

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, 27 July 2016.

PRESENT: Councillor P L E Bucknell – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, T D Alban, K M Baker, Mrs B E Boddington, D Brown, G J Bull, E R Butler, R C Carter, S Cawley, B S Chapman, Mrs S Conboy, J E Corley, S J Criswell, D B Dew, Mrs A Dickinson, Mrs A Donaldson, Mrs L A Duffy, M Francis, R Fuller, I D Gardener, L George, J A Gray, S Greenall, R Harrison, D Harty, T Hayward, R B Howe, B Hyland, Mrs P A Jordan, P Kadowere, Mrs R E Mathews, D J Mead, J P Morris, J M Palmer, P D Reeve, Mrs D C Reynolds, M F Shellens, L R Swain, Mrs J Tavener, R G Tuplin, D M Tysoe, D Watt, R J West and J E White.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors J W Davies, D A Giles, Mrs S A Giles, T D Sanderson, Mrs S L Taylor and D R Underwood.

19. PRAYER

The Reverend M Amey, Vicar of All Saints Parish Church, St Ives opened the meeting with prayer.

20. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman referred to the recent death of former Councillor R H Turpin OBE who had died on 26th July 2016 after a short illness having served as a District Councillor for many years during which time he had held a number of positions, including Leader of the Council.

Councillor Mrs D C Reynolds paid tribute to Mr Turpin's enthusiasm for life and offered her condolences to his family. In so doing Councillor Reynolds referred to his talent in his role as Leader of the Council and his interests outside of the Council, including involvement with the church and Freemasons.

Councillor T Hayward referred to the years that he had known Mr Turpin, through serving together in 617 Squadron in the RAF and the loss that would be felt personally.

On behalf of the Conservative Party and the Cabinet, the Deputy Leader, Councillor J A Gray, commended Councillor Reynolds tribute to Mr Turpin with his remarkable and varied life and the huge loss to his family and the Conservative Party.

In concluding, the Chairman paid tribute to Mr Turpin and referred to him as a gentleman.

Following the tributes made to former Councillor Turpin, Members stood and observed a minute's silence in his memory and the Reverend Amey offered prayers for him and his family.

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 referred to the appointment of the new High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire and had been invited to meet Sir D Arculus at an evening reception. The Chairman was also honoured to meet the Duke of Edinburgh at an event with the Chairman of Cambridgeshire County Council and the High Sheriff. Attendance had also included the laying of a wreath for Memorial Day at Madingley Cemetery, further Queen's birthday celebrations and the flying of a flag for the Battle of the Somme.

The Vice-Chairman reported upon his attendance at the St John's Ambulance presentation and commended the involvement of the young volunteers to the service. He also referred to the launch of the 'Invest Huntingdonshire' website and his attendance at the Freedom of Entry and Centenary Parade in Huntingdon and the Luminus Community Inspiration Awards.

21. MINUTES

Subject to replacement of the number "1" with "2" in Minute No. 17 in the voting 'For the Motion' paragraph for Councillor T Hayward and the inclusion of Councillor Mrs S J Conboy in the votes 'For the Motion' in Minute No. 17, the Minutes of the meeting held on 29th June 2016 was approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

22. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

23. STATE OF THE DISTRICT 2016 (ANNUAL REPORT)

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12, the Chairman invited the Executive Leader, Councillor R B Howe to address the Council on the State of the District. In support of his presentation, a copy of the Annual Report 2015/16 had been laid on the table (a copy of which is reproduced in the Minute Book).

Councillor Howe reported upon the continuing challenge faced by the Council to deliver higher quality services with reduced budgets with a rapidly increasing population. In this connection, Members had been reminded of the surplus budget that had been attained in 2015/16, through efficiency savings and strategic partnerships for some services and commended the Officers involved in achieving these efficiencies.

In referring to the Annual Report 2015/16 that highlighted the achievements in the previous year, the Council noted that Council

Tax had not increased for four successive years and remained one of the lowest in the country. Councillor Howe also referred to his new role as Executive Leader and the focus for the Council going forward to understand and manage the demands and expectations of the residents, as well as working with partners and organisations.

