

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COUNCIL held in the Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 26 February 2020

PRESENT: Councillor R J West – Chairman.

Councillors R E Bellamy, Mrs M L Beuttell, G J Bull, E R Butler, S Bywater, J R Clarke, J C Cooper-Marsh, S J Corney, J W Davies, D B Dew, Ms A Diaz, Mrs A Dickinson, R Fuller, I D Gardener, Dr P L R Gaskin, D A Giles, Mrs S A Giles, J A Gray, M S Grice, K P Gulson, M J Humphrey, P Kadewere, D N Keane, C J Maslen, H V Masson, L W McGuire, D J Mead, J Neish, J M Palmer, K I Prentice, Roberts, T D Sanderson, Mrs P E Shrapnel, Mrs S Smith, Mrs J Tavener, D Terry, R G Tuplin, D M Tysoe and Mrs S R Wilson.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors T D Alban, B S Banks, S M Burton, B S Chapman, Mrs S Conboy, S J Criswell, Dr N Johnson, J P Morris and S Wakeford.

53 PRAYER

Pastors Joyce of the International Prayer Church opened the meeting with a prayer.

54 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 4th December 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

55 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

56 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: SECTION 89 ALCONBURY WARD AND ST IVES EAST WARD

The Returning Officer reported that following by-elections in the Alconbury Ward on 12th December 2019 and St Ives East Ward on 13th February 2020, Councillor Ian Gardener and Councillor Adam Roberts respectively had been elected to the District Council.

Councillors Gardener and Roberts expressed their appreciation to their respective electorates following their recent election successes, as well as Officers for their continued dedication and commitment in supporting these processes.

57 CHAIRMAN'S ENGAGEMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Council noted those engagements attended by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman since the last meeting (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book).

58 2020/21 BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2021/22 TO 2024/25)

In conjunction with a report by the Head of Resources and PowerPoint presentation (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book), Councillor J A Gray, Executive Councillor for Strategic Resources, presented to Members the 2020/21 Revenue Budget, the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2021/22 to 2024/25, the Fees and Charges schedule for 2020/21, the Treasury Management Strategy, the Capital Strategy, the Investment Strategy and the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy for 2020/21 and other associated matters for the Council's consideration and approval.

In accordance with Section (30)2 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Council also considered proposals for levels of Council Tax in 2020/21 for various parts of the Huntingdonshire district.

In his opening remarks on completion of the Budget and MTFS, Councillor Gray referred to the time and effort involved with the long process that began in May 2019 and conveyed his gratitude to the Officers that had assisted, including the Managing Director and her staff, as well as the S151 Officer in the guise of Mr C Mason that had commenced this work at the beginning and had been concluded by Mrs C Edwards and well as his Cabinet Member colleagues.

Members attention was drawn to the Plan on a Page for the Council that had shown a clear strategy for a sustainable and balanced budget including a proposed Council Tax increase of 2.6% for 2020/21. It was noted that the proposed budget deficit by 2024/25 was now £0.5m compared with £1.25m in 2020/21 and this had been achieved whilst retaining and enhancing core services, as well as delivering the Conservative Party manifesto set out by the Group in 2018. These included a dramatic drop in the use of B & B accommodation for homelessness, continuation of a free green waste collection service, increasing recycling rates, investment in Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, a new Local Plan channelling housing and employment growth, One Leisure capital investment and an effective Transformation programme structured at providing a vision, direction and financial stability to enable residents to thrive.

Members noted that the revenue changes to the budget in respect of savings and additional income, service growth and capital had resulted in a net increase of 3% of the Council's budget as growth bids had been larger than anticipated, as well as some targets proven to be more stretching than originally planned resulting in schemes being put back in the budget.

In referring to the Commercial Investment Strategy (CIS), Councillor Gray explained that the Council had been close to completing the work set out after the CIS in 2015 that had been an important income stream to enable a balanced budget without the reliance on Central Government funding and the focus looking forward to the development of housing related acquisitions. Reference was also

made to the budget assumption that Council Tax would increase by 2.6% per annum across the term of the MTFS.

