

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COUNCIL held in Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN (ON THE RISING OF THE SPECIAL MEETING) on Wednesday, 16 December 2015.

PRESENT: Councillor P L E Bucknell – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, T D Alban, K M Baker, D Brown, G J Bull, R C Carter, S Cawley, B S Chapman, Mrs S Conboy, S J Criswell, Mrs A D Curtis, J W Davies, D B Dew, Mrs L A Duffy, M Francis, R Fuller, I D Gardener, L George, D A Giles, J A Gray, S Greenall, A Hansard, D Harty, T Hayward, R B Howe, Mrs P A Jordan, P Kadewere, Ms L Kadic, D J Mead, J P Morris, J M Palmer, P D Reeve, T D Sanderson, M F Shellens, R G Tuplin, D M Tysoe, K D Wainwright, R J West and J E White.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors I C Bates, Mrs B E Boddington, E R Butler, K J Churchill, Mrs A Dickinson, R S Farrer, R Harrison, B Hyland, S M Van De Kerkhove, Mrs R E Mathews, M C Oliver and Mrs D C Reynolds.

43. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman presented to the Council an account of the activities both he and the Vice-Chairman Councillor R J West had attended since the last meeting. The Chairman had commended his Vice-Chairman and Assistant, Mrs B Morrison, in the arrangements to support the large volume of events over this period. Attendance had included the opening of new classrooms at Kimbolton School with Councillor J A Gray, Hunts Post Awards, visit to Huntingdon Mail Sorting Office and particular mention was made of the school visit to the Civic Suite which resulted in a lively debate.

The Vice-Chairman reported upon the 450th anniversary of Hinchingsbrooke School, Huntingdon with attendance by the Duke of Gloucester, the Royal Anglian Freedom March in St Neots, flag raising at the Battle of Britain Commemoration and signing of the equity pledge at Queens College, Cambridge.

44. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 30th September 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

45. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

46. BY ELECTION - HUNTINGDON EAST WARD

The Chairman introduced Councillor S Greenall who had been elected to the office of District Councillor for the Huntingdon East Ward at a by election held on 10th December 2015.

47. CAMBRIDGESHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE - LOOKING FORWARD

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Sir P Brown, Chairman of Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service, accompanied by Mr C Strickland, Acting Chief Fire Officer of Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service who had been invited to the meeting to address the Council. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation and handout is appended in the Minute Book.

Sir P Brown opened the discussion by referring to the difficulties experienced by local councillors with the reduction in services through budget cuts and similar effects on the Fire and Rescue Service resulting in an assessment of how to operate more efficiently. Sir P Brown reported that he had been proud to serve as Chairman of the Service for the past three years and had been working with the senior management team on changes to their structure and reviewing the budgets. Members noted that the number of call outs to domestic fires had reduced, which could be attributable to an increase in the number of community visits by Fire Officers to educate on fire prevention.

Mr Strickland continued the discussion by informing Members of his position as Acting Chief Fire Officer that would be made permanent in June 2016. Mr Strickland explained the past 4 years had seen a great period of change, the biggest in 32 years of the Service. The Council noted that £4m had been removed from the £30m budget and a further £3m of savings needed to be identified over the forthcoming 3-4 years. Despite these reductions, it was reported that the Service remained the cheapest in the UK per head of population.

Focussing on the forthcoming year, Mr Strickland outlined to Members details of the staffing restructure at senior management level, involving the departure of the existing Chief Fire Officer in April 2016 and Director of Support resulting in a saving of £200k per annum. The focus for the forthcoming year would be collaboration, involving work on inter service. Members noted that Cambridgeshire was the first service to merge its community function with Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service, with an operation base in Cambridgeshire and a saving of £400k per annum. The Council also noted a number of other collaborative services, including Service Transformation and Efficiency Programme with Bedfordshire, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Services and combined ICT, Geographical Information System and Incident Command Unit with Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Mr Strickland informed Members of the collaborative work with utilisation of Fire Stations by Cambridgeshire Police the East of

England Ambulance Service. Members were also acquainted with extensive work provided by the Service working with public and private sector partners, with particular focus on a scheme working with disadvantaged youths over a 12 week period. The Council noted the biggest achievement of the Service in creating a new Fire Station in Cambridge, including flats above, through a profit share with a private sector partner.

