

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COUNCIL held in Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 17 December 2014.

PRESENT: Councillor A J Mackender-Lawrence – Chairman.

Councillors S Akthar, M G Baker, K M Baker, I C Bates, Mrs B E Boddington, P L E Bucknell, G J Bull, S Cawley, B S Chapman, K J Churchill, Mrs S Conboy, S J Criswell, Mrs A D Curtis, I J Curtis, J W Davies, D B Dew, Mrs A Dickinson, Mrs L A Duffy, R S Farrer, M Francis, R Fuller, I D Gardener, D A Giles, J A Gray, A J Hardy, G J Harlock, R Harrison, D Harty, T Hayward, R B Howe, B Hyland, Mrs P A Jordan, P Kadewere, Ms L Kadic, S M Van De Kerkhove, Mrs R E Mathews, P G Mitchell, J P Morris, M C Oliver, P D Reeve, Mrs D C Reynolds, T D Sanderson, M F Shellens, R G Tuplin, D M Tysoe and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors E R Butler and R C Carter.

### **47. PRAYER**

Councillor J D Ablewhite, Leader of the Council, opened the meeting with a prayer.

### **48. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman presented to Council an account of the activities both he and the Vice Chairman, Councillor Bucknell had attended since the last meeting, mentioning in particular the Civic Awards, Remembrance Day Services, United States Air Force Service and carol services around Cambridgeshire.

### **49. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 29th October 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **50. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

No interests were declared by the Members present.

### **51. BY ELECTION - ST NEOTS, PRIORY PARK WARD**

The Chairman introduced Councillor Mr I Gardiner who had been

elected to the office of District Councillor for the St Neots Priory Park Ward at a by election held on 27th November 2014.

The Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite thanked the Returning Officer and the Elections Team for the efficient and professional way in which they had conducted the by election.

## **52. PLAN ON A PAGE**

Councillor J D Ablewhite, Leader of the Council, introduced the Plan on a Page to the Council and explained that the vision for such a document was with the intention of simplifying the Council's corporate priorities and financial aims with the main focus of moving the Council towards a sustainable future. Councillor J A Gray, Executive Councillor for Resources, outlined to Members six key programmes of work to drive savings and efficiencies. These included –

- ◆ the Customer Service Strategy and Service Standards, focusing on channel migration to increased self-service enabling and differing levels of standards for all services;
- ◆ the assessment of services to incorporate the principles of Lean which will involve taking the waste from existing processes to achieve efficiency savings or redirect resources to priority services;
- ◆ the investigation of savings through the delivery of shared services;
- ◆ the continuation of the Zero Based Budgeting project across all services;
- ◆ the prioritisation of income generation by using the Council's land and buildings to support the Corporate Plan and service delivery ambitions, both for capital receipt and revenue return; and
- ◆ the restructuring of the Facing the Future programme arising from the Cabinet's Away Day with further prioritisation and target dates for completion.

In response to questions from Members on the Council's budget, Councillor Gray explained that the draft budget had been prepared based upon some key assumptions and there remained uncertainty over the future government grant allocation if there was a change in Government in May 2015.

Councillor Gray concluded the presentation by encouraging Members to commit to supporting the services the Council needs to deliver, at an appropriate level that fits the District's needs, achieve efficiency and more importantly enable customers to take actions to help themselves at times and places that best suit them to allow the Council to remain in a sustainable financial position for the future.

## **53. EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR PRESENTATIONS**

### **(a) Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor Planning and Housing Strategy**

Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Planning and Housing Strategy described, in detail, the principal services within his portfolio namely – planning, housing strategy and

transportation and referred to the briefing on the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 that Members had received prior to the meeting of the Council. A copy of the presentation would be circulated to all Members. The Council were informed of the proposed targeted consultation with Town and Parish Councils and key stakeholders starting in January 2015 and Councillor Dew encouraged Members to engage with their parishes to encourage their involvement of shaping the future of the District.