Members attention was drawn to the impact on the revenue reserves with the removal of the grant settlement from Government, increase in Council Tax and the savings, income and growth in the budget, together with the expectation of a minimum level of reserves of 15% but may be impacted if the Council takes the decision with regard to future investment in the town centres but would ensure that the Council were kept informed of any such impact.

Councillor Gray drew attention to an increase in the draft Capital Programme and the importance of the inclusion of such investments as the funding of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to enable individuals to remain in their own homes with adaptations. Further attention was also drawn to the Treasury Management activity that the Council was expected to undertake during 2020/21 in terms of its borrowing and investments, with the policy expected to mirror previous years in terms of affordability and reducing overall treasury risk.

In concluding, Councillor Gray reported to Members that the proposed budget for 2020/21 should not give Members significant concerns over the Council's financial position and represented a sound and balanced budget.

Councillor Gray moved the recommendations which were duly seconded by the Executive Leader, Councillor R Fuller.

In response and on behalf of the HDC Independent Group and Leader of the Principal Opposition Group, Councillor T D Sanderson thanked Councillor Gray for his presentation and the contribution by Mrs Edwards as S151 Officer. In so doing, he commended the continued contribution to DFGs and reduction in spend on temporary accommodation for the homeless but outlined his concern that that Council still continued to face significant financial challenges with a deficit of nearly £0.5m by the end of the MTFS. He further referred to the improvements with more modest financial projections for One Leisure and although supported the inclusion of Civil Parking Enforcement suggested that this went against the recent introduction of the Council's Car Parking Strategy. In supporting the proposed Council Tax increase that had been presented in accordance with the average wage increase, concern was expressed that average wages had fallen in comparison in Huntingdonshire and questioned whether this would be reflected in the MTFS.

In response, Councillor Gray indicated that the concerns expressed regarding the deficit would be tackled and welcomed the realism with One Leisure budgeting, but this needed to be managed carefully alongside the turnover of the service and disputed the reference to the wage growth in Cambridgeshire but reduced situation in Huntingdonshire.

On behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor M Grice reported that although it represented a balanced budget, it was also heavily reliant on reserves and if the savings would not be achieved the risks to the Council could be similar to that of Northamptonshire County Council and losing ability to control the Council's finances.

In response, Councillor Gray explained that the Council would be using reserves to cover a shortfall and money had been put into reserves in previous years to

take account of any drops in income. He further disagreed with the statement that the Council had been heavily reliant on reserves but the budget surplus in previous years had been managed to take account of requirements in future years when they would be needed.

Councillor P Kadewere, on behalf of the Labour Group, applauded the administration in the delivery of the proposed budget and welcomed the decision to raise Council tax to protect key services but questioned whether the District Council could approach Central Government for additional funding.

In response, Councillor Gray explained that there would be no opportunity for further Government grants following the announcement of the spending and fair funding review but had been pushing hard on the latter for it to work in the Council's favour based on its needs and resources.

Councillor D B Dew, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) explained to Members that the budget process had allowed all Members an opportunity to get involved in the budget setting process this year but had been disheartened to hear some feedback from Members and the decision taken to adopt an alternative strategy in previous years with contribution to reserves in light of the Government grant uncertainty had been the correct approach, otherwise the Council would be in a far worse position. Councillor Dew referred to the alternative budget that had been presented by the HDC Independent Group and encouraged other Groups to engage with the process at an early opportunity in July to start discussions.

In concluding the debate, Councillor Fuller, Executive Leader, refuted most of the opposition group's comments and was offended by the Liberal Democrat's suggestion that the Council was anywhere near Northamptonshire and suggested that this clearly indicated their lack of understanding of the budget process. In referring to the Civil Enforcement Parking proposal, he indicated that a commitment had been made to investigating a scheme and this would be presented through the normal cycle of meetings.

With reference to a suggested lack of vision in the budget, Councillor Fuller referred to the lack of engagement, with the exception of the HDC Independent Group, of all groups for alternative budget proposals. It was an essential requirement of the Council to set a budget in the interests of the communities and that supported the needs of the residents who required the services the most. Without the investment in the CIS the Council would be facing a large deficit in the MTFS and the Council had also committed to re-investment in High Streets, DFGs, homelessness and rough sleeping. Councillor Fuller concluded by reference to the delivery of services to support the changing future of Huntingdonshire in a positive way and urged Members to be proud of the benefits that could be delivered.

