

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COUNCIL held in the CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER / STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 22 May 2024

PRESENT: Councillor M J Burke – Chair.

Councillors T Alban, B S Banks, M L Beuttell, A Blackwell, R J Brereton, E R Butler, S Bywater, S Cawley, S J Conboy, S J Corney, A E Costello, S J Criswell, L Davenport-Ray, D B Dew, S W Ferguson, I D Gardener, C M Gleadow, J A Gray, K P Gulson, J E Harvey, M A Hassall, P J Hodgson-Jones, S A Howell, N J Hunt, A R Jennings, P A Jordan, M Kadewere, P Kadewere, D N Keane, J E Kerr, R Martin, S R McAdam, B A Mickelburgh, D L Mickelburgh, S Mokbul, J Neish, Dr M Pickering, B M Pitt, T D Sanderson, D J Shaw, R A Slade, S L Taylor, I P Taylor, D Terry, C H Tevlin, S Wakeford, N Wells and G J Welton.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors J Catmur, J Clarke and C Lowe.

CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair reported on the election of Councillor James Catmur as District Councillor for Great Paxton on Thursday 2 May 2024 and welcomed him to the District Council.

The Council were informed of the recent death of former District Councillor Chris Stephens who had served as a District Councillor for the Hemingford's Ward from 2004 to 2010. During which time he was notably Chairman of the Council's Corporate Governance Panel from 2005-2010. An individual tribute was then paid by Councillor T D Sanderson.

Members were also advised that this would be the last meeting attended by Karen Sutton, Corporate Director of Finance and Resources who would be retiring from the authority at the end of June. The Executive Leader, the Deputy Leader and the Assistant Deputy Leader then individually expressed their own appreciation to Mrs Sutton, before the Council then placed on record their gratitude to Karen for her effort and support during her time in post.

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR

It was proposed by Councillor S J Conboy, seconded by Councillor T D Sanderson and upon being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED

that Councillor S R McAdam be appointed Chair of the Council for the ensuing Municipal Year.

Councillor S McAdam in the Chair.

Councillor McAdam made the Statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

The Chair paid tribute to the way in which Councillor Burke had performed his duties as Chair of the District Council over the course of the last two years and having proposed a vote of thanks to him, presented Councillor Burke with his past Chair's badge. In so doing, he added that Councillor Burke had been a privilege to work alongside, had undertaken his role professionally, firmly and with a touch of humour. He also commented upon the way in which he had represented the Council around the District.

In response, Councillor Burke remarked that it had been a privilege to Chair the Authority. He made particular reference at being able to represent the Authority and the District at the time of the passing of her late Majesty the Queen, a memory which would remain with him forever. Finally, he thanked the Chief Executive, the Corporate Directors, the Elections and Democratic Services Manager and the Member Development and Support Officer for their support and assistance during his term of office.

RESOLVED

that the Council's appreciation to Councillor M J Burke be placed on record as Chair during the last two years.

2 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 27th March 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

4 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

It was proposed by Councillor S McAdam, seconded by Councillor S J Conboy and upon being put to the vote it was

RESOLVED

that Councillor D B Dew be appointed Vice-Chair of the Council for the ensuing Municipal Year.

Councillor Dew made the Statutory Declaration of Office.

5 APPOINTMENT OF CABINET

The Executive Leader, Councillor S J Conboy announced that she had appointed Councillors T D Sanderson, S Wakeford, L Davenport-Ray, S Ferguson, J

Harvey, B Mickelburgh, B M Pitt and S L Taylor to the Cabinet for the ensuing Municipal Year. She also announced that Councillor T D Sanderson would be appointed Deputy Executive Leader and Councillor S Wakeford would be appointed Assistant Deputy Executive Leader.

6 TERMS OF REFERENCE REVIEW, CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

With the assistance of a report by the Director of Finance and Corporate Governance (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Chair of the Corporate Governance Committee Councillor N Wells presented a proposal to revise the terms of reference and membership of the Committee for approval.

In presenting the proposals, Councillor Wells explained that the need to review the Committee's terms of reference had been identified within the Local Government Association (LGA) peer review of Internal Audit. The proposals presented were based upon the model recommended by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance (CIPFA) for audit committees, with additional paragraphs included to incorporate the Committee's constitutional, conduct and regulatory responsibilities. The Council also noted that the recommendations had been developed by a Sub-Group of members from the Corporate Governance Committee and had been endorsed by the Committee at their last meeting.

With regards to the proposals to reduce the membership of the Committee, the Council were advised that it was suggested that the size of the Committee should be reduced to seven members and up to two non-voting Independent Members. This should not include Executive Members.

In commending the proposals within the report, Councillor P Hodgson-Jones reported that this was the first stage in a full review of the Council's Constitution. It was hoped that there would be further developments over the course of the year to further improve the Council's effectiveness.