Councillor Dew reported on the key challenges in the delivery of affordable housing, including the identification of sites which has included the use of exception sites adjacent to villages which helps meet the specific needs of the villages and those connected with them. Members indicated their support for such initiatives, in particular playing a proactive role by working with the Town and Parish Councils to support such villages. Members were also given an update on transport and infrastructure issues, specifically the A14, A428 and A1 and the long term transport strategy working with Cambridgeshire County Council.

An update was provided on the vacancies in the Planning Division and Councillor Dew assured Members that the vacant senior posts had been filled with the backlog of planning and enforcement applications being addressed. In response to a question from Councillor P D Reeve regarding consultation with Cambridgeshire County Council on planning applications, Councillor Dew indicated his support to meet with Councillor Reeve and Senior Officers at the County Council.

**(b) Councillor D M Tysoe, Executive Councillor Operations and the Environment**

Councillor D M Tysoe, Executive Councillor for Operations and the Environment addressed the Council on the principal services within his portfolio responsibilities namely building control, emergency planning, ground maintenance, refuse recycling and streetscene. A copy of Councillor Tysoe's PowerPoint presentation is appended in the Minute Book.

In response to a question from Councillor K J Churchill regarding the remit and Councillor involvement in the Flood Forum, Councillor Tysoe explained that historically the District Council has taken the lead, but going forward it was likely to be led by the Environment Agency or Cambridgeshire County Council.

Councillor P D Reeve raised a question on whether opportunities had been explored to expand the recycling service through the provision of further blue bins, whereby Councillor Tysoe explained that the range of materials for recycling had increased but further opportunities to expand could be explored.

**(c) Questions to Other Members of the Cabinet**

In response to a question from Councillor M F Shellens regarding Luminus, Councillor J D Ablewhite explained that an independent investigator has been looking at the allegations and would be reported back to a future meeting of the Council.

In response to a question from Councillor D A Giles regarding the level of Community Infrastructure Levy that had been raised since its inception and what had been spent in St Neots, Councillor Ablewhite undertook to provide further details to Councillor Giles following the meeting.

Referring to the saving of the Cromwell Museum in Huntingdon and the promotion of tourism and in response to a question from Councillor M G Baker, Councillor Ablewhite explained that Town and Parish Councils successfully promote tourism very well in their respective areas.

In response to a question from Councillor R J West on the Alconbury development and surrounding infrastructure, Councillor Ablewhite updated Members on progress with Alconbury Weald together with the plans for the A428 and A14.

In response to a question from Councillor G J Bull on the support provided by the Council over the Christmas period, Councillor Ablewhite explained that this year would be the first year that the Council offices would be open to the public and all services would be available.

Lastly, in response to a comment from Councillor Chapman on the forthcoming turf cutting ceremony for the Community Centre at Loves Farm, St Neots Councillor Ablewhite indicated his intention to attend and paid tribute to Councillors Chapman and Harty for their assistance on the scheme.

**54. GREEN PAPER ITEM: CUSTOMER SERVICES STRATEGY - WHAT NEXT?**

By reference to a PowerPoint presentation, Mr J Taylor, Head of Customer Services, updated Members on the Customer Service Strategy and programme for review. Members were informed of the changes that had taken place since the Strategy had been approved over a year ago, which included the requirement for channel migration and incorporation of the principles of Lean, as referred to in Item No. 54 ante, together with the strategic partnership with neighbouring authorities through shared services.

Members' attention was drawn to a lack of clear focus and identification of priorities and were informed that the Strategy would be reviewed to take into account customer feedback whilst ensuring that the focus would be the delivery of customer services in the back office service areas as well as the Customer Service Centre and Call Centre. The Council were advised of the process of consultation and

the outcome would be reported back to a future meeting.

**55. REPORTS OF THE CABINET AND PANELS**

**(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 23rd October, 20th November and 11th December 2014.

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In connection with Item No. 25 and upon being moved by Councillor Ablewhite and seconded by Councillor J A Gray, the recommendation was declared to be CARRIED.

