

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, 25 April 2012.

PRESENT: Councillor J J Dutton – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, S Akthar,
M G Baker, K M Baker, Mrs M Banerjee,
I C Bates, Mrs B E Boddington,
P L E Bucknell, G J Bull, E R Butler,
S Cawley, B S Chapman, K J Churchill,
S J Criswell, I J Curtis, J W Davies,
Mrs J A Dew, D B Dew, P J Downes,
R S Farrer, J A Gray, S Greenall, N J Guyatt,
A Hansard, G J Harlock, R Harrison, D Harty,
R B Howe, C R Hyams, A R Jennings,
Mrs P J Longford, A J Mackender-Lawrence,
L W McGuire, P D Reeve, T V Rogers,
T D Sanderson, M F Shellens, P A Swales,
R G Tuplin, D M Tysoe, P K Ursell,
P R Ward, R J West and A H Williams.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors W T Clough, P Godley, Mrs P A Jordan, S M Van De Kerkhove, Mrs D C Reynolds and J S Watt.

62. PRAYER

Prior to commencement of formal proceedings, the Reverend A Milton, Team Rector for Huntingdon Ministry invited those present to join him in Prayer.

63. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Councillor P M D Godfrey

The Chairman paid tribute to former Councillor P M D Godfrey who passed away on 2nd April 2012 after a long illness. Councillor Godfrey had represented Earith Ward since 2006 and was elected Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) in May 2009.

Councillor J D Ablewhite, Executive Leader, described Councillor Godfrey as a man of courage and conviction who was devoted to serve those he represented in his Ward and Parish. Councillor Ablewhite announced that the Conservative Group had agreed to fund a memorial bench which would be placed in Samian Court in memory of Councillor Godfrey.

As Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor P J Downes expressed his admiration for the way in which

Councillor Godfrey had conducted himself during his illness and for the manner in which he had Chaired the Overview and Scrutiny Panel. He added that Councillor Godfrey had been an asset to the Council and would be sadly missed.

On the conclusion of further tributes to Councillor Godfrey made by Councillors K M Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, P L E Bucknell, D B Dew, D Harty and T V Rogers, the Council stood for a few moments in memory of their former colleague.

(b) Equality and Diversity Award

The Chairman was pleased to announce that the Council had been awarded "Achieving Status" by the Local Government Association against the "Equality Framework for Local Government" following an external review.

(c) Chairman's Fundraising

The Chairman announced that he had raised a total of £7,400 for his chosen charities – Alzheimer's Society (Huntingdonshire), Parkinson's UK (Huntingdonshire), Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre (Huntingdonshire) and St. John's Ambulance (Huntingdonshire).

The Council also was advised that the Chairman had awarded grants to charities and organisations across the District amounting to approximately £3,500.

(d) Chairman's Correspondence

Having reminded Members that he had, on their behalf, congratulated Her Majesty the Queen on the occasion of the 60th Anniversary of her accession to the throne, the Chairman reported that he had subsequently received a response in which the Queen had sent her good wishes to the Council for a memorable and enjoyable Diamond Jubilee Year.

(e) Awards to the Chairman

Councillor Mrs B E Boddington, Vice-Chairman of the Council drew the Council's attention to two awards which had recently been presented to the Chairman, Councillor J J Dutton.

Members joined in a round of applause on the appointment of Councillor Dutton as a Member of the President's Club, in recognition of the support he had offered to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Outward Bound Association and for his admission as a Serving Brother in the Order of St. John with effect from 4th April 2012.

(f) Membership of the Council

The Chairman referred to the impending retirement of Councillors Mrs J A Dew, P Godley, P A Swales, P Ward and J S Watt, all of whom had indicated that they were not seeking re-election to the District Council in May 2012. The Council

recorded their thanks to those Members for their services during their respective periods of office and extended best wishes to them and their families for the future. The Chairman and Councillor Mrs B E Boddington added their own personal tributes for the contributions made to the life of the Council by Councillors Mrs J A Dew and P A Swales.