Whereupon it was duly moved and seconded and

RESOLVED

that the necessary variations to the Council's Constitution to reflect the revised Terms of Reference of the Corporate Governance Committee and the amendments to the membership of the Committee be approved as outlined in the report now submitted.

7 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS TO CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

With the assistance of a report by the Director of Finance and Corporate Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), Councillor N Wells Chair of the Corporate Governance Committee reported on the outcome of the selection process for the appointment of up to two non-voting Independent Members to the Corporate Governance Committee. The Process had now been completed and was reported for ratification to Council.

Whereupon it was moved by Councillor N Wells duly seconded by Councillor J Harvey and

RESOLVED

that Messrs P Webb and T Sakhrani be appointed as Members of the Corporate Governance Committee for a period up to 30th April 2027.

8 REPRESENTATION OF POLITICAL GROUPS ON DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEES, ETC

A report was submitted by the Elections and Democratic Services Manager (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book) relating to the principles and 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.

Members were advised that since the publication of an agenda, an updated appendix had been tabled. This was a result of changes in the allocation of seats by the Joint Administration which meant that the Council were being asked to depart slightly from the rules of proportionality and agreement was being sought to these changes.

Clarification having been sought to the detail of the changes being proposed, Members were advised that there had been no change in the number of seats allocated to each political group, however the apportionment for the Green councillor had been re-allocated from the Development Management Committee to the Employment Committee to enable her to fulfil her responsibilities as Executive Councillor for Workforce.

Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that the allocation of seats on District Council Committees and Panels to political groups and non-aligned Members be determined as set out in the revised appendix now submitted.

9 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS

RESOLVED

that the following Members be appointed to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels for the ensuing Municipal Year:-

Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth)

A M Blackwell
J Catmur
S Cawley
S J Corney

Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities & Partnerships)

T D Alban
S Bywater
S Criswell
M A Hassall

I D Gardener
C M Gleadow
S A Howell
A R Jennings
R Martin
M Pickering
D Terry
N Wells

N J Hunt
M Kadewere
J E Kerr
S R McAdam
S Mokbul
D Shaw
C H Tevlin
G J Welton

10 COMMITTEES

RESOLVED

- a) that Members be appointed to serve on the Corporate Governance, Development Management, Employment, Licensing and Protection, Licensing Committee and Senior Officers Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year as follows:-

Corporate Governance Committee (7)

Councillors M J Burke, J A Gray, P J Hodgson-Jones, A R Jennings D J Shaw, I P Taylor and C H Tevlin

Development Management Committee (16)

Councillors R J Brereton, E R Butler, J Clarke, S J Corney, D B Dew, P A Jordan, K P Gulson, S R McAdam, S Mokbul, D L Mickelburgh, J Neish, B Pitt, T D Sanderson, R A Slade C H Tevlin and S Wakeford

Employment Committee (8)

Councillors A M Blackwell, S Cawley, L Davenport-Ray, S Howell, P A Jordan, P Kadewere, D N Keane and C A Lowe.

Licensing and Protection Committee (12)

B S Banks, M L Beuttell, S Bywater, A E Costello, S Criswell, S W Ferguson, I D Gardener, S A Howell, P A Jordan, P Kadewere, D Terry, and N Wells.

Licensing Committee (12)

B S Banks, M L Beuttell, S Bywater, A E Costello, S Criswell, S W Ferguson, I D Gardener, S A Howell, P A Jordan, P Kadewere, D Terry, and N Wells.

Senior Officers Committee (4)

M L Beuttell, S Cawley, P A Jordan and T D Sanderson.

- b) that the following Members be nominated from which the Elections and Democratic Services Manager be authorised when necessary to convene a meeting of the Appeals Sub-Group to include up to five Members

(excluding Members of the Employment Committee) to determine appeals under the Council's disciplinary and appeals procedures –

Councillors B S Banks, A M Blackwell, S Bywater J R Catmur, S Corney, A Costello, S Criswell, S W Ferguson, I D Gardener, P J Hodgson-Jones, N J Hunt, M Pickering, T D Sanderson, D J Shaw and S Wakeford.

11 CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY MEMBERSHIP AND OTHER APPOINTMENTS

With the assistance of a report by the Chief Executive (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), Council were invited to make appointments / nominations to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority for the 2024/25 Municipal Year.

Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that Councillor S J Conboy, Executive Leader of Council be appointed to act as the Council's appointee to the Combined Authority and Councillor S Wakeford be appointed as the substitute member.
- (b) that Councillors N J Hunt and J Neish be nominated to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with Councillors J Harvey and P Hodgson-Jones nominated as substitutes;
- (c) that Councillor P Hodgson-Jones be nominated to the Audit and Governance Committee, with Councillor R Martin as the substitute member; and
- (d) that the Chief Executive be authorised to make any amendments to the appointments to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee in consultation with the Political Group Leaders, if the Political Balance is amended by the Combined Authority between now and the next Council meeting

12 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION GOVERNANCE PEER CHALLENGE

With the assistance of a report by the Chief Executive (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), Councillor S Ferguson, Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance presented the feedback report from the Local Government Association Governance Peer Challenge, together with details of progress made against the actions identified.

