

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, 4 July 2012.

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs B E Boddington – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, S Akthar,
M G Baker, K M Baker, Mrs M Banerjee,
I C Bates, P L E Bucknell, G J Bull,
E R Butler, R C Carter, S Cawley,
B S Chapman, K J Churchill, S J Criswell,
I J Curtis, J W Davies, D B Dew, P J Downes,
Mrs L A Duffy, R S Farrer, R Fuller,
D A Giles, J A Gray, S Greenall, N J Guyatt,
G J Harlock, R Harrison, D Harty, R B Howe,
Mrs P A Jordan, P Kadewere, Mrs L Kadic,
S M Van De Kerkhove, A J Mackender-
Lawrence, P G Mitchell, M C Oliver,
J W G Pethard, P D Reeve,
Mrs D C Reynolds, T D Sanderson,
M F Shellens, R G Tuplin, D M Tysoe,
R J West and A H Williams.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors W T Clough, A Hansard, C R Hyams, Mrs P J Longford and T V Rogers.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D L Hall.

14. PRAYER

The Reverend A Milton, Team Rector for the Huntingdon Ministry opened the meeting with Prayer.

15. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) New Councillor

The Chairman welcomed Councillor R Carter, newly elected Member for Earith Ward to his first meeting of the Council.

(b) Chairman's Events

Having reported on her attendance at various events since her election as Chairman, Councillor Mrs Boddington informed Members of her plans for a Civic Reception on 14th September at 7pm and a Charity Dinner at the George Hotel, Buckden on 8th October 2012.

(c) Members/Officers Cricket Match

The Chairman encouraged the Council to support the Annual Cricket Match between Members and Officers which was to

be held at 6pm on 12th July 2012 at St. Ivo Outdoor Centre.

(d) **Tabled Documents**

Members' attention was drawn to a leaflet on "Natural High", one of the Chairman's chosen charities which had been circulated for the Council's information. Councillor R G Tuplin, Chairman of the Member Development Group urged all Councillors to complete the annual skills analysis to help inform training and development sessions during the year.

16. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 16th May 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

17. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No interests were declared by the Members present.

18. BY-ELECTION: EARITH WARD

The Council noted that Mr R C Carter had been elected to the Office of District Councillor for Earith Ward at a by-election held on 21st June 2012. Councillor Carter thanked the Returning Officer and his staff for their contribution on the day of the election and looked forward to commencing his work as a District Councillor.

19. LEADERSHIP DIRECTION

By reference to a document which had been tabled (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite and Deputy Executive Leader, Councillor N J Guyatt presented to the Council, the proposed 'Leadership Direction' and 'Key Priorities' for the Council in the ensuing year.

Councillor Ablewhite explained that although the document reflected key themes and aims and would form a basis upon which to work, it could not cover all the services the District Council provided. He believed, however, that the strategic direction concentrated on those issues of most importance to local people, national priorities and local challenges arising from the social, economic and environmental context of the District.

With the assistance of power point, Councillor Ablewhite described the overall vision for Huntingdonshire and the individual themes in detail. The key themes included –

- ◆ strong local economy
- ◆ enable sustainable growth
- ◆ improve the quality of life in Huntingdonshire
- ◆ working with our communities; and
- ◆ the Council.

As an illustration of the way the Council was required to respond to national priorities, Councillor Guyatt addressed Members on the requirement to produce the new Local Plan within twelve months. To

meet this timescale, Councillor Guyatt explained that it was the intention to use the existing Plan as a basis for going forward and to respond to new challenges, such as employment and the successful delivery of the Alconbury Enterprise Zone.

As an example of the theme “working in other communities”, Councillor Guyatt described the steps being taken by the Council to consult with non-statutory consultees on the potential for new housing development and how 110 responses had been received thus far.

Members were urged to involve themselves in the consultation to help shape and develop the new Local Plan. Communities could, if they so wished, then begin to prepare their own neighbourhood plan which would be required to conform to the District Council’s Local Plan. Councillor Guyatt indicated that the new Local Plan would support, among other issues, low/medium growth in key service areas, improved infrastructure provision including the A14 and measures to improve and maintain the quality of life and a strong local economy. He intimated that the formal statutory consultation process would commence at the end of July.