It having been previously moved and seconded, upon being put to the vote it was further

- a) that the proposed overall Budget 2020/21 and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2021/22 to 2024/25 (Appendix 1) to include the Revenue Budgets at Section 2, the Capital Programme at Section 3 and the 2020/21 Fees and Charges at Section 7, Annex A;

- b) that an increase of 2.6% Council Tax for 2020/21 be approved, i.e. the Band D Charge will increase to £145.86;
- c) **that the Council note the Council Tax Base for the whole Council area and individual Towns and Parishes (para 6.2) as approved by Cabinet on the 4th December 2019 (and subsequent publication as a key decision).**
The tax base (T) which is the amount anticipated from a District Council Tax of £1 is £62,854;
- d) that the following amounts calculated by the Council for 2020/21 in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by the Localism Act 2011 (the Act), the Local Government Finance Act 2012 and associated regulations :-
- i. the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) (a) to (f) of the Act
Gross revenue expenditure including benefits, Town/Parish Precepts £79,755,973
 - ii. the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) (a) to (d) of the Act
Revenue income including reimbursement of benefits, specific and general grants, use of reserves and any transfers from the collection fund. £63,134,970
 - iii. the amount by which the aggregate at (i) above exceeds the aggregate at (ii) above in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act
This is the "Council Tax Requirement" including Parish/Town Precepts (item i minus item ii). It is the cash sum to be funded from District, Town and Parish Council Taxes. £ 16,421,003
 - iv. the Council Tax requirement for 2020/21 divided by the tax base (T) in accordance with Section 31B (1) of the Act
District plus average Town/Parish Council Tax (item iii divided by District taxbase) £261.26
 - v. the aggregate of all "Special Items" referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
The total value of Parish/Town precepts included in i and iii above. £7,252,766
 - vi. the Basic Amount of Council Tax for 2019/20 being item iv less item v divided by the tax base (T) in accordance with Section 34 (2) of the Act
The District Council's Band D Tax for 2020/21 £145.86
 - vii. the basic amounts of Council Tax for 2020/21 for those parts of the District to which one or more special items (Parish/Town precepts) relate in accordance with Section 34 (3) of the Act are shown by adding the Huntingdonshire District Council amount to the appropriate Parish Council amount in column "band D" set out in Table 1 attached.

viii.the amounts to be taken into account for 2020/21 in respect of categories of dwellings listed in particular valuation bands in accordance with Section 36 (1) of the Act are shown by adding the Huntingdonshire District Council amount to the appropriate Parish Council amount for each of the valuation bands in the columns "bands A to H" set out in Table 1 attached;

e) that the amounts of precept issued to the Council by Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Police Authority, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Fire Authority and for each Parish Council for each of the categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands in accordance with Section 40 of the Act shown in para 6.3 attached be noted;

f) that, having regard to the calculations above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30 (2) of the Act, hereby sets the figures shown in para 6.4 as the amounts of Council Tax for 2020/21 for each of the categories of dwelling shown. ***This is the total Council Tax to be collected, incorporating the requirements of all of the relevant bodies, for each town or parish area;***

g) the Council notes that, in accordance with Section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the basic amount of its Council Tax for 2020/21 is not excessive. ***The basic amount at b(vi) above is not excessive as defined by the Government.***

Tax Base 2020/21

Abbotsley	260
Abbots Ripton	133
Alconbury	574
Alconbury Weston	292
Alwalton	119
Barham & Woolley	30
Bluntisham	746
Brampton	2253
Brington & Molesworth	173
Broughton	95
Buckden (incorporating Diddington)	1196
Buckworth	54
Bury	639
Bythorn & Keyston	150
Catworth	161
Chesterton	62
Colne	372
Conington	74
Covington	45
Denton & Caldecote	27
Earith	599
Easton	76
Ellington	242
Elton	289
Farcet	528
Fenstanton	1273