In response, Councillor Swales thanked Members for their kind words and indicated that it had been a privilege and honour to serve the District of Huntingdonshire. He paid tribute to his colleagues on the Development Management Panel, to his wife Pam for her support and for the help and guidance he had received from Officers over the years.

64. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 22nd February 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

65. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillors I C Bates, K Churchill, S J Criswell, P J Downes, J J Dutton, R S Farrer, N J Guyatt, D Harty, P D Reeve and R J West declared a personal interest in Minute No. 70(a), Item No. 72 by virtue of their membership of Cambridgeshire County Council.

66. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: SECTION 87 - EARITH WARD

The Chairman reported that the by-election to be held in the Earith Ward following the recent death of Councillor P M D Godfrey would be called once the appropriate requisition had been received.

67. GENERAL POWER OF COMPETENCE AND FREEDOM TO PRAY

Having regard to the recent High Court ruling that "the saying of prayers as part of the formal meeting of a Council is not lawful under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972", a subsequent appeal against the ruling in the case and advice received from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services as to how the Council would wish the matter to be dealt with at future meetings, it was moved by the Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite, duly seconded and

RESOLVED

that the saying of prayers be held as part of the formal meeting of the Council with effect from the Annual Meeting on 16th May 2012.

68. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

By way of a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Council was advised that the NJC for Local Government Staff Services had decided not to offer local government employees a pay award in 2012. Given that this mechanism also is used to adjust Members' allowances annually, the Council noted that, in these circumstances, there would be no increase in Members' allowances with effect from

16th May 2012 ie. the date of the Annual Council Meeting.

69. "WHAT WILL LOCALISM MEAN TO OUR PARISH COUNCIL?"

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. 69 during which time the Common Law Rules of Debate be observed by Members and applied by the Chairman.

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Deputy Executive Leader and Executive Councillor with responsibility for localism, Councillor N J Guyatt welcomed County Councillor L W McGuire and all representatives of Town and Parish Councils to the meeting. Councillor Guyatt was pleased to invite Mr I Dewar, Chief Executive of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils to open the debate on "What Will Localism Mean to our Parish Council".

Mr Dewar explained the role of the Association in offering guidance and support to Town and Parish Councils. In his view, whilst the Localism Act would present a serious challenge to the Sector, in reality the Act had only formalised what Parish Councils may already have been doing for many years. Referring specifically to the Act, Mr Dewar mentioned the "community right to bid" for local assets of community value and the "community right to challenge". However, he was concerned at the limited detail available on the new rights and powers for communities and commented that the Act was short in the explanation of terminology and the definition of terms. Mr Dewar questioned whether a local council could deliver services in a sustainable or cost-effective way. He also expressed concern at the suggested "community right to build" and whilst accepting that this power could give a local community the opportunity to deliver affordable housing, questioned how this could be achieved in a sustainable way.

Mr Dewar also expressed interest in how the general power of competence would develop. He reported that he had given presentations on the Act to a number of Parishes, several of which had not expressed any interest in further development whilst others had wished to see increased employment and housing opportunities but found it difficult to understand how this could be achieved. He looked forward to the assistance that the local planning authority might offer in this connection.

Mr Dewar indicated his disappointment at the proposed changes to the Standards regime and was unclear whether the intentions of the Act in this respect would be of any benefit to the parish sector or indeed any other tier of local government.

At present, Mr Dewar reported that he was looking at the various

issues arising from the Act with a group of Councils in Cambridgeshire to decide how best Councils could organise themselves. It was his intention to record the outcome of this work to assist other Councils in the future. The Group was considering the expectations of their communities, the capacity of Parish Councils to undertake new functions, sustainability and infrastructure issues.

However, Mr Dewar reiterated his concerns that the Act and governance process needed to be clearer. He urged all parties to be open to the opportunities which may be presented by the Act, to look forward to improved consultation, the development of partnerships and the establishment of a robust Charter which would enable all tiers of Government to work together in a more cost-effective way. To achieve all these objectives, Mr Dewar concluded by stating that he looked towards the District Council for its assistance.