The Council's attention was drawn to closer engagement and improving the working relationships of District Councillors with Town and Parish Councils, in particular referred to the recent issues that had been reported in the press regarding grass cutting. Furthermore, Members were reminded of the Customer Service Strategy that was published last year and referred to the action to develop a new website as a result of direct feedback from customers and work towards channel migration to encourage self-service and reduce the number of unnecessary visits and telephone calls to the Council. In addition to this, Members attention was also drawn to the increased presence on social media and related interaction from the residents.

Councillor Howe reported upon the growth agenda and the delivery of new housing well underway, particularly at the key sites of Alconbury Weald and Godmanchester. He also referred to the aim of meeting the housing needs of the growing population of the District and the subsequent development of infrastructure to support such development. Attention was also drawn to the success of One Leisure and the surplus that had been created in 2015/16 for the first time.

Looking forward, the Council was advised of the challenges to find further saving to reduce reliance on Government funding and the plans already in place to generate additional income, including income from CCTV and the Document Centre and returns on the Council's capital investment through the Commercial Investment Strategy. The 3C Shared Service went live in October 2015 for Building Control, ICT and Legal and it was expected to produce services delivered more efficiently with increased resilience.

Councillor Howe referred to recent discussions and further debates on the Devolution Deal that was currently out for consultation that would result in the transfer of significant resources and powers for infrastructure, housing, economic investment and capital investment in Huntingdonshire. In concluding, Councillor Howe referred to his confidence in the administration of the Council to address the challenges ahead with the Council's finances to provide value for money services for the residents of Huntingdonshire.

The Leader of the Principal Opposition, Councillor Mrs S J Conboy was invited to respond. Councillor Mrs Conboy commended the Council and its staff on their performance over the previous 12 months and in particular the achievements at One Leisure, development of the shared services and letting of space in Pathfinder House. Councillor Mrs Conboy asked that the Managing Director, Executive Leader and Lead Members pass on a message of thanks to those staff involved.

In referring to the Council's current financial position and necessity to identify further savings, Councillor Mrs Conboy highlighted their concern for the future sustainability but commended the changes that had already taken place to transform the way the Council delivered its services.

Member's attention was drawn to the proposed Devolution Deal and although in support of the regional decisions being made locally, Councillor Mrs Conboy expressed concern that although negotiations are still ongoing there remained issues to be resolved before taking the Deal forward. Reference was made to encourage the Council to be more ambitious for the residents of the District to focus on becoming a provider of services rather than enabler and provide support to the vulnerable residents and volunteer services.

Whilst welcoming the need for further housing, there was a requirement for more affordable housing and Councillor Mrs Conboy expressed concern with the current provision of jobs in the District and highlighted the need for the development of jobs to support residents to remain in the District.

Reference was made to the additional financial burdens that had been placed upon Towns and Parishes as a result the savings that the Council had achieved and Councillor Mrs Conboy suggested that the Council had a role to play in supporting Towns and Parishes and ensuring that frontline services are maintained.

In concluding, Councillor Mrs Conboy welcomed working alongside the new Executive Leader in the forthcoming year in an attempt to be more ambitious and show greater leadership for the District's residents.

In response to a question from Councillor T Hayward on the importance of attendance by Councillors at organised training events, Councillor Howe referred to the difficulty of some Members in attending events during the day due to work commitments but concurred with the sentiments of Councillor Hayward and the importance of the training programme but had been investigating alternative flexible methods of delivering the training to Members.

Arising from concerns raised by Councillor M F Shellens in relation to the potential unfairness of how the funding would be shared between the Combined Authority as part of the Devolution Deal, Councillor Howe explained that there would be a guaranteed stream of funding for the District and explained that there would be significant discussions and debates as to whole the funding would be allocated.

24. EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR PRESENTATIONS

(a) Councillor R C Carter, Executive Councillor for Environment, Street Scene and Operations

Councillor R C Carter, Executive Councillor for Environment, Street Scene and Operations addressed the Council on the Waste and Recycling Round Reconfiguration Project. A copy of Councillor Carter's PowerPoint presentation is appended in the Minute Book.

By way of background, Members attention was drawn to the reason for the reconfiguration of the waste collection streams to reduce imbalances within the rounds and deliver a more efficient service. Savings had been identified in the region of £276k by a combination of balancing collection rounds and reduction in the size of the domestic waste bin.

