

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, 28 June 2017.

PRESENT: Councillor R J West – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, T D Alban,
K M Baker, C E Bober, D Brown,
P L E Bucknell, G J Bull, E R Butler,
R C Carter, S Cawley, B S Chapman,
Mrs S Conboy, J E Corley, S J Criswell,
J W Davies, Mrs A Dickinson,
Mrs A Donaldson, Mrs L A Duffy, M Francis,
R Fuller, I D Gardener, L George, D A Giles,
Mrs S A Giles, T Hayward, R B Howe,
P Kadewere, Mrs R E Mathews, J P Morris,
J M Palmer, P D Reeve, Mrs D C Reynolds,
T D Sanderson, M F Shellens, L R Swain,
Mrs S L Taylor, R G Tuplin, D Watt and
J E White.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs B E Boddington, D B Dew, J A Gray, R Harrison, B Hyland, Mrs P A Jordan, D J Mead, Mrs J Tavener and D R Underwood.

12. PRAYER

The Reverend D Busk, Vicar of St Mary's Parish Church, Godmanchester opened the meeting with prayer.

13. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman presented to the Council an account of the activities that he and the Vice-Chairman Councillor R C Carter had attended since the last meeting. In so doing, referred to the successful cake sale held at Pathfinder House that had been supported by Councillor A Dickinson in aid of Dementia UK. The Chairman reported upon his attendance at the Mayor making ceremony on Godmanchester in May 2017 and Members present congratulated Councillor Mrs S J Conboy in her new role. Members were informed of his visit to the MS Centre, Huntingdon accompanied by his consort Councillor Ms J Tavener, and referred to the courage of the sufferers that attended the Centre. Further reference was made to his attendance at the Waresley Cricket Club Outreach, wreath laying ceremony at Madingley Cemetery with 104 wreaths having been laid, the Mayor's open day at Peterborough City Council, Armed Forces Flag Raising Day and attendance at the St Neots Choral Society.

14. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 17th May 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15. MEMBERS INTERESTS'

No declarations were received.

16. STATE OF THE DISTRICT 2017 (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 2016/17 had been laid on the table together with an accompanying PowerPoint presentation (copies of which are reproduced in the Minute Book).

Councillor Howe reported upon the uncertain times that the Council had been experiencing currently, particularly with the House of Commons and the effect of Brexit on jobs, taxes, migration and the economy as a whole. He also made reference to the pervasive threat of terror with the recent terrorist attacks around the country. With this in mind Councillor Howe indicated the importance of ensuring high quality services for the residents of Huntingdonshire continuing to be provided with fair value. Attention was drawn to improvements made to the operational services of the Council, with new arrangements for grass cutting and weed management resulting in a reduction of customer requests. The round reconfiguration for refuse collection resulted in a number of persistent problems during March and April 2017 and Councillor Howe placed on record a formal apology to the residents for these issues that had resulted from these changes.

In referring to the Annual Report 2016/17 that highlighted the achievements in the previous year and outlined the strategic objectives, the Council noted the objective of sustainable growth and Councillor Howe referred to the Gross Value Added (GVA) of incomes into new businesses in Huntingdonshire was significantly less than neighbouring Cambridge, as many residents commuted to other areas for work. With this in mind Members' attention was drawn to the importance of the Oxford to Cambridge corridor and the St Neots Market Town Masterplan, together with planned improvements to the infrastructure to support further employment opportunities in the area.

Councillor Howe reported upon the continuing problem of insufficient affordable homes, despite the acceleration of house building in the District, and indicated that the emergence of a new Housing Strategy had been developed to identify and accelerate the development of affordable homes. He was hopeful that this combined with an innovative approach to land use utilising rural exception sites and consideration of modular homes, as well as revising the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) rules could assist in achieving a better supply of new and affordable housing.

Members' attention was drawn to the development of policies and priorities, whereby Councillor Howe referred to ensuring the governing of the Council was an inclusive and democratic process for all Councillors and the appointment of Councillor Ms A Dickinson as Executive Councillor for Community Resilience and Well Being would

support this role through her work on the Market Town Strategy Programme and engagement of more Members in the process and referred to the forthcoming Members' Summit that had been designed to engage Members more in shaping policy development.