Folksworth & Washingley	348
Glatton	133
Godmanchester	2759
Grafham	235
Great & Little Gidding	125
Great Gransden	446
Great Paxton	365
Great Staughton	326
Haddon	23
Hail Weston	245
Hamerton & Steeple Gidding	53
Hemingford Abbots	332
Hemingford Grey	1282
Hilton	455
Holme	248
Holywell-cum-Needingworth	985
Houghton & Wyton	782
Huntingdon	7643
Kimbolton & Stonely	598
Kings Ripton	84
Leighton Bromswold	79
Little Paxton	1552
Morborne	12
Offord Cluny & Offord D'Arcy	530
Old Hurst	102
Old Weston	99
Perry	268
Pidley-cum-Fenton	174
Ramsey	2902
St Ives	6010
St Neots	11074
Sawtry	1936
Sibson-cum-Stibbington	231
Somersham	1407
Southoe & Midloe	157
Spaldwick	247
Stilton	776
Stow Longa	69
The Stukeleys	864
Tilbrook	124
Toseland	38
Upton & Coppingford	89
Upwood & The Raveleys	434
Warboys	1525
Waresley-cum-Tetworth	144
Water Newton	41
Winwick	46
Wistow	226
Woodhurst	153
Woodwalton	83
Wyton-on-the-Hill	429
Yaxley	2951
Yelling	153

- h) that the future savings targets of £0.5m of Net Expenditure by 2024/25 be approved; and
- i) that the 2020/21 Treasury Management, Capital and Investment Strategies, MRP Statement and Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy be approved.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Order) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 the following Members voted for, against or abstained from the Motion -

For the Motion – Bellamy, Beuttell, Bull, Butler, Bywater, Clarke, Corney, Davies, Dew, Dickinson, Fuller, Gardener, Gaskin, Gray, Gulson, Kadewere, Keane, Masson, McGuire, Mead, Neish, Palmer, Prentice, Roberts, Tavener, Tuplin, Tysoe, and West.

Against the Motion – Cooper-Marsh, Diaz, S A Giles, Grice, Humphrey, Sanderson, Shrapnel, Smith, Terry and Wilson.

Abstentions – D A Giles and Maslen.

59 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2020/21

In compliance with the requirements of Sections 38 - 43 of the Localism Act 2011, Councillor D Keane, Executive Councillor for Corporate Services presented a report by the Strategic HR Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) in connection with the District Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2020/21.

The Statement, which is required to be approved by the Council by 31st March 2020 and produced annually, detailed the Council's policies relating to Officer remuneration.

Having noted an amendment to the ratios listed in the Pay Multiples paragraph to 1:5.8 and 1:4.9, it was noted that a copy of the Pay Policy Statement would be publicised on the Council's website along with data on senior salaries under the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency 2011. Accordingly it was moved by Councillor Keane, duly seconded and

RESOLVED

that the Policy Statement for 2020/21 be approved.

60 QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

Arising from a question from Councillor G J Bull on the Council's policy on reducing climate change and efforts to mitigate the effects, Councillor Ms M Beuttell, Executive Councillor for Operations and Environment, reported that a full update on climate change by the Council would be presented to the Council in May 2020.

In response to a question by Councillor D A Giles on how the Council accounted for the reduced income in car parking of £2.4m as reported in the budget,

Councillor Ms Beuttell explained that this was attributed to technical issues resulting in a delay in the full roll-out of the programme of car parking changes.

Councillor T D Sanderson questioned when Members would have an opportunity to consider the impact of the car parking changes, whereby Councillor Ms Beuttell explained that the roll-out had still not been completed but could be reviewed in the Autumn.

Arising from a question by Councillor J C Cooper-Marsh on suggested changes to the operating tariff days, including the removal of free parking on Bank Holidays, Councillor Ms Beuttell confirmed that free parking remained in place on Sundays and Bank Holidays and encouraged Councillor Cooper-Marsh to share further details of the locations where he felt there may be anomalies.

In response to a question from Councillor A Roberts on the launch of the Training Shed with One Leisure, Councillor J M Palmer, Executive Councillor for Leisure and Health, explained that this complemented the One Leisure suite of activities but delivered a different type of activity and was unique to Huntingdonshire.

Councillor P Kadewere raised a question in relation to emerging concerns with the Coronavirus and impact in the District, whereby the Managing Director, Mrs J Lancaster, reassured Members that work was already underway by Officers working with Public Health England and other agencies planning for any necessary changes.