Councillor Mrs L Craig, Chairman of Houghton and Wyton Parish Council was invited to address the Council. Councillor Mrs Craig acknowledged that it was in the interests of all tiers of Government to work together and that she was frustrated that a promised meeting arrangement and neighbourhood planning tool kit was not yet in place for this purpose. Councillor Mrs Craig described the Parish of Houghton and Wyton and the facilities available in the village and was hopeful that the Act would assist the Parish Council in maintaining the village and its surrounding countryside. Lastly, Councillor Mrs Craig questioned from where funding could be sourced to enable the Parish Council to implement aspects of the Act.

The Chairman of Buckden Parish Council, Councillor T F Hayward was invited to address the Council. Councillor Hayward also enquired as to the progress of the neighbourhood tool kit which had been promised to parish councils at a meeting on a proposed Town and Parish Charter in January. He considered that this partnership could present the opportunity for all tiers of Government to work together on regional strategies such as the A14 and other road infrastructure concerns in the area. He was anxious that the village boundary in Buckden would be maintained and that the Parish Council would not have to argue its case again. Councillor Hayward advised Members that his Parish Council was unsure how to respond to the challenges of the Act, how it would impact on the Parish Council's budget and how the Parish Council could attract individuals in the community to serve on the Council to take on these additional responsibilities. He added that it was difficult to attract sufficient Parish Councillors as it was without the new responsibilities suggested by the Act and that he was aware that the political parties found it just as difficult to encourage people to stand for the District and County Councils. He expressed concern at the abilities of the Parish Council to meet its new responsibilities and any additional new powers which may be devolved to it. He also referred to the influence of community groups and questioned whether these groups could override the authority of the Parish Council. He was also concerned at the cost of holding referenda and the underlying issues raised in an article by George Jones and George Stewart which appeared in the first edition of the publication "Local Council Review".

In his capacity as Councillor for Huntingdon Town Council, Councillor A MacKender-Lawrence addressed the meeting. Although making it

clear that the views he presented were not those of the Town Council, he referred to the return of the Town Council to offices in the Market Square in Huntingdon and the opportunity this offered to residents of the town to take ownership of the Market Place and High Street and to engage with the community to re-develop areas in the town under the Bid Process. As an illustration, Councillor MacKender-Lawrence made reference to a recent exchange visit to Gubbio in Italy where he had observed how the local authority worked in partnership with the town it represented.

He acknowledged that it might be difficult to effect a change in culture and interest in the town but considered that the first step should be to ask the community how it wished to develop its ideas. In terms of shared services and notwithstanding the excellent work of the District Council's Grounds Maintenance Team, Councillor MacKender-Lawrence could foresee that it was in the interests of the Town Council to take responsibility for the maintenance and use of play areas. With the Town Council now occupying Huntingdon Town Hall, Councillor MacKender Lawrence considered that there was also an opportunity to deliver leisure and tourism and in particular suggested that the Town Hall could host a tourist information point. This work could be undertaken in conjunction with Huntingdon Town Partnership as it was the objective of both organisations to increase footfall in the town centre. Above all, it was his desire to take whatever opportunities presented to increase the number of visitors to Huntingdon.

In response to comments about dual-hatted Councillors, Councillor S J Criswell, Chairman of Somersham Parish Council and District and County Councillor considered that membership of two or three tiers of local council gave a Member a broader view and a more comprehensive understanding of local government and avoided the danger of a Councillor working in isolation. Whilst the different tiers of authority could assume changed roles under localism it might not be easy to meet the aspirations of communities. He considered that, whilst it was essential to grasp the principles of localism, there were parish councils who had already been active in many areas regardless of the new ideas contained in the Act.

Brief mention was made of a proposed new approach to the neighbourhood forums which might involve the opportunity to recommend expenditure on local needs. Councillor Criswell also pointed out the advantages presented by the "Shape My Place" Initiative. He accepted that further work required to be undertaken but urged the District, in partnership with the County, to have the vision to maximise the opportunities presented by localism and to offer help and guidance to parish councils in this regard.