Further attention was drawn to policy priorities, including the strong emphasis on upgrading the main trunk roads and strategic road and rail developments in support of economic growth. With reference to the importance of customer service throughout the Council, Councillor Howe reported that the Customer Service Centres would now not be closing until it was sure that the needs of the customer had been properly looked after. Members noted that there would be a review of the Planning Department to improve the efficiency of planning to deal with more transactions in a more efficient and productive way. Councillor Howe reminded Members of the Devolution deal and support from this authority. In so doing, he expressed his gratitude to his fellow Cabinet Members for his support during this transition period and in particular to the Managing Director, Mrs J Lancaster and her Team of Officers who had continued to deliver services despite the reduced resources, as well as the successful delivery of two impeccable elections.

In concluding his presentation, Councillor Howe outlined his objectives for the forthcoming 3 – 4 years, with a focus on stimulating economic growth, accelerating house building, maximising the use of the Combined Authority influence, providing services that meet and exceed the expectations of residents in the District and ultimately making it a great place to live, work and invest.

The Leader of the Principal Opposition, Councillor B S Chapman was invited to respond. In so doing, he indicated his support that St Neots had been identified and recognised as an area for development and also echoed the Executive Leader's views of thanking the Officers for the quality of services provided in the face of change in direction. With this in mind Councillor Chapman reported upon the need to ensure the robustness of reserves and ensure that Council Tax levels were kept low.

In thanking Councillor Howe for his presentation, Councillor Mrs S J Conboy asked that the PowerPoint presentation be circulated to all Members. With reference to the points that had been highlighted by Councillor Howe, Councillor Mrs Conboy expressed concern regarding the time and energy that the Combined Authority agenda was taking away from this authority and, although supported the work on commercialisation of services, she was concerned at the customer expectations and the requirement for more investment. With these issues in mind Councillor Mrs Conboy questioned whether any commitment would be made to explore a business case to remove the County Council tier as well as devolving more power enabling parishes. In response to the questions raised, Councillor Howe explained the importance of the role of the Combined Authority and believed that Devolution would lead to revolution in public service. He reported that the Combined Authority had decided to establish a commission to look at the structure of local government in Cambridgeshire, with the intention of producing recommendations to rationalise and reduce costs. It was noted that Councillor Howe understood the importance of Towns and Parishes in the District and

had charged Councillor Ms Dickinson with taking this forward, already through the establishment of six-monthly meetings held with all Town and Parish Councils.

Councillor P D Reeve thanked the Executive Leader for his presentation and in so doing highlighted his concerns for the level of resource required by the Combined Authority following Councillor Howe's appointment as Deputy Mayor, as well as the powers of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Combined Authority. With reference to the challenges that had been faced by the District Council, particularly with the refuse round reconfiguration, he indicated that these issues had been addressed efficiently and effectively by the Managing Director and Executive Councillor J White. He also indicated his concerns with the National Planning Policy Framework combined with making the planning system more efficient, as well as the authorisation of gypsy and traveller sites. In outlining his disappointment that the Council had not continued with the appointment of opposition Members to one of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels, he understood the reasoning and endorsed the Council's programme of creating a leaner and more efficient authority that would be supported by the excellent Senior Officers led by Mrs Lancaster.

In response to the points raised by Councillor Reeve above, Councillor Howe explained that with the appointment of two representatives from each constituent authority on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Combined Authority Members should expect to see more opportunities for engagement. In terms of his capacity with the additional workload of the Combined Authority, Councillor Howe indicated that he had been challenged by it but had delegated much of his work to his Deputy and other Cabinet Members and continued to refine how this would work going forward.

With reference to the Executive Leaders address on the GVA, Councillor M F Shellens questioned whether any consideration had been given to the implications of Brexit and its impact on the potential reduction of Eastern European workforce and the availability of skilled labour in area. In response Councillor Howe explained that the Combined Authority would be undertaking a review of the implications of Brexit over the next six months with the intention of ensuring that funding would be retained in Cambridgeshire to address such issues.

Councillor D A Giles outlined his support for the presentation, in particular the references and vision for St Neots, with house building, Enterprise Zone, Oxford to Cambridge corridor as well as supporting working with Town and Parish Councils in the area.

In concluding, Councillor J D Ablewhite endorsed the comments of the Executive Leader and congratulated the leadership as well as support for Mrs Lancaster. He echoed the support for a continual drive to protect services for residents working on a stable financial platform.

17. EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR PRESENTATIONS

(a) Councillor D Brown, Executive Councillor for Commercialisation and Shared Services

Councillor D Brown, Executive Councillor for Commercialisation and Shared Services, addressed the Council on the commercialisation of CCTV and the Document Centre. A copy of Councillor Brown's PowerPoint presentation is appended in the Minute Book.