Mr Strickland went on to outline priority projects in programme management. This included the relocation of Huntingdon Fire Station and Training Centre, new fire uniform for the crews to ensure fire fighters are equipped with optimum modern protective clothing and the on-call review. Cambridgeshire is largely operated as an on-call service, with predominantly part time staff and it was reported that it was becoming an issue to retain on-call staff. As a result a review was being undertaken of different ways to retain on-call staff and delivering the service through better coverage.

Members were acquainted with the background to the major project of the relocation of Huntingdon Fire Station and Service Headquarters and the expense of maintaining the current out of date buildings. Mr Strickland outlined the proposals for potential relocation to Alconbury or St John's Park, Huntingdon as a combined centre for both and the associated costs of relocation and sale of existing assets. The latter location had been selected as the preferred site that would allow better access to main trunk roads in the area.

In response to a question from Councillor D A Giles on how to address the issue of an increased fire hazard with hoarding properties, Mr Strickland explained that the Service had been working with the Police and local authorities to identify such properties and work to alleviate these problems.

The Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite, praised the Service for the work that they had undertaken under some particularly difficult circumstances and referred to their innovative approach that the Council could learn from. In referring to their wider public estate, Councillor Ablewhite questioned whether any further collaborative work would be undertaken with the Police. Mr Strickland responded by explaining that opportunities had been investigated with Yaxley and Cambourne and the potential to move into the Waterbeach site had not come to fruition. Contact had been made with all partners to investigate the opportunity to bring the property portfolio together.

In response to a question by Councillor K M Baker on the demands on the Service of road traffic accidents, Mr Strickland explained that the Service only attended a small percentage and according to research from the National Audit Office, there had been a decline in the number of calls combined with a reduction in the number of vehicle movements.

Councillor J A Gray referred to the coverage of on-call stations, particularly in the rural areas and enquired as to whether Members could assist with communication to support the on-call stations. Whereby Mr Strickland reported that a seminar was being held by the Fire Authority the following day to discuss on-call provision and recognising the difficulties that many people do not live and work in

the same location.

In response to a question from Councillor M F Shellens on a recent incident involving an attack on fire vehicle, Mr Strickland explained that these isolated incidents and the Service had been working with youths and schools to promote the service and educate them.

Councillor Mrs S J Conboy highlighted the challenges faced by an increased number of housing developments for the Service to cover and Mr Strickland explained that fire station will be provided at Northstowe but the Service had been working with developers to agree to place sprinklers in houses of vulnerable people in that area.

48. EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR PRESENTATION

(a) Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing

Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Strategic Housing and Planning addressed the Council on an update of the Local Plan and Development Management update. A copy of Councillor Dew's PowerPoint presentation is appended in the Minute Book.

Councillor Dew updated Members on the timeline of the Local Plan and explained that the revised timetable had been in accordance with the Minister of State for Housing and Planning's written statement of July 2015 which had urged all planning authorities to produce an up-to-date Local Plan by early 2017. Councillor Dew explained that the proposed submission of the Local Plan was Autumn 2016 for full public consultation with final submission in March 2017 and adoption in 2018/19. It was explained that key supporting evidence was required to support the submission that included an Environmental Capacity Study that had identified additional sites since the last public consultation, strategic transport study jointly commissioned with Cambridgeshire County Council and strategic flood risk assessment. In addition to these requirements further supporting evidence required was a retail assessment, gypsy and traveller accommodation needs assessment, identification of areas for wind energy development.

Members were acquainted with further challenges faced by the Council on demonstrating deliverability in the provision of housing but had been achieved through the number of sites with planning permission and under construction. The National Planning Policy Framework required the Council to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites to provide five years' worth of housing against identified need. Councillor Dew explained that the provision of infrastructure and raising of funding provided the greatest challenge and the Infrastructure Business Plan would identify the requirements to deliver and service the growth in the Local Plan. He further explained that the aspiration was to have a Local Plan with housing allocations to meet all development needs up to 2036.

Members were provided with an update on changes in national guidance since the targeted consultation in January 2015, resulting in tougher action on local authorities that have not got a Local Plan in place by 2017, a zoning system to grant planning permission automatically on suitable brownfield sites and a requirement to plan proactively for the delivery of starter homes for first-time buyers under 40. Changes had been made to the Planning Policy for Travellers which included changes to the definition of a gypsy or traveller and restrictions to traveller sites in the open countryside. Local Plan policies required to consider inclusion of optional housing standards on accessibility and wheelchairs housing standards, water efficiency standards and internal space standards.