Councillor M G Baker suggested that whilst he had listened with great interest to the speakers thus far, he was concerned that the Councils in Parishes he represented would become disillusioned as local communities would not be granted powers to address issues as they might have envisaged - for example to resist the location of traveller sites. On a similar theme, Councillor P J Downes, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group accepted that, in principle, the Act appeared to suggest that decisions locally could be made by those directly affected but, in practice, it was difficult to see how this could be

implemented. It was difficult to envisage how local government finance could be devolved to the smaller councils. He also expressed concern at the difficulty in attracting individuals to serve as parish Councillors and in deciding why this appeared to be the case and indicated that he would like to see localism being used to generate participation in local decision making. Councillor Downes also was anxious about the relationship which might develop between community groups and democratically elected Councils given that sporadic groups could promote issues that were not acceptable. Whilst Councillor Downes had concerns and accepted that it would be a challenge, he indicated that he desperately wanted the principles of localism to be a success.

Councillor P D Reeve expressed his pleasure at the attendance of local councils at the meeting suggesting that the role of the Parish Councillor was under-appreciated but critical to the success of local government. He added that the idea of localism was partly irrelevant given the number of Councils who had already been working locally on similar issues for a long time.

The National Planning Policy Framework and the Localism Act had, in the view of Councillor Reeve, offered so much but delivered little. He was concerned at the cost of implementing neighbourhood plans, the inability of local councils to stop unacceptable development or activities, considered that the District Council had a role in assisting Parish Councils and urged Councils not to lose heart as the impact of localism unfolded.

Whilst promising much, Councillor D B Dew expressed his disappointment at what localism could usefully bring to local government. He also considered that it was imperative to clarify what District and Parish Councils could achieve given the inclusiveness currently of arrangements in the planning process which involved Parish Councils in consultation on development proposals and the joint working evident in meetings of the Traffic Management AJCs.

On the same theme, the Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite suggested that the District Council had embraced localism before it had been proposed given its involvement with local community groups and Town and Parish Councils. His main concern, however, was how to manage the aspirations of the Parish Councils given the varying levels of precepts and how to encourage people to get involved in working for their Parish. In closing, Councillor Ablewhite undertook to ensure that the District Council would endeavour to improve its communications with Parish Councils.

Councillor R J West urged the Council to have patience with the principles of localism as he believed it needed time to nurture and grow. He too recognised the difficulties which lay ahead for Parish Councils given the absence of funding and the paucity of skilled volunteers.

Having commended the contribution by Councillor MacKender-Lawrence, Councillor C R Hyams expressed disappointment that local communities would continue only to be consultees especially in the planning process and that the powers which had been promised had not been forthcoming. Councillor R B Howe also acknowledged the

challenges presented by localism and suggested that whilst there were opportunities for neighbourhoods or parishes to co-exist, for efficiency reasons, this might result in the loss of a village or community identity.

As Mayor of St. Neots, Councillor B S Chapman suggested that dual or triple hatted Councillors often were stronger and better informed and he believed that such individuals enriched the Town Council. He also considered that volunteer groups benefited all Councils and drew attention to the outcome of discussions with Town Councils on the provision of CCTV in the District as an indication of what could be achieved. He also referred to a series of other examples where St. Neots were working in partnership with community groups.

Councillor Mrs M Banerjee encouraged all tiers of local government to work together and underlined the importance of consultation and Councillor M F Shellens added his concerns to those previously expressed regarding the number of people who wished to come forward to volunteer to help the community in which they lived, the risk of disillusionment and the need to manage expectations.

It was the view of Councillor I C Bates that a thriving community would find a way to achieve what it required regardless of localism and it would be difficult to devolve further functions or funding given the need for the District Council to be accountable for both.

County Councillor L W McGuire responded to the debate by reminding the Council that each tier of Government was responsible for specific functions and that each should work together to enhance community engagement. He too had difficulty in understanding what was meant by localism and he considered that this had been practiced locally for some time, referring specifically to the decision of the County Council to devolve certain highway related matters to Parish Councils and the "Making Assets Count" Project. Councillor McGuire confirmed that whilst the County Council was meeting regularly with CPALC there continued to be difficulty in understanding what was truly meant by "localism".