Councillor Brown outlined to Members the vision and process for the commercialisation project by way of generating additional income through joint ventures with the District Council and the commercial sector. Members noted that a Holding Company had been established with the appointment of Councillors Brown and Mrs S J Conboy as Non-Executive Directors and the Managing Director as Executive Director. Work was underway to progress with the finding and selecting of business partners with the ultimate outcome of a planned £50k of efficiency savings in the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2017-2021.

In relation to CCTV, Councillor Brown explained that the Council wished to develop a joint venture company to offer a range of CCTV services to public, private and third sector organisations, with the intention of making CCTV cost neutral by 2021. Attention was drawn to how the existing shared CCTV service would work alongside a joint venture partner and the viability of identifying and contracting with an external partner.

With regard to the Document Centre, Councillor Brown reported that the potential commercial partnership was under development and development of a final business case to support this working model. Attention was drawn to the company structure and governance arrangements, with the process of identification and appointment of a partner to commence imminently.

In response to a question from Councillor T D Sanderson on the impact of the proposals on existing Service Level Agreements with Town Councils supporting 25% of the costs and any variation to such agreement would need a minimum of 12 months' notice, Councillor Brown explained that there would be no variation to the service and the benefit to such proposals would be the potential for the profits to be put back in and ultimately may result in a significant savings to Town Councils.

Councillor B S Chapman indicated his concern that there appeared to be no provision to remove a Director when they ceased to be a District Councillor and questioned the level of assets transferring and in response Councillor Brown explained that the removal would be agreed by the Board of the Trading Company and the District Council would be transferring £100k. It was suggested that a further dialogue be undertaken with the Managing Director on this project.

By way of a question by Councillor D A Giles on the criteria for Board Membership, Councillor Brown explained that appointments would be made on individual merits and the number of appointments would depend upon how many joint ventures would be established.

In commending the presentation, Councillor P D Reeve outlined his concern with which the Council would have an input into scrutinising decisions of an arm's length business, whereby Councillor Brown explained that the existing governance arrangements of decision making through Overview and Scrutiny and onto the Cabinet allowed for full engagement to ensure that the Non-Executive Directors were kept fully informed.

(b) Councillor S Cawley, Executive Councillor for Transformation and Customer

The Chairman invited Councillor S Cawley, Executive Councillor for Transformation and Customers to update the Council on Transformation. A copy of Councillor Cawley's PowerPoint presentation is appended in the Minute Book.

Firstly Members' attention was drawn to the new name of the Transformation Programme – Mosaic, Councillor Cawley proceeded to outline to the Council the goals and objectives of the Programme and updated Members on the new work streams – Customer, Business, People, Work Smart and Commercial, each headed up by a lead Senior Officer and supported by a Project Manager. Councillor Cawley reported upon the success under the Customer Work Stream and the recent award to the Council's Digital Team for the website achieving four stars. He also explained how the Council had been reviewing its services through a LEAN based approach and encouraged all Members to attend the Members Summit to discuss this in more detail.

In light of the comments made previously by Councillor M F Shellens (Minute No. 16 ante refers), Councillor Cawley explained that through the People Work Stream work was being undertaken looking at people policies, transferring skills and opportunities for staff to be identified for upskilling, alongside a People Strategy that would be addressing the availability of staff.

Members noted the growing expectations of its customers and Councillor Cawley indicated that inefficiency needed to be eliminated to increase productivity and the development of services with customers as the primary focus delivering services efficiently and effectively. In order to enable this, Members noted that technology would need to drive transformation and empower staff to manage relationships with our customers and respond to their changing expectations.

Councillor Cawley explained that Mosaic was a three year plan designed to transform work through the five work

streams and the proposal for a single point of contact for customers and Members so issues could be dealt with at the first point. He referred to the launch event that took place on 26th June 2017 for all staff and Councillor Cawley reported upon the responsiveness of staff involved, together with identified opportunities for the Council.

In welcoming the assurance by the Executive Leader that the Customer Service Centres would now remain open, Councillor Mrs S A Giles referred to the collection of a petition of signatures against the closure of the facility in St Neots and the lack of consultation with Members on the original decision to close the facilities. In accepting the petition, Councillor Cawley explained that the timing of the planned closures had been incorrect and the decision to close the Customer Service Centres had been a Council decision taken through the budget setting process.

Councillor T Hayward outlined his concerns for the fear of losing face to face contact for customers, whereby Councillor Cawley provided reassurance that although technology would be embraced to undertake jobs more efficiently and effectively it had always been the intention to continue to support customers through the Customer Service Centre in Huntingdon to meet those customers in most need of the Council's support.

