

# 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, 16 October 2024

PRESENT: Councillor S R McAdam – Chair.

Councillors T Alban, B S Banks, M L Beuttell, A Blackwell, R J Brereton, M J Burke, S Bywater, Catmur, S Cawley, B S Chapman, J Clarke, 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, M A Hassall, S A Howell, N J Hunt, A R Jennings, P A Jordan, M Kadewere, P Kadewere, D N Keane, J E Kerr, C Lowe, R Martin, 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 and N Wells.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors E R Butler, J E Harvey and P J Hodgson-Jones.

Prior to the start of the business, the Chair took the opportunity to welcome Ms Suzanne Jones, the new Director of Finance and Corporate Services and the Council's Section 151 Officer to her first meeting of the Council. Suzanne had joined the Council on 2nd October 2024.

## **31 PRAYER**

Imaam SK Foyajul Islam of St Ives Mosque opened the meeting with a prayer.

## **32 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 17th July 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## **33 MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillors B S Banks, M L Beuttell, B S Chapman, J Clarke, A E Costello, S Criswell, K P Gulson and N Wells declared a non-registerable interest in Minute No. 37 by virtue of their previous receipt of the Winter Fuel Allowance payment.

## **34 RETURNING OFFICER'S REPORT: ST NEOTS EATONS BY-ELECTION**

The Chair reported on the outcome of the By-Election which was held for the vacant seat in the St Neots Eatons Ward on Thursday 19 September 2024. In

doing so, he took the opportunity to welcome and congratulate newly elected Councillor Barry Chapman on his return to the District Council. Councillor Chapman had previously served as a District Councillor from 2010 until 2022.

### **35 CHAIR'S ENGAGEMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair referred to the recent death of District Councillor Colin Saunderson who sadly passed away in September 2024. Councillor Saunderson was elected to the Fenstanton Ward in 2010 and served until 2011 when he lost his seat but continued to stand as a Liberal Democrat in several District Council elections. Colin has served in the St Ives area since the 1970s. Following tributes from Councillor S J Conboy, P Kadewere, C Tevlin and N Wells, Members then observed a moments silence in memory of the former Councillor.

The Council noted those engagements attended by the Chair and Vice-Chair since the last meeting (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). In doing so, the Chair took the opportunity to give advance notice of his annual Carol Service which would be taking place on Wednesday 18th December at 6pm at All Saints Church in Huntingdon. He encouraged all Members to attend.

### **36 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

The Chair reported that there had been no public questions received by the deadline for consideration by the Council.

### **37 NOTICE OF MOTION**

*(See Minute No.33 for Members' Interests)*

Councillor R Martin moved, and it was duly seconded by Councillor M L Beuttell who reserved her right to speak that –

#### **'This Council Notes:**

The Labour Government's recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of means-tested benefits like Pension Credit, as announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves.

The estimated impact of this decision which Age UK says will mean 2 million pensions who need the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it.

The significant role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping older residents of Huntingdonshire and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health.

The criticism from Age UK, the Countryside Alliance and other charities, highlighting the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this sudden policy change.

The additional strain this decision will place on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible, further exacerbating their financial hardship.

**This Council believes:**

That the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship.

While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many thousands across Huntingdonshire sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance.

The decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and wellbeing of our poorest old residents.

The government's approach fails to consider the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit leaving many without the support they desperately need.

**This Council resolves to:**

Request that the Council Leader write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit are protected from fuel poverty.

Commit the Council to signing the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK and write to all members offering them the opportunity to sign the petition themselves.

Encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit update through council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Huntingdonshire are supported in claiming their entitlement'.

In presenting the motion, Councillor R Martin explained that he was raising the matter on behalf of an estimated 32,000 residents within Huntingdonshire who would be losing out on a Winter Fuel Payment following the decision of the Labour Government to limit it to those pensioners who receive means tested benefits.

Councillor Martin went on to state that according to Age UK this policy change meant that around 2 million pensioners, many of whom are already just about making ends meet would no longer be in receipt of the payment. He reiterated that the importance of such payments within the community could not be overstated and that by reducing access to this support, the government risked putting thousands of pensioners into fuel poverty. Council's attention was then drawn to those organisations who had raised criticisms of the policy and attention drawn not only to the effect on health but also the administrative and the psychological barriers that many pensioners faced because there were unaware of or did not want the stigma associated with applying for benefits. Attention was also drawn to the fact that the change had been introduced with little or no notice and no alternative measures to protect the more vulnerable.

Councillor Martin went on to outline the actions he was asking the Council to take by supporting the motion as presented. In doing so, he reiterated that any decision to reverse the policy would be a matter for central government, but by supporting the motion it would send a strong message that Huntingdonshire as a community and as a Council will not stand by whilst its elderly residents were put at risk.