Following her attendance at the soft launch of the Training Shed and Members review of health and well-being, Councillor Ms S Smith raised a question in relation to how the most vulnerable people could access such facilities and whether there was any plans to extend this type of provision elsewhere. In response Councillor Palmer referred to the important role of the Active Lifestyles Team and their ongoing schemes, as well as the concessionary One Leisure membership scheme and expansion of the Training Shed concept would be dependent upon on the success of the St Ives provision.

61 LEAD AND DEPUTY INDEPENDENT PERSONS

In conjunction with consideration of the item at the meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee on 22nd January 2020, the Chairman of the Committee, Councillor L W McGuire presented to the Council a report by the Elections and Democratic Services Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking the re-appointment of the Lead and Deputy Lead Independent Persons for a further two year period.

Councillor McGuire reminded Members that in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, it was necessary for the Council to appoint one or more Independent Persons and acquainted the Council with the backgrounds of the proposed appointments and their agreements to continue in their roles.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the re-appointment of Mrs Gillian Holmes and Mr Peter Baker to the posts of Lead and Deputy Independent Persons respectively be reaffirmed

for a further two year period to 30th April 2022 without the need for further ratification in each year by the Council at its Annual Meeting.

62 COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - HOLME PARISH COUNCIL

In conjunction with consideration of the item at the meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee on 22nd January 2020, the Chairman of the Committee, Councillor L W McGuire presented to the Council a report by the Elections and Democratic Services Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on a Community Governance Review of Holme Parish Council following a request from the Parish Council to increase its size from 7 to 9 Members.

Members were advised that a public consultation had taken place and the Parish Council had identified their preference for an implementation date of 7th May 2020, with the cost of the referendum being borne by the Parish Council. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that a Reorganisation of Community Governance Order to be made in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 for Holme Parish Council to increase the size from 7 to 9 parish councillors.

63 CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY - UPDATE

In conjunction with the decision summaries of the recent meetings of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, Councillors R Fuller and J Neish presented an update of their activities. Copies of the decision summaries are appended in the Minute Book. Particular attention was drawn to agreement to the launch of the public consultation on the Cambridge Autonomous Metro (CAM) in the early part of the New Year and encouraged all Members to share and participate. He further drew attention to the approval of the £100k Homes Business Case and welcomed the work to be undertaken to support bringing this in across the Combined Authority area. Finally Councillor Fuller was pleased to report that the National Non-Domestic Rates receipts split with the Combined Authority in relation to the Alconbury Enterprise Zone had been concluded with the District Council retaining the full receipt.

Arising from a question by Councillor D A Giles on how to influence the joined up thinking behind the CAM, A428 and East West Rail service and Councillor Fuller reminded Members of the Council's position and the views that had been presented in relation to the consultation that fully supported the proposal to ensure the maximum benefit for St Neots in terms of route options.

Councillor Neish reported upon the approval of their budget for 2020/21 and Medium Term Financial Plan and potential to look at a business case to support the inclusion of areas within the District as regional arms extensions to the CAM.

Councillors D B Dew provided an update on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee and particular mention was made of the discussion and debate on affordable housing.

Members were provided with an update on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Audit and Governance Committee by Councillor L W McGuire and Members noted discussion on delay with the auditing of accounts attributable to a resource issue similarly experienced by the Council, but they had received similar assurances that that the Combined Authority would not experience the same issue next year.

64 OUTCOMES FROM COMMITTEES AND PANELS

A copy of the list of meetings held since the last meeting of the Council held on 4th December 2019 is appended in the Minute Book and Members were advised that any issues or questions could be raised in relation to these meetings.

65 VARIATIONS TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

On the recommendation of the Executive Leader, Councillor R Fuller, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that Councillor A Roberts be appointed to the membership of the Corporate Governance Committee;
- (b) that Councillor I D Gardener be appointed to the membership of the Development Management Committee;
- (c) that Councillor A Roberts be appointed to the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth);
- (d) that Councillor I D Gardener be appointed to the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) in place of Councillor J W Davies; and
- (e) that Councillor I D Gardener be appointed to the Appeals Sub-Group.

The meeting ended at 8.52pm.

Chairman