Councillor Dew provided an update on the Neighbourhood Plan process and reported that Neighbourhood Plan areas had been designated for Houghton and Wyton, St Neots, Brampton, Godmanchester, Huntingdon and Bury. Following examination, a referendum on the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan would be held on 4th February 2016. A Neighbourhood and Community Planning Guide had been approved by the Cabinet at their meeting in November 2015 that had been designed to assist Town and Parish Councils in reaching a decision on the form of plan to develop.

Councillor Dew concluded his presentation by reporting upon the performance of Development Management and the timescales involved in determining major, minor and other planning applications.

In response to a question from Councillor D A Giles on the amount of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding raised from development in St Neots had been spent in St Neots, Councillor Dew reported that it had been 3 years since the introduction of CIL and funding had amounted to £2.378m overall, with £1.53k from St Neots and £96.5k already allocated to St Neots. CIL expenditure had been approved for the infrastructure project at Edison Bell Way, Huntingdon and Councillor Dew explained that there would be a further review to consider the allocation of CIL funding throughout the District as a whole. He further explained that CIL funding was only available for infrastructure or capital projects.

Arising from a question from Councillor T D Sanderson of developers with approval for large housing sites not commencing work on site, Councillor Dew explained that this was a national problem that needed to be addressed.

(b) Questions to Other Members of the Cabinet

Councillor Ms L Duffy raised a question in relation to the success of the Black Friday Gym Membership promotion, whereby Councillor R B Howe, Executive Councillor for Commercial Activities, reported that there had been over 200

new subscribing members that had resulted in £5k of additional revenue.

In response to a question by Councillor T Hayward on the acceptability of lack of attendance of training courses that had been organised for Members, the Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite explained that the Council had a duty to ensure that relevant courses were available at different times during the day to ensure availability for all Members. He further explained that there needed to be a balance between the appropriate time during the day and subject matter. Councillor Ablewhite praised Mrs B Morrison, Members Support Assistant, for her excellent provision of training and urged Members to complete their annual return and self-assessment at the end of the Municipal Year.

Arising from a question from Councillor R Fuller on the opening of the Council offices between Christmas and New Year, Councillor Ablewhite reported that the Council intended to remain open during this period and reminded Members of the support that it provided to nine families who presented themselves as homeless during the same period last year.

Councillor P D Reeve raised a question in relation to the CCTV service and viability of utilising the wireless networks across the District to promote wider coverage, whereby Councillor Howe explained that there was a requirement for the wireless networks to conform with Central Government standards but undertook to investigate this issue further. He also reported that he was actively pursuing the feasibility of expanding the service to include coverage at larger events such as the Secret Garden Party to produce an additional revenue stream.

In response to a question from Councillor G J Bull on how well the Council was prepared for the announcement on the local government financial settlement, Councillor Ablewhite explained that the Council had undertaken a substantial amount of forward planning and would remain in a good financial position but continue to have challenges in the way services are provided for the residents of the District.

49. REPORTS OF THE CABINET AND PANELS

(a) Cabinet

Councillor J D Ablewhite, Executive Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Cabinet presented the Reports of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 22nd October, 19th November and 10th December 2015.

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In connection with Item No 26 and upon being moved by Councillor Ablewhite, and seconded by Councillor R B Howe, the recommendation on the Treasury Management

6-month Performance Review was declared to be CARRIED.

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In connection with Item No 39 and upon being moved by Councillor Ablewhite, and seconded by Councillor J A Gray, the recommendation on the Procurement Policy was declared to be CARRIED.

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In connection with Item No 40 and upon being moved by Councillor Ablewhite, and seconded by Councillor D M Tysoe, the recommendation on the Customer Service Strategy was declared to be CARRIED.

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In connection with Item No 41 and upon being moved by Councillor Ablewhite, and seconded by Councillor J A Gray, the recommendation on the Commercial Investment Strategy 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 22nd October, 19th November and 10th December 2015 be received and adopted.

(b) Corporate Governance Panel

Councillor M Francis, Chairman of the Corporate Governance Panel presented the Report of the meeting of the Panel held on 2nd December 2015

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In connection with Item No 22 and upon being moved by Councillor Francis and seconded by Councillor J D Ablewhite, the recommendation on the Overview and Scrutiny Structure Changes was declared to be CARRIED.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraph, the Reports of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 2nd December 2015 be received and adopted.