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In connection with Item No. 32 and upon being moved by Councillor Ablewhite and seconded by Councillor J A Gray, the recommendation was declared to be CARRIED.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Reports of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 23rd October, 20th November and 11th December 2014 be received and adopted.

**(b) Corporate Governance Panel**

Councillor G J Harlock presented the Report of meetings of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 25th September and 26th November 2014.

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In connection with Item No. 11 and upon being moved by Councillor Harlock and seconded by Councillor P G Mitchell, the recommendation was declared to be CARRIED.

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In connection with Item No. 12 and upon being moved by Councillor Harlock and seconded by Councillor B S Chapman, the recommendation was declared to be CARRIED.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Reports of the meetings of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 25th September and 26th November 2014 be received and adopted.

**(c) Development Management Panel**

Councillor Mrs B E Boddington presented the Report of the meetings of the Development Management Panel held on 20th October and 17th November 2014.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Development Management Panel held on 20th October and 17th November 2014 be received and adopted.

**(d) Employment Panel**

Councillor S Cawley presented the Report of the meetings of the Employment Panel held on 8th October and 19th November 2014.

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In connection with Item No. 14, Councillor Cawley responded to a question from Councillor K J Churchill on the levels of sickness absence, the reasons for absence and the support available in the return to work. Councillor J D Ablewhite explained that this would be addressed through the variation to the membership of Committees and Panels later in the Agenda.

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In connection with Item No. 15 and in response to a question from Councillor R S Farrer on LGSS, Councillor Cawley informed Members that two years remained on the contract and the Council receives regular information on performance standards which is assessed against the contract and service level agreement

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meetings of the Employment Panel held on 8th October and 19th November 2014 be

received and adopted.

**(e) Licensing and Protection Panel**

Councillor J W Davies presented the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 6th November 2014.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 6th November 2014 be received and adopted.

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

Councillor R Harrison presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 9th October, 6th November and 4th December 2014.

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In connection with item No. 27 and subject to the amendment of the 2014 to 2015 in paragraph 3, Councillor Harrison informed Members of the forthcoming Select Committee on project management that would be meeting in February 2015.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Reports of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 9th October, 6th November and 4th December 2014 be received and adopted.

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

Councillor G J Bull presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 11th November and 9th December 2014.

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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 11th November and 9th December 2014 be

received and adopted.

**(h) 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 7th October, 4th November and 2nd December 2014.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) held on 7th October, 4th November and 2nd December 2014 be received and adopted.

**56. REPRESENTATION OF POLITICAL GROUPS ON DISTRICT COUNCIL PANELS, ETC**

A report was submitted by the Corporate Team Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) relating to the principles of proportionality to be applied to the appointment of Panels and Committees following the recent by election in St Neots Priory Park Ward. 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 revised allocation of seats on Panels to political groups be determined as set out in the report now submitted.

**57. VARIATION TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS, ETC**

Further to Minute No. 55 ante and arising from the difficulties that staff have experienced with the salary review and reorganisation, Councillor J D Ablewhite informed Members of his intention to improve the organisational morale amongst the organisation, whereupon, the Council

RESOLVED

- (a) that Councillor S Cawley be appointed as a member of the Cabinet with responsibility for Organisational Change and Development;
- (b) that Councillor B Hyland be appointed to the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) in place of Councillor I J Curtis;
- (c) that Councillor I D Gardener be appointed to the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) in place of Councillor S Cawley;



- (d) that Councillor R S Farrer be appointed to the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) in place of Councillor B Hyland;
- (e) that Councillor I J Curtis be appointed to the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) in place of Councillor R S Farrer; and
- (f) that Councillor Mrs A D Curtis be appointed to the membership of the Employment Panel in place of Councillor S Cawley.

The meeting concluded at 9.55pm.

Chairman