In closing the debate, Councillor Guyatt thanked all the speakers who had contributed to the meeting. He invited all Parish Councils to respond to the consultation being led by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and underlined the importance, in his view, of issues, being dealt with at the appropriate level locally. Whereupon, at 8.50pm, it was

RESOLVED

that the meeting stand adjourned to allow Town and Parish Council representatives to leave the Civic Suite.

Upon resumption at 8.55pm.

70. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, PANELS AND COMMITTEE

(a) Cabinet

Councillor J D Ablewhite, Executive Leader of the Council

and Chairman of the Cabinet presented the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 28th February, 22nd March and 19th April 2012.

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In connection with Item No. 61 and in response to a question from Councillor S Greenall, Councillor Ablewhite confirmed that savings arising from the deletion of the post of Housing Services had not been included in the budget or Medium Term Plan.

On the same subject and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, Councillor Ablewhite was confident that the deletion of the post of Head of Housing Services would not impact upon the delivery of the front line housing service.

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In connection with Item No. 62 and in response to a question from Councillor P D Reeve, Councillor Ablewhite indicated that he was unable, in the current financial climate and in the absence of future Government guidance on this issue, to commit to a position whereby the Authority would not approve the development of wind farms on District Council land.

On the same subject and in response to a further question from Councillor Reeve, Councillor Ablewhite confirmed that he was not presently aware of any proposal to develop a wind farm on District Council owned land.

On the same subject and in response to a question from Councillor J A Gray, Councillor Ablewhite assured the questioner that there would be full consultation with Town and Parish Councils at the time when the District Council decided to update its current supplementary planning guidance on wind power.

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In connection with Item No. 66 and upon being moved by the Chairman, Councillor J J Dutton and duly seconded by Councillor N J Guyatt, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Huntingdonshire Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule 2012, the CIL Instalment Policy and the CIL Regulation 123 Infrastructure List be approved for implementation from 1st May 2012; and
- (b) that subject to the approval of the above, the "correctable error" for the Charging Schedule referred to in paragraph 4.2 of the report of the

Head of Planning Services now submitted be approved as a point of legal clarification.

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In connection with Item No. 70 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes on the review of the Neighbourhood Forums, Councillor S J Criswell reported that a draft Constitution recommending a new method of operation had been sent to Town and Parish Councils that day, that it had been proposed that the Forum should operate within revised geographical boundaries and that they should involve all County, District and Town and Parish Council representatives; copies of the consultation document had been issued to all Members and he was hopeful that the Council would take the opportunity to respond.

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In connection with Item No. 71 and in response to a question from Councillor D B Dew, Councillor Ablewhite advised the Council that progress had been made in seeking to secure an alternative premises for St. Ives District Rifle and Pistol Club which had been required to vacate their current accommodation at One Leisure, St. Ives due to the redevelopment of the existing buildings.

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In connection with Item No. 72 and in response to a question from Councillor P A Swales, Councillor Ablewhite confirmed that the arrangements for the future management of the District Council's HR and Payroll Service would be reviewed and monitored by the Corporate Governance Panel.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 28th February, 22nd March and 19th April 2012 be received and adopted.

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

Councillor T V Rogers presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 28th February, 8th March and 5th April 2012.

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In connection with Item No. 55 and in response to a question by Councillor P J Downes, Councillor Rogers indicated that,

as far as he was aware, the Council had not yet developed any measures to monitor the performance of the proposed new HR Service. However, he reported that the Panel had recommended the inclusion of various terms within the Agreement which would enable it to review performance at various stages. Councillor Ablewhite added that negotiations were ongoing to secure the best possible service through a Service Level Agreement.

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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 28th February, 8th March and 5th April 2012 be received and adopted.

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

Councillor D Harty presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 13th March and 10th April 2012.

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In connection with Item No. 49 and in response to a question from Councillor P D Reeve, Councillor Harty undertook to establish the reasons why it had been decided to use a German rather than British company to install solar panels at Eastfield House and to reply in writing to the questioner.

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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 March and 10th April 2012 be received and adopted.

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

Councillor S J Criswell presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) held on 6th March and 3rd April 2012.