By way of introduction, Councillor Ferguson reminded the Council that the Peer Review Team had revisited the Council in February 2024 to assess progress made against the recommendations from their review in March 2023. Members were advised that the team made five recommendations, the first concentrating on progress against the initial seventeen recommendations from the March 2023 review and the remaining four having regard to wider corporate governance

issues. Council were also advised that the report had been reviewed and considered by Overview and Scrutiny and the Cabinet.

In responding to the report, Councillor R Martin, Leader of the Conservatives outlined his Group's general support to the actions which were being undertaken and the willingness of his group to assist in driving these forwards. However, he commented on the pace at which some of the issues were being addressed and sought clarification that actions were going to be given the priority which was needed moving forward. Having regard to the comments within the document about resources and the fact there were a further three reviews to be undertaken, Councillor Martin also commented on the need to ensure that there were sufficient resources in place to undertake these resources and implement any actions that were arising therefrom.

Having congratulated Councillor Martin on his new role as Leader of the Conservative Group, the Executive Leader reiterated that Peer Reviews were about learning from others about what the Authority did well and what could be improved, as well as making sure the Council were on a continuous learning curve. She emphasised that cross party working was critical to making sure that learning was embedded across the organisation and thanked Councillor Martin for his offer to work collaboratively in this regard.

Councillor Ferguson reported verbally on the recent visit from the Local Government Association and the positive comments which had been made regarding corporate governance within the Council. He outlined his ambition to develop the Council's corporate governance over the course of the next two years to a position whereby it is seen as exemplary.

Councillor Hodgson-Jones indicated that he shared Councillor Ferguson's ambition to establish the Authority as exemplary in terms of the quality and effectiveness of its corporate governance. He explained that the Corporate Governance Committee had over the course of the past two years been trying to become more proactive in the areas of risk management and internal audit. However, he expressed concern regarding the loss of resources with the internal audit function and the impact this might have on progress on actions within these areas. With this in mind, he urged progress to be made in addressing this resourcing issue.

In addressing the Council, the Assistant Deputy Executive Leader Councillor Sam Wakeford reminded members that change within an organisation of the size of District Council would always take time and that the report had been intended to identify learning opportunities and areas for improvement. He also took the opportunity the positive spirit of engagement expressed from the opposition which would help to make the District Council as effective for residents as possible.

Councillor Sanderson concurred that it was equally important to highlight the areas for improvement as well as the successes over the course of the previous years, across both administrations. He also expressed his appreciation to the officer team for their hard work in preparing for the reviews and their work on a day-to-day basis. He had no doubt that the Leader of the Opposition and his group would continue to ensure that the administration were held to account and that Council meetings were positive and worthwhile.

Finally, the Chief Executive reminded Council Members that the Corporate Governance Committee would be considering an updated version of the action Plan at their meeting on 28th May 2024 which would provide further detail on the current position.

Whereupon and having been proposed by Councillor S W Ferguson and seconded by Councillor S J Conboy, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the LGA Governance Peer Challenge report as set out as Appendix 1 to the report now submitted be received and the recommendations noted; and
- (b) that Appendix 2 to the report now submitted which provides an update on progress against all the proposed recommendations be noted.

13 CONSTITUTION REVIEW WORKING GROUP

RESOLVED

that Councillors M J Burke, J A Gray, P Hodgson-Jones, R Martin, D Mickelburgh, T D Sanderson and S Wakeford be appointed to the Constitution Review Working Group for the ensuing Municipal Year.

14 APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

With the assistance of a report by the Chief Executive (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the legislative duty placed on the Council to appoint a Section 151 Officer, the Council were advised of the outcome of the meeting of the Senior Officers Committee which had met on 20th May 2024 to consider the appointment of a new Director of Finance and Corporate Resources. It was the intention that this post should take on the role of Section 151 Officer on commencement on their employment with the District Council.

Having noted that the proposal enabled the Council to fulfil its duty to appoint an Officer who is responsible for the Council's financial affairs and to ensure that the necessary governance arrangements are in place for Huntingdonshire District Council, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that Suzanne Jones be appointed as the Council's Section 151 Officer on commencement of her employment as Director of Finance and Corporate Resources with a start date to be confirmed following necessary employment checks; and
- (b) that following the departure of Karen Sutton as the Council's Section 151 Officer, Sharon Russell-Surtees, (Chief Finance Officer) and currently

Deputy Section 151 Officer until the commencement of the employment of Suzanne Jones.

Chair