks views on the range and quality of pharmaceutical services in Cambridgeshire, the times during which they are available, their location and any other aspect of these services. It is intended to inform the Primary Care Trust's Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment, which it is required to complete by 1st February 2011.

The Panel has queried a number of matters, including the design of the consultation document and its distribution. Members are concerned that all sectors of the community should have an opportunity to respond, particularly those that use existing pharmacies. It has been suggested that in future NHS consultations should endeavour to elicit information on where respondents live in order better to understand local needs.

The value to be gained from undertaking the present consultation also has been queried and in response, the Panel has been informed that it will assist the Primary Care Trust (PCT) to manage the number of pharmaceutical outlets that operate in Cambridgeshire. This is significant because the PCT is required to contribute £40,000 in establishment payments to each pharmacy per year.

26. CAMBRIDGESHIRE ADULTS WELL-BEING AND HEALTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Panel has received an update on matters currently being considered by the Cambridgeshire Adults Well-Being and Health Scrutiny Committee, which include the Government's proposals to reform the NHS as outlined within the "Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS" White Paper, adult support services, training on dementia for care home staff and membership of the neo-natal intensive care joint committee.

Other Matters of Interest

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

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies. Members have been informed that the Strategic Health Authority will shortly be making an announcement on which company will be awarded the contract to manage Hinchingsbrooke Hospital.

28. WORK PLAN STUDIES

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

29. 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 Cambridgeshire Local Investment Plan prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

30. SCRUTINY

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

S J Criswell
Chairman

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Development Management Panel

Report of the meeting held on 18th October 2010

Matters for Information

**10. URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK:
ST NEOTS EASTERN EXPANSION**

Following a presentation on the proposed urban design framework for the development of land east of the railway line in St Neots and discussion on the objectives to be achieved, the Panel has made a series of comments for consideration by the Cabinet prior to adoption of the framework document.

Principally these comments relate to –

- ◆ the impact of the development on local traffic in Little Paxton and Priory Park and on the A428;
- ◆ the importance of the improvement (dualling) scheme for the A428 Caxton to the A1 Black Cat roundabout and the desire that this should proceed in the short-term;
- ◆ the establishment of a new secondary school for the town;
- ◆ the integration of the new development by footpath, cycleway and road with the existing town;
- ◆ the provision of much-needed community facilities;
- ◆ awareness of the potential impact of a retail unit in the “district centre” which could have a detrimental effect on the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre;
- ◆ the need to take account of the findings of the St Neots health check; and
- ◆ the need to consider carefully the planning of the development in terms of phasing and size albeit accepting that the latter could generate Section 106 contributions which could achieve the facilities considered to be desirable by the Panel

Notwithstanding these views, the Panel accepted the potential design parameters and objectives contained in the design framework.

**11. SECTION 207 – TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990:
TREE REPLACEMENT NOTICE**

The Panel have agreed that a Tree Replacement Notice should be served under Section 207 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 on the owner of a property in Meadow Lane, Hemingford Grey. The owner had been permitted to fell a tree that was subject to a Tree

Preservation Order on the proviso that a scots pine was planted in its place. As the replacement tree has not yet been planted, the Panel considered that action to serve a Tree Replacement Notice was appropriate to secure compliance with the original TPO and to maintain the visual amenity of the area.

Should similar circumstances arise in the future, the Panel also has authorised the Head of Planning Services or in his absence, the Planning Service Manager (Policy), to serve Tree Replacement Notices under Section 207 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 where he considers this to be appropriate.

12. DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

In terms of the applications determined by the Panel in October, all nine related to minor development schemes of which seven were approved and two refused.

13. APPEAL DECISIONS

The Panel regularly monitors the outcome of appeals to the Planning Inspectorate against refusal of planning permission by the District Council. On this occasion, the Panel has been informed that the appellant in the case of an application for development at RAF Upwood, Ramsey Road, Bury, which was dismissed on appeal, has applied for judicial review of the decision made by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in respect of a proposal to redevelop the former airfield for mixed uses including housing, employment, a neighbourhood centre and open space.

P G Mitchell
Chairman

Employment Panel

Report of the meeting held on 27th September 2010

Matter for Decision

**8. POLICY REVIEW:
REDUNDANCY SCHEME AND VOLUNTARY RELEASE SCHEME**

Pursuant to Item No. 7 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 29th September 2010, the Panel has endorsed the content of a revised Redundancy Policy and Voluntary Release Scheme. The latter was approved subject to minor amendment to the selection procedure criteria and further clarification on eligibility criteria which had been suggested by the Council's independent legal advisers. Both have been subject to consultation with employees and their representatives.

The Panel has discussed the appeals process for both elements of the Scheme and the timetable for the Voluntary Release Scheme. The Voluntary Scheme will be rolled out in two phases to all eligible staff from 28th September 2010 to 12th January 2011 and will be supported through a comprehensive communications plan to ensure that communication is maintained at all times with employees.

As the appeals process for this Scheme will be dealt with through the Council's grievance procedure, the Panel has authorised amendments to be made to the Grievance Policy to include the Chief Executive and Chief Officers. Furthermore, the Panel has requested that in the case of appeals hearings involving Chief Officers and Heads of Service, the Appeals Sub-Group that is convened should include an Executive Member.