Councillors B S Chapman, D Giles and Ms S L Taylor made reference to the closure of the St Neots Customer Service Centre and requested that consideration be given to the co-location of other services at the Customer Service Centres including the Job Centre and concern expressed by staff that they had been in fear of losing their jobs. Whereby, the Managing Director undertook to arrange a separate meeting to discuss these issues with the Members concerned.

In response to concerns expressed by Councillor T D Sanderson on the single point of contact and discussion of case work with specific officers, Councillor Cawley explained that this level of detail had not been determined and welcomed Members input into development of the operating model.

In commending the presentation, Councillor Ms L A Duffy commended the work of the Call Centre staff with the knowledge in their ability to resolve issues at first point of contact, but remained concerned about the ability of residents to travel into Huntingdon and other vulnerable residents. In response Councillor Cawley undertook to pass back the positive comments to Mr J Taylor, Head of Customer Services and reassured Councillor Ms Duffy that there was a commitment to support these residents that preferred face to face contact.

In the light of Councillor Sanderson's comments above, Councillor P D Reeve also indicated his concern that Members might become more channelled through the single

point of contact approach, whereby Councillor Cawley indicated that Members would not be restricted to use the resources that they currently utilised but stressed the importance of ensuring staff were equipped to take forward the Project.

(c) Questions to other Members of the Cabinet

Arising from a question from Councillor J M Palmer on the changes to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) that had not been reflected fairly across the District, with particular reference to East Cambridgeshire District Council that operated a differential zoning charge across their District, Councillor G J Bull explained that the concept of zonal charging for CIL had been investigated at its inception but had been found to be problematic in its implementation. It was noted that the Council would await the outcome of the report on CIL that had been presented to Government that may be reported in the Autumn statement and undertook to look at this issue further on receipt of further information.

In response to a question from Councillor T Hayward on public rights of way, Councillor J White explained that it was a County Council function to maintain the public rights of way but the Council had continued to strive to achieve the highest standards in areas of its responsibility. He further reported that the County Council had recently appointed a Rights of Way Officer for Huntingdonshire and would be working within the Council area to maintain public rights of way in the District.

Councillor M F Shellens raised a question in relation to the availability of electronic car charging points across the District in comparison to other local authority areas, whereby Councillor White indicated that it had been a very relevant issue that had been incorporated into the draft Local Plan to 2026 and would be included in the strategic review of car parking in the District. The Council had been in the process of finalising a new contract for a new supplier and the overall strategic review would be addressing the availability of charging points.

In light of the recent Grenfell Tower tragedy, Councillor Mrs S J Conboy questioned whether the District Council had any buildings deemed to be at risk or others in the Council's investment portfolio. Whereby, the Managing Director, Mrs J Lancaster, reported that there was one building identified over the prescribed height but had not been a clad building. As the Fire Authority was the enforcing agency they had been actively engaged in a review process with a focus on residential properties and then move towards commercial buildings. At this point it may be necessary to review the Council's commercial stock. Mrs Lancaster also reported that the County Council had already undertaken some local research into the make-up and construction of schools and buildings and private sector accommodation for vulnerable

adults.

With reference to a question raised at Council previously (Minute No.66 of the meeting of the Council held 22nd February 2017 refers), Councillor Mrs S L Taylor reported upon the continuous problems with street signs that had not been repaired, whereby Councillor Brown undertook to get exact details following the meeting to proceed with this issue.

In relation to Councillor D Brown's presentation (Minute No. 17a ante refers), Councillor T D Sanderson questioned whether Town and Parish Councils had been made aware of the proposals of the commercialisation of CCTV, whereby Councillor Brown reported that initial discussions had taken place with Huntingdon and St Neots Town Councils and a presentation would be made to St Ives Town Council shortly. It was also noted that such proposals would not affect the Service Level Agreement.

In response to a question from Councillor J P Morris on the increase in the level of homelessness and expenditure on homing homeless families and plans for future years, Councillor R Fuller explained that the Council's new Housing Strategy set out the vision for planned affordable housing builds and the recent awareness raising through the local media has also meant that that Council had been prepared to spend money to house homeless residents. It was recognised that B and B accommodation was not a long term viable solution but plans were being assessed as to the provision of new temporary accommodation to eradicate the requirement to use B and B accommodation. It was further noted that a report would be presented to the Cabinet in October 2017 on a Homelessness Strategy.

In light of a question raised by Councillor B S Chapman on the inability of parishes to plan for the spending of Community Infrastructure Levy money, Councillor Bull undertook to investigate this matter further and reported that there were plans to improve communications with Town and Parish Councils.