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In connection with Item No. 63, Councillor P J Downes indicated his support for the views expressed by the Panel that representation on the proposed Police and Crime Panel should be drawn from one of the District Council's existing

Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

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In connection with Item No. 66, Councillor P J Downes welcomed the continuing work undertaken by the Panel on Hinchingsbrooke Hospital.

On the same subject, Councillor Criswell reported that the Head of Business Development at the Hospital had indicated, in answer to a question previously asked at a Council meeting by Councillor P R Ward, that the financial demands arising from the Private Finance Initiative Agreement had been included within Circle's financial plans. Councillor Criswell also was pleased to report that representatives of Circle Health Care and Hinchingsbrooke Hospital had undertaken to update the Panel on a regular basis.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) held on 6th March and 3rd April 2012 be received and adopted.

(e) **Development Management Panel**

Councillor D B Dew presented the Report of the meetings of the Development Management Panel held on 27th February, 19th March and 16th April 2012

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Development Management Panel held on 27th February, 19th March and 16th April 2012 be received and adopted.

(f) **Licensing and Protection Panel**

Councillor J W Davies presented the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 22nd February 2012.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 22nd February 2012 be received and adopted.

(g) **Corporate Governance Panel**

Councillor E R Butler presented the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 28th March 2012.

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Upon being put to the vote, the recommendations contained in Item No. 20 were declared to be CARRIED.

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In connection with Item No. 22 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, Councillor Butler acknowledged the comments which had been made by representatives of Town and Parish Councils earlier in the meeting on the lack of progress on the Town and Parish Charter and reiterated that it was his understanding that the Panel would be involved in development of the Charter in advance of its final approval in September 2012.

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In connection with Item No. 26 and in response to a question from Councillor S Greenall in respect of the timetable for the finalisation of the 2011/2012 accounts, Councillor Butler assured the questioner that he did not anticipate any delay to the completion of these accounts. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 28th March 2012 be received and adopted.

(h) **Senior Officers' Panel**

Councillor N J Guyatt presented the Report of the meetings of the Senior Officers' Panel held on 12th January and 22nd February 2012.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Senior Officers' Panel held on 12th January and 22nd February 2012 be received and adopted.

71. 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 R J West to the Executive Councillor for Healthy and Active Communities, Councillor T D Sanderson

In response to a question regarding the successful outcome of the Diversity Peer Challenge, Councillor Sanderson confirmed that he had congratulated the Members and Officers involved for their enthusiasm and effort in securing the award.

Question from Councillor P J Downes to the Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite

In response to a question regarding the content of literature distributed by the Conservative Party ahead of the forthcoming District Council elections, Councillor Ablewhite considered that it was inappropriate to comment on the content of political party leaflets at the Council meeting.

Question from Councillor R S Farrer to the Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite

In response to a question regarding charges for car parking at the Riverside Car Park, St. Neots, Councillor Ablewhite confirmed that car parking charges currently were under review and that he would welcome the contributions of the questioner and his colleagues in St. Neots to this process. Councillor Ablewhite added that he was aware that there were car parks in the District, including the Riverside Car Park that appeared to be under-used and that he would expect any review to address this issue and the current marketing of the District's car parking facilities.

Question from Councillor M F Shellens to the Executive Councillor for Healthy and Active Communities, Councillor T D Sanderson

In response to a question regarding the potential closure of Dairy Crest in Fenstanton and the impact this might have on the budgets of local families and on the local economy, Councillor Sanderson was of the view that it was not necessary to review the timing of the project to invest in One Leisure, St Ives and undertook to respond in greater detail to the questioner in writing to explain the reasons why.

Question from Councillor R J West to the Executive Councillor for the Environment, Councillor D M Tysoe

In response to a question regarding the necessity for the Flood Forum during a period of drought, Councillor Tysoe confirmed that it continued to be important to discuss the readiness of flood prevention measures as well as the impact of water levels on the District and that, in the event that rain fall continued to remain low, he was of the

view that the Forum might have a role in discussing the storage of water and the designation of new reservoir areas.

The meeting ended at 9.40pm.

Chairman