Councillor Carter outlined the work programme established to deliver the reconfiguration of the waste collection and the timescales involved before final implementation of reconfigured rounds on 21st November 2016. The Communications Plan to residents was further highlighted to Members using various media and publicity and in this connection Members were requested for their support in identifying newsletters produced by Town and Parish Councils to be used for publicity material.

In response to a question from Councillor Mrs D C Reynolds on the domestic waste bins, Councillor Carter explained the criteria for size and provision of additional bins.

Arising from concerns expressed by Councillor P D Reeve on proposals to reduce the size of the domestic waste bins, Councillor Carter assured Members that a full consultation would be carried with residents prior to any changes being made.

(b) Councillor D Brown, Executive Councillor for Strategic Partnerships and Shared Services

The Chairman invited Councillor D Brown, Executive Councillor for Strategic Partnerships and Shared Services to update the Council on the 3C Shared Services. A copy of the Executive Summaries of the Business Plans for the ICT, Legal and Building Control Services for the period 2016/17 are appended in the Minute Book.

Members were reminded that the 3C Shared Service had gone live in October 2015 and in conjunction with the Executive Summaries referred to above, Councillor Brown reiterated the key objectives that had been agreed by the Leaders of the three Councils to identify savings, provide better value for money services, income generation, maintaining and improving service quality and support growth and the local economy.

Attention was drawn to the key performance indicators that had been implemented to allow performance monitoring and the proportional savings per partner Council of £317k for ICT, £25k for Legal and £16k for Building Control, whereby members noted that progress had been on track and would be reported at future meetings.

Councillor Brown referred to further challenges faced by the 3C Shared Service, including the harmonisation of HR policies across the three Councils and recognition of Trade Unions. A Business Case and harmonisation study would be compiled by October 2016 for consideration by Members and the Cabinet by the end of the year.

(c) Questions to other Members of the Cabinet

In response to a question from Councillor T Hayward on the loss of the Tree Warden Co-ordinator for the Towns and Parishes, Councillor G J Bull explained that following similar concerns expressed by Parishes the Council had been looking at how the service could be delivered to replace this post that had been identified as a saving through the Zero Based Budgeting process.

Arising from concerns expressed by Councillor M F Shellens on the turnover of staff in the Planning Department, Councillor Bull referred to the reorganisation process and the vacant posts had been supported by further provision of support in the Administration Teams. Furthermore, Members had been informed that the posts of Planning Services Manager and Development Management Manager had been successfully recruited.

Councillor B S Chapman referred to the rowing regatta that had taken place in the Riverside Park, St Neots the previous weekend and the promotion of the Council's parks, whereby Councillor R C Carter reported that he had met with the St Neots Rowing Club previously and outlined his full support for such promotional activities.

Councillor J P Morris raised a question in relation to the receipt of complaints on the maintenance of the grass verges in the District and the viability of increasing the frequency of cuts each year. In response Councillor Carter outlined the background to the programme, whereby new machinery had been procured this year but the number of viable days had been lost to the wet conditions that had been experienced in June 2016. In conjunction with this, new working practices had been implemented with the crews and this had slowed work in some areas, but the frequency of cuts had not reduced for parks and open spaces and amenity grass adjacent to highways.

25. OUTCOMES FROM COMMITTEES AND PANELS

Members were acquainted with the background and context to the new format for consideration of outcomes from Committees and Panels by Mrs J Lancaster, Managing Director. The Council noted that any matters for decision would appear as a separate item on the Council's Agenda. A copy of the list of meetings held since the Annual Council meeting on 18th May 2016 is appended in the Minute Book and Members were advised that any issues or questions could be raised in relation to these meetings.

26. USE OF SPECIAL URGENCY PROVISIONS 2015/16

Consideration was given to a report by the Executive Leader on the use of special urgency provisions taken throughout the previous year (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). Councillor Howe advised Members of the procedure to consider a key decision that had not been included on the Notice of Key Decisions and reported that this provision had been used on one occasion in the previous year to consider the procurement of a Commercial Investment Strategy asset. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted.