Councillor P D Reeve requested that his thanks be passed to the Street Naming and Numbering Team for their recent work in avoiding confusion over road naming in Ramey. Furthermore arising from Councillor Brown's presentation earlier (Minute No. 17a ante refers), Councillor Reeve questioned the investigation of the use of Wi-Fi CCTV cameras, whereby Councillor Brown explained that provision of Wi-Fi CCTV cameras did not currently form part of the Service Level Agreement and any further investment in such was on hold pending the development of the commercialisation project.

18. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY

Councillor R B Howe presented an update of the activities of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority by way of a PowerPoint presentation. A copy of the presentation is appended in the Minute Book and would be circulated to all Members. Councillor Howe also reported upon the outcome of the Combined Authority meeting held earlier that day and informed Members that it had been agreed that the Mayor of the Combined Authority would receive a remuneration of £70k and they had appointed Mr M Whiteley as their Chief Executive.

Members also noted that a business case had been presented for Peterborough University funded by the LEP and Combined Authority and then out to Government and private institutions to fund in the region of £60m, accommodating 20k students to degree level courses. A presentation was received on the Interim Local Transport Plan with preliminary findings into the extension of the A47, development of the A10, extension of the M11 and A428 corridor development. Councillor Howe also reported that the Mayor had been asked to investigate the provision of a light railway solution between St Neots and Whittlesey.

In referring to the 100 day plan commitments, a document that had been circulated to all Members previously, Councillor Howe reported upon the RAG status of the commitments set out in the plan.

With reference to recent conflicts in the provision of roadworks conflicting with use of the A1(M) as reported by Councillor T Alban, Councillor Howe explained that the Combined Authority was not currently responsible for this area but responsible for strategic development.

Arising from a question by Councillor Ms L A Duffy on the ability of the Combined Authority to take forward provision of a suitable rural bus service, Councillor Howe explained that the new Transportation Strategy that had been published today combined the plans of Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council and although buses would feature, the Combined Authority had also been keen to develop other forms of public transport.

Councillor Mrs S J Conboy highlighted her concern of the speed of decision making of the Combined Authority and ability to ensure Members are kept abreast of any decisions, whereby Councillor Howe explained that it had been agreed to publish a monthly newsletter and update report to all Members, together with a concise digest of what the Combined Authority had achieved in the previous period and decisions taken.

Arising from the report of development of a light railway solution, Councillor B S Chapman questioned the timescale for development of such a project, whereby Councillor Howe reported that the Combined Authority had authorised for the commissioning of a transport feasibility study to be undertaken, including the provision of an underground system in Cambridge, with proposals reported within 6-9 months.

Councillors R C Carter and T Hayward provided an update on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A copy of their PowerPoint presentation has been appended in the Minute Book. They reported upon their attendance at a meeting on 26th June 2017 and had reviewed the Agenda for the forthcoming Combined Authority meeting that had been held earlier that day, as well as looking at the Combined Authority Forward Plan and reviewing the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme. It was noted that Councillor Hayward had been appointed Vice-Chairman for the ensuing Municipal Year and he would be chairing the next meeting held on 24th July 2017 in the absence of the Chairman. Members attention was drawn to concerns expressed by the Committee of the over ambitious nature of the 100 day plan and difficulty in achieving all targets. In relation to specific issues for Huntingdonshire, it was reported that all infrastructure improvements had been supported with the A1 and rail improvements.

Members noted the work programme for the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and they would have an opportunity to question Portfolio Holders and receive a presentation on the Interim Local Transport Plan.

Councillor J D Ablewhite concluded by commending that this authority had been well represented on the Combined Authority in the leading roles enabling the Council to be in a good position to deliver and scrutinise and congratulated Councillor Hayward on his appointment.

19. USE OF SPECIAL URGENCY PROVISIONS 2016/17

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.

20. OUTCOMES FROM COMMITTEES AND PANELS

A copy of the list of meetings held since the last meeting of the Council held on the 17th May 2017 is appended in the Minute Book and Members were advised that any issues or questions could be raised in relation to these meetings.

Councillor T Hayward directed a question to Councillor T D Alban, Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny (Communities and Environment), asking for an update on the takeover of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital. In so doing, Councillor Alban declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in this item by virtue of his employment and reported that a

meeting of the Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee was being held the following week and Councillor Ms J Tavener had been appointed as the Council's representative on this Committee and would be reporting back to the Panel upon progress.

21. VARIATIONS TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

There were no changes to report.

The meeting ended at 9.55pm.

Chairman