(c) Licensing Committee

Councillor R Fuller, Chairman of the Licensing Committee presented the Report of the meeting of the Committee held on 21st October 2015

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In connection with Item No 3 and upon being moved by Councillor Fuller and seconded by Councillor Ms L V Kadic, the recommendation on the Statement of Principles under the Gambling Act 2005 was declared to be CARRIED.

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In connection with Item No 4 and upon being moved by Councillor Fuller and seconded by Councillor Ms L V Kadic, the recommendation on the Statement of Licensing under the Licensing Act 2003 was declared to be CARRIED.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 21st October 2015 be received and adopted.

(d) Development Management Panel

Councillor P L E Bucknell, Chairman of the Council presented the Reports of the meetings of the Development Management Panel held on 19th October, 16th November and 14th December 2015.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Reports of the meetings held on 19th October, 16th November and 14th December 2015 be received and adopted.

(e) Employment Panel

Councillor J W Davies, Chairman of the Employment Panel presented the Report of the meeting of the Panel held on 18th November 2015.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 18th November 2015 be received and adopted.

(f) Licensing and Protection Panel

Councillor R Fuller, Chairman of the Licensing and Protection Panel presented the Report of the meeting of the Panel held on 20th October 2015.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 20th October 2015 be received and adopted.

(g) Standards Committee

Councillor K M Baker, Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee presented the Report of the meeting of the Committee held on 8th December 2015.

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Members were reminded of the decision that had been taken previously in connection with Item No 8 on election frequency at the Special Meeting of the Council held prior to this meeting.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 8th December 2015 be received and adopted.

(h) Overview and Scrutiny (Economic Well-Being)

Councillor G J Bull, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) presented the Reports of the meetings of the Panel held on 8th October, 5th November and 8th December 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 8th October, 5th November and 8th December 2015 be received and adopted.

(i) Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-Being)

Councillor T D Sanderson, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) presented the Reports of the meetings of the Panel held on 10th November and 8th December 2015.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Reports of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 10th November and 8th December 2015 be received and adopted.

(j) Overview and Scrutiny (Social Well-Being)

Councillor S J Criswell, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) presented the Reports of the meetings of the Panel held on 6th October, 3rd November and 1st December 2015.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Reports of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) held on 6th October, 3rd November and 1st December 2015 be received and adopted.

50. 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 Huntingdon East 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, subject to the transfer of the seat of UKIP from the

Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) to Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) and transfer of the seat of the Independent Conservative from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) to Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being), the revised allocation of seats on Panels to political groups be determined as set out in the report now submitted.

51. VARIATION TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS, ETC

The Council received an update on the health of Councillor S Van De Kerkhove provided by Councillor M F Shellens and he reported that Councillor Van De Kerkhove had requested to pass on his gratitude to the Council for their continued support.

Further to Minute No 50 ante, the Council

RESOLVED

- (a) that Councillor S M Van De Kerkhove be appointed to replace Councillor B S Chapman in the membership of the Corporate Governance Panel;
- (b) that Councillor Mrs R E Matthews be appointed to replace Councillor Mrs D C Reynolds in the membership of the Corporate Governance Panel;
- (c) that Councillor Mrs S J Conboy be appointed to replace Councillor Ms L A Duffy in the membership of the Development Management Panel;
- (d) that Councillor B S Chapman be appointed to replace Councillor S M Van De Kerkhove in the membership of the Licensing and Protection Panel/Licensing Committee;
- (e) that Councillor Ms L A Duffy be appointed to the vacancy on the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being);
- (f) that Councillor S Greenall be appointed to replace Councillor Ms S J Conboy on the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being);
- (g) that Councillor B S Chapman be appointed to replace Councillor Ms L A Duffy on the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being); and
- (h) that Councillor Mrs S J Conboy be appointed to replace Councillor K J Churchill on the membership of the Senior Officers Panel.

52. APPOINTMENTS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS

Further to Minute No 49b ante, the Council

RESOLVED

that the following membership be approved with effect from 1st January 2016 –

Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Customers)	Current Members of Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being)
Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Finance and Performance)	Current Members of Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being)
Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth)	Current Members of Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)

The meeting ended at 9.45pm.

Chairman