27. APPOINTMENT OF MONITORING OFFICER AND INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS

By way of a report by the Managing Director (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the legislative duty placed upon the Council to appoint a Monitoring Officer and the designation that had been held previously by the Corporate Director (Services), the Council were invited to consider interim arrangements relating to the designation of a Monitoring Officer and appointment of a new Monitoring Officer following this period. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

(a) that Mr T Lewis, the newly appointed Head of Legal Shared Services be designated the Council's Monitoring Officer with effect from 22nd August 2016; and

(b) that Mrs M Sage, Democratic Services Officer, be appointed Monitoring Officer for a temporary period commencing 23rd July until 21st August 2016.

28. ELECTORAL BOUNDARY REVIEW OF HUNTINGDONSHIRE

Further to Minute No. 72 of the meeting of the Council on 23rd March 2016, the Council considered a report by the Managing Director to which was attached the new warding proposals published by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) now subject to consultation (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book).

The Chairman of the Electoral Boundary Review Working Group, Councillor G J Bull, reported that that the Group had met on the 29th June 2016 and considered the draft recommendations in detail. Councillor Bull advised Members that the proposed warding arrangements had largely mirrored the proposals submitted by the Council. Further clarification had been sought on Fenstanton and St Ives South and the feasibility of splitting the proposed three Member Huntingdon North Ward into a single Member and two Member ward. Whereby in relation to the latter, following further consultation with Huntingdon councillors, support for this proposal had not been forthcoming.

Councillor M F Shellens highlighted his concern for the Huntingdon North proposals and in response Councillor Bull explained that as there had been no support for any changes to this from Members it was felt that, on balance, the proposals should be supported.

In response to concerns raised by Councillor B S Chapman in relation to anomalies in the projected electorate used in the St Neots area, the Chairman reminded Members that representations could still be submitted separately to the Council's submission.

Councillor D B Dew referred to his inability to support the proposal for Godmanchester and Hemingford Abbots, owing to the lack of community cohesion between the parishes affected.

In continuing the debate, Councillor Shellens moved and it was duly seconded by Councillor S Greenall that the Huntingdon North Ward proposals be comprised of a single Member and two Member Ward, whereupon being put to the vote the Motion was declared to be LOST.

Councillor Bull moved the recommendation, which was duly seconded by Councillor R B Howe and upon being put the vote, it was

RESOLVED

that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) draft proposals for the District Council be approved and the LGBCE be informed accordingly.

29. CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

In conjunction with the Corporate Governance Committee at their meeting held on 20th July 2016, the Council considered a report by the Internal Audit and Risk Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was attached the new Code of Corporate Governance.

The Chairman of the Corporate Governance Committee, Councillor M Frances, advised the Council that the Code of Corporate Governance was first adopted in September 2003 and had been subsequently amended on a number of occasions to take account of updates to 'proper practice'. A new 'proper practice' document - Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework – had been published in April and the Framework had been recognised as 'proper practice' by both the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the National Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016. Therefore Members noted that a new Code of Corporate Governance was required to meet the Framework and ensure that the Council acted in accordance with 'proper practice'.

Members were acquainted with the seven principles as defined in the

Framework that should underpin the Council's overall governance structure alongside a number of sub-principles that expanded each area. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Code Of Corporate Governance as attached as an Appendix to the report now submitted be adopted.

30. REPRESENTATION OF POLITICAL GROUPS ON DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEES

A report was submitted by the Elections and Democratic Services Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) relating to the principles of proportionality to be applied to the appointment of Committees and Panels in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and Part II of the Local Government Act 2000 following the change in membership of the Conservative Group.

Whereupon 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.

31. VARIATION TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

Further to Minute No. 30 ante, it was

RESOLVED

(a) that Councillors M Francis and R Fuller be appointed to the Development Management Committee in place of Councillors T D Sanderson and K D Wainwright;

(b) that Councillor D B Dew be appointed to the Corporate Governance Committee in place of Councillor T D Sanderson;

(c) that Councillor R J West be appointed to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Customers) in place of Councillor T D Sanderson;

(d) that Councillor T D Sanderson be appointed to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth) in place of D A Giles: and

(e) that Councillor D A Giles be appointed to the Overview

and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Environment) in
place of M Francis.

The meeting ended at 8.50pm.

Chairman