In response to questions from Councillor R B Howe and R S Farrer, Councillor Guyatt confirmed that he would expect to be in a position to advise on the timescale for preparation of neighbourhood plans towards the end of the Local Plan process and that those Authorities without arrangements in place for developers to contribute to a Community Infrastructure Levy would ultimately experience a deficit in funding towards their infrastructure projects. The Executive Leader added that each District Authority was obliged to undertake the same process but that the Council had progressed further than other Authorities and hopefully would reap the consequential benefits of its prompt response.

Referring to Section 3 of the “Leadership Direction”, Councillor P J Downes expressed the view that the Leadership may have underestimated the difficulty which lay ahead in implementing benefit reforms in terms of the impact on the District and effect on the Council and suggested that the District Council would need to work hard to protect the most vulnerable.

Councillor P D Reeve welcomed the level of engagement which had been arranged on the proposed new Local Plan and indicated his appreciation for the support offered by the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy. He was hopeful that the new Local Plan would seek to impose minimal rather than maximum parking standards and establish a requirement for good quality family housing. In response to a further observation from Councillor M F Shellens on the inadequacy of car parking on the Kings Ripton Park Estate, Councillor Guyatt confirmed that whilst parking standards were under consideration, the District Council had no control over a householder’s decision to convert their garage for leisure or other use.

20. CABINET PROCEDURE RULES - DELEGATION BY THE EXECUTIVE LEADER

In accordance with the Procedure Rules contained in the Council's

Constitution and by reference to a report by the Head of Paid Service and Managing Director (Communities, Partnership and Projects), the Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite presented the Cabinet Portfolios for the ensuing Municipal Year. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the report now submitted be noted.

21. FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2012/13

By reference to a report by the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) Councillor J W Davies, Chairman of the Licensing and Protection Panel reminded the Council that the Food Standards Agency required the Council to prepare a Food Safety Service Plan annually in accordance with an agreed framework. A full copy of the Food Safety Service Plan 2012/2013 had been made available in the Members' Room (an Executive Summary of which also is appended to the Minutes).

Members were reminded of the objectives of the Service Plan in terms of identifying resources, establishing a work programme and providing a means by which to measure and manage performance. In that context, Councillor Davies drew attention to the budget of £442,060 for 2012/2013 which represented a decrease of 6.18% over the previous financial year. In terms of specific performance, Councillor Davies reported that the service had developed and delivered an implementation plan for caterers and food producers to address the requirements of FSA guidance on e-coli 0157 and confirmed that grant assistance had been received from the FSA towards the launch of the National Food Hygiene Rating Scheme in place of the successful "Scores on the Doors" Scheme.

Mention also was made of the demands placed on the service by the Secret Garden Party and other large scale events, fairs, shows and heritage attractions and whilst these activities had been absorbed within existing budgets, it was acknowledged that they had an impact on the service given the increase in pro-active and reactive work which resulted often at weekends and during unsociable hours. In terms of enforcement action, Councillor Davies reported that during 2011/2012 there were four successful prosecutions instigated for unhygienic premises and practices, 34 hygiene improvement notices issued and two remedial action notices served, two premises had been subject to voluntary closure and unfit food was voluntarily surrendered from two businesses following inspections. The service also responded to over 140 complaints about unfit food or unhygienic food premises from local residents and 96 food alerts from the FSA.

In 2012/2013, Councillor Davies advised Members that the service would continue to give priority to the inspection of high risk food premises and the delivery of key projects to protect the health of individuals.

In response to concern expressed by Councillor P J Downes at the suggestion that fewer "high risk" outlets were being inspected and the number of businesses that this was likely to involve, Councillor Davies

assured the questioner that the service would do its best within the resources available but he undertook to respond in writing with precise details. Councillor Davies further assured Councillor Mrs Duffy that the service charged for the additional costs incurred from support of the Secret Garden Party. Whereupon, after noting the support for the Plan on the part of the Licensing and Protection Panel, the Council

RESOLVED

that the Food Safety Service Plan 2012/2013 be adopted.

22. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, PANELS AND COMMITTEE

(a) Standards

Mr D L Hall presented the Report of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 21st June 2012.

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Having noted that recommendation (a) in Item No 1 of the Report of the Corporate Governance Panel had superseded recommendation (a) in the Report of the Committee, on being put to the vote, the remaining recommendations (b), (c) and (d) contained in Item No. 1 were declared to be CARRIED.

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On behalf of the Council, the Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite paid tribute to the contribution made by Mr Hall as Chairman of the Standards Committee and wished to place on record the District Council's sincere gratitude for his diligence and efforts in his position as Independent Member and Chairman of the Committee.

Councillor P J Downes endorsed the sentiments of the Executive Leader and commended Mr Hall for the thoughtful and measured way in which he had chaired meetings of the Committee and dealt sensitively with a number of difficult matters.

The Chairman, Councillor Mrs B E Boddington requested the Head of Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer to convey to all the Independent Members and Parish Council representatives on the Committee, the Council's appreciation for their contribution and support over recent years. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 21st June 2012 be received and adopted.

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

Councillor G J Bull presented the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 14th June 2012.

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Referring to the absence of Councillor T V Rogers through ill health, Councillor Bull invited the Council to join him in wishing Councillor Rogers a speedy recovery.

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In connection with Item No. 3, Councillor P J Downes commended the Panel for the interest they had expressed in forthcoming changes to the housing benefits system.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 14th June 2012 be received and adopted.

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

Councillor D Harty presented the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 19th June 2012.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 19th June 2012 be received and adopted.

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

Councillor S J Criswell presented the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) held on 12th June 2012.

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In connection with Item No. 2 and in response to a question from Councillor M F Shellens regarding the costs incurred by the Council on measures to prevent homelessness in comparison with expenditure involved in dealing with it, Councillor Criswell undertook to ensure that this question

would be considered at a future Panel meeting perhaps in conjunction with Panel discussions on the housing strategy.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) held on 12th June 2012 be received and adopted.

(e) 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 17th May and 21st June 2012.

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In connection with Item No. 1 and upon being moved by Councillor Ablewhite and seconded by Councillor N J Guyatt, it was

RESOLVED

that the Treasury Management Annual Report 2011/2012 and the amended Appendix B of the Treasury Management Strategy for 2012/2013 reproduced as Document 2 be received and approved.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraph, the Report of the meetings held on 17th May and 21st June 2012 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 21st May and 18th June 2012.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Development

Management Panel held on 21st May and 18th June 2012 be received and adopted.

(g) Licensing and Protection Panel

Councillor J W Davies presented the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 20th June 2012.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, with the exception of Item No. 6 which had been repeated in the text of the Report, the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 20th June 2012 be received and adopted.

(h) Licensing Committee

Councillor J W Davies presented the Report of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 20th June 2012.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 20th June 2012 be received and adopted.

(i) Employment Panel

Councillor S Cawley presented the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 20th June 2012.

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In connection with Item No. 6, the Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite asked Members to join him in sending the Council's best wishes to employees who were retiring and in particular to place on record their gratitude for the contribution made to the District Council's housing service by Mr S Plant, former Head of Housing Services who was retiring after 36 years of local government service.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Employment

Panel held on 20th June 2012 be received and adopted.

(j) Corporate Governance Panel

Councillor E R Butler presented the Report of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 26th June 2012.

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Having been reminded that recommendations (d), (e) and (k) had previously been dealt with by the Standards Committee, recommendations (a), (b), (c), (f), (g), (h), (i), (j) and (l) contained in Item No 1 were declared to be CARRIED.

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In connection with Item No 5, Councillor Butler assured the Council that the 2010/11 Final Accounts had been approved for publication and the 2011/12 accounts submitted to audit on time. Councillor Butler thanked the Managing Director (Resources) and his staff for their efforts in overcoming the difficulties with publication of the 2010/11 accounts.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 26th June 2012 be received and adopted.