Whilst it is inevitable that the application of both elements of the Scheme will require changes to be made to the Council's organisational structure, particularly when having regard to the Council's ongoing savings and efficiency programme, Chief Officers and the Chief Executive respectively have been authorised to instigate and implement any Directorate or cross-Directorate restructuring(s) and the release of employees as a result of the take-up of the Voluntary Release Scheme or application of the Redundancy Policy.

In accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Panel has identified the need to extend the remit of the current Appointments Panel to include the dismissal of employees at Head of Service, Chief Officer and above. This will require the subsequent

reconstitution of the Panel to reflect this change. As this will require formal approval from the Council, it is

RECOMMENDED

that the Council

- (a) approves an extension to the remit of the Appointments Panel to include the dismissal of employees at Head of Service, Chief Officer and above in accordance with the Officer Employment Procedure Rules; and**
- (b) reconstitutes the Appointments Panel as the Employee Selection Panel as a result of recommendation (a) above.**

Matters for Information

9. STRESS MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Panel has considered the content of a revised Stress Management Policy which was updated to take into account guidance issued by the Health and Safety Executive together with a number of changes made to organisational procedures since the policy was initially adopted in 2003. Subject to amendments to the employee and manager self assessment forms contained within the stress management toolkit to include questions relating to an employee's personal circumstances, the Policy has been endorsed by the Panel.

10. SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME

The Panel has been acquainted with progress towards the achievement of the Corporate Equality Policy Action Plan and approved the content of a new Single Equality Scheme. The latter was prompted by the Equality Act 2010 which now brings together all equalities matters into a single framework. A progress report and the findings from the Equality Impact Assessments conducted during 2009/10 were also received.

11. REQUESTS TO FILL VACANT POSTS

Having been satisfied that it is essential to recruit to a vacancy in the Environmental Management Division, the Panel has authorised the Head of People, Performance and Partnerships to commence recruitment to the post identified.

P A Swales
Chairman

Corporate Governance Panel

Report of the meeting held on 28th September 2010

Matters for Information

6. VALUE FOR MONEY CONCLUSION 2009/10

The Panel has considered the results of the Value for Money (VFM) conclusion undertaken by the Council's External Auditors which is intended to determine whether sufficient arrangements are in place for the Council to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Having been acquainted with the key findings and actions required by the Council and noting the "unqualified conclusion" reached by the External Auditors, the Panel has agreed to adopt an associated action plan which is intended to assist the authority improve its performance in key areas of its activity.

7. DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE WORKING GROUP

The Panel has endorsed the findings of the Democratic Structure Working Group regarding the membership of the Employee Liaison Advisory Group and the proposal to introduce the titles of Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen for past Members of the Council and Honorary Freemen and Freewomen for local citizens. Conferment of the titles on individual past Members and citizens will require a formal resolution of the Council in each case. The recommendations have subsequently been approved at the meeting of the Council held on 29th September 2010.

8. FORMAT OF THE COUNCIL'S EXECUTIVE: THE CHOICE OF EXECUTIVE LEADER OR MAYOR

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 has introduced significant changes to the Leader and Cabinet system and has narrowed the choice of executive arrangements open to local authorities to -

- ◆ an elected Mayor and Cabinet appointed by him; or
- ◆ an Elected Leader appointed by the Council from its membership and a Cabinet appointed by the Leader.

These executive arrangements have been the subject of a public consultation exercise which indicated a clear preference for an Executive Leader. Having regard to the outcome of the consultation together with the views of the Democratic Structure Working Party on

the matter, the Panel has recommended to Council that the proposals for a change in governance arrangements to an Executive Leader and Cabinet Executive be approved. This was endorsed subsequently at the Council meeting on 29th September 2010.

9. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SYSTEM OF INTERNAL AUDIT

The outcome of a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal audit has been received by the Panel which is a requirement of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003. To support the four key elements of the review, details of the current risk assessment matrix, and the Annual Internal Audit Report have also been provided. Members were informed of the Audit & Risk Manager's opinion that limited assurance was provided by the Council's internal control environment in terms of the effective exercise of its functions.

Having raised a number of questions with regard to specific issues identified with the annual report, the Panel agreed that the information provided should be taken into account as part of their deliberations on the Corporate Governance Statement.

10. GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

The Panel has approved the Governance Statement which summarises the corporate governance work carried out in 2009/10 and identified matters to be addressed during 2010/11. The Statement has been produced following the annual review of the Council's Governance arrangements and is an essential element to ensure proper governance practice in the conduct of the Council's business, in safeguarding the use of resources and in engendering confidence in the accountability and integrity of the Council.

11. APPROVAL FOR PUBLICATION OF THE 2009/10 ACCOUNTS

Following an audit of the accounts, the Panel has approved the revised accounts for 2009/10 for publication. In doing so, the Panel has noted the report of the External Auditor and the associated action plan which highlights the key issues arising from the Council's financial statements for the year ending 31st March 2010.

Having endorsed the Council's Letters of Representation which sets out the actions taken by the Council to ensure its financial records are accurate, Members have been informed by the Council's external auditors that an "unqualified opinion" will be provided on the accounts.

12. COUNCIL TAX COMPLAINT: AWARD OF COMPENSATION

The Panel has been advised of the details of a complaint against the Council by a member of the public and the terms of a compensatory payment approved as a consequence thereof.

T D Sanderson
Chairman