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

Further to Minute No 11 of the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 16th May 2012, consideration was given to a report by the Head of Legal & Democratic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) in response to a request to review the representation of political groups and independent Members on the District Council given the outcome of the recent by election in Earith Ward and the consequential change to the membership of a political group on the Council.

In accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and Part II of the Local Government Act 2000, it was

RESOLVED

that the allocation of seats on Panels to political groups and non aligned Members be determined as set out in the report now submitted.

24. 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 I J Curtis to the Executive Councillor for Environment, Councillor D M Tysoe

In response to a question regarding recycling bins, Councillor Tysoe acknowledged that there were anomalies in the current scheme which he envisaged would be resolved following a review of the policy on collection which was to be discussed by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) shortly.

Question from Councillor M F Shellens to the Executive Councillor for Customer Services, Councillor B S Chapman

In response to a question regarding the likely financial impact on the Council of the reform of welfare and council tax support and the probability of an increased incidence of arrears and court actions, Councillor Chapman assured the questioner that a project team was looking at the consequences of the changes to seek to minimise the impact of the reform and avoid, as far as possible, an increase in the number of residents likely to default in their payment of council tax and rent.

Question from Councillor P J Downes to the Executive Leader and Chairman of the Cabinet, Councillor J D Ablewhite

In response to a question suggesting the existence of a criteria for the allocation of Council's resources, Councillor Ablewhite assured the questioner that funds were directed to whichever part of the District was in most need and that the distribution of resource was not based upon the political allegiance of the ward Councillor.

Question from Councillor P D Reeve to the Executive Leader and Chairman of the Cabinet, Councillor J D Ablewhite

In response to a question which expressed concern regarding progress on the establishment of future transport policy for Cambridgeshire and the impact this might have for Huntingdonshire, Councillor Ablewhite assured the Council that he took every opportunity to make representations in this respect at meetings of District and County Leaders and with Partners to seek to secure the best arrangements for the District.

Question from Councillor M G Baker to the Deputy Executive Leader and Executive Councillor for Planning & Housing Strategy, Councillor N J Guyatt

In response to a question regarding the up and coming expiry of temporary planning permission for a traveller's site in Ellington Ward, Councillor Guyatt replied that responsibility for enforcement action would lie with the District Council in the event that an application for permanent planning permission was not forthcoming.

Question from Councillor S Greenall to the Executive Councillor for Resources, Councillor J A Gray

In response to a question regarding the use of offshore accounts, Councillor Gray replied that he was not aware that allowances or salaries due to any Member or employee were paid into offshore accounts to mitigate the levy of income tax either in the past or currently but that he would make enquiries to verify this fact and respond to the questioner in writing after the meeting.

Question from Councillor R S Farrer to the Deputy Executive Leader and Executive Councillor for Planning & Housing Strategy, Councillor N J Guyatt

In response to a question relating to the progress of the review of Car Parking charges, Councillor Guyatt reported that a revised policy currently was in preparation drawing on the responses made by Members to a survey undertaken earlier in the year and that the draft policy would be subject to further consultation.

Question from Councillor Mrs M Banerjee to the Executive Councillor for Customer Services, Councillor B S Chapman

In response to a question regarding the readiness of the District Council to respond to the implications of the Housing Welfare Act when it takes effect from 1st April 2013, Councillor Chapman confirmed that a great deal of preparatory work had already been undertaken to identify the most vulnerable and that the District Council would be ready to support those residents in most need.

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With the permission of the Chairman, Councillor P Kadewere invited Members to participate in the annual event entitled 'Unity For Community' which was to be held at the Huntingdonshire Regional College on 14th July 2012 between 11 am - 3 pm.

25. MEMBERSHIP OF CABINET, COMMITTEES AND PANELS

Further to Minute No 22(a), resolution (b) and following the recent by election in Earith Ward, it was moved, seconded and

RESOLVED

- (a) that Councillor R C Carter be appointed to the vacancy in the membership of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Social Well Being); and
- (b) that Councillors K Baker, Mrs B E Boddington, P J Downes, Mrs L Duffy, G J Harlock, A Hansard and T D Sanderson be appointed as members of the Standards Committee.

The meeting ended at 8.25 pm.

Chairman