In responding to the motion, the Executive Leader Councillor S J Conboy first reflected concerns that this was a national political move. That having been said, she reiterated that the Joint Administration were committed to listening and responding to residents' concerns and cared passionately about the living conditions of its residents. Reference was made to the previous motion brought by the Joint Administration in October 2022 regarding the Cost-of-Living Crisis and the imposition of measures to seek to address that.

Councillor Conboy then outlined her intention not to amend the motion but to report on those measures which the Administration intended to take to assist in the situation. These included the signposting of those who were eligible for pension credits to encourage more individuals to realise it was accessible and that they were entitled. To work with partners to utilise the District Council's share of the additional household support fund as effectively as possible to support vulnerable households in Huntingdonshire, building up to the Council's expansion of the eligibility criteria for council tax support and to work with peers across local government in Cambridgeshire to support the cost-of-living issues for residents and to seek to meet those needs as effectively as possible.

*A debate then ensued during which Councillors Ferguson, Sanderson, Kerr, Hassall and Davenport-Ray indicated that they were unable to support the motion.*

In doing so, Councillor S W Ferguson recognised that the United Kingdom was experiencing unacceptable high levels of poverty but reiterated that preventing residents from entering crisis and rescuing residents from crisis remained two of the Council's most prominent corporate objectives to which the Joint Administration were committed to taking action. With this in mind, he made reference to the success of the new Council Tax Support scheme, which had resulted in an increase from 1300 to 4000 households now receiving full Council Tax Support. He also took the opportunity to remind the Council that successive national governments had sought to address the issues relating to poverty, but it had been almost twenty years since the last period of falling poverty. In terms of the motion presented, Councillor Ferguson recognised the administrative barriers to individuals who wished to claim pension credit and reiterated that the Council's Customer Support Team worked hard to ensure that individuals received the benefits to which they were entitled. He acknowledged the need to focus on outreach and education going forward to ensure that eligible pensioners also received assistance. However, whilst supporting many of the points made within the presentation of the motion, he was unable to support all of it.

Councillor T D Sanderson having also commented on the political nature of the motion and the current economic position, took the opportunity to outline the practical steps that the Council could undertake to support vulnerable pensioners who were affected by the changes this winter. Councillor J Kerr took the

opportunity to express her concerns that the motion was of a political nature, to which the Council had no remit, or powers.

In addressing the Council, Councillor M Hassall explained that he was unable to support the motion due to his personal agreement with the approach to means testing the Winter Fuel Payment so as to ensure that support is directed to those who most needed it. He also reiterated that the District Council had very limited influence on national policy decisions and that there were Members of Parliament representatives who may be able to make these points more effectively.

Councillor L Davenport-Ray took the opportunity to remind the Council of services that the Council was already providing and would continue to do so to help with the situation. These included the multi-faceted approach taken to residents calling with difficulties paying their Council tax and the work to encourage means test funding to retrofit homes still using oil fired heating. She reiterated that the Council were already making real and tangible efforts to address the problems.

*Councillors C A Lowe, J Neish, J A Gray and M L Beuttell addressed the Council in support of the Motion.*

With reference to her previous employment as a warm home's surveyor for another local authority, Councillor C A Lowe drew attention to the extreme health conditions which could be caused from damp and mould, which also had the potential to make existing health problems worse. Having acknowledged the comments regarding the efforts which would be made to signpost affected individuals to information regarding pension credits, she urged the Administration to make contact directly with this sector of the community.

Councillor J A Neish referred to the circumstances of an individual constituent directly affected by the policy change and reiterated the need for consideration to be given to those individuals that fall just short, with no notice and additional needs. Whilst he recognised that the District Council was not in a position to directly change Government Policy; by supporting the motion it would illustrate to the residents of Huntingdonshire that the District Council cared about their plight.

With reference to the actions that the motion was requesting the Council take, Councillor J A Gray expressed his surprise that there was opposition to what he saw as the straightforward requests which were being made. He also referred to the fact that there had been general support for the need to encourage the take-up of pension credit as outlined at point 3 of the recommendations. He also used the opportunity to make reference to the position that the political parties were taking on the matter at a national level.

Finally, Councillor Beuttell took the opportunity to reiterate that the Winter Fuel Payment would be withdrawn in December and that time was very much of the essence.

In drawing the debate to a close, Councillor R Martin urged Members to support the Motion presented. In doing so, he reiterated that they were straightforward requests, which he foresaw as fair and open asks of the Council. He also took the opportunity to reject the comments that had been made regarding its overly

political nature, referring to the fact that all members were elected for political reasons and the positions of the national parties on the matter. He urged members to support the open, honest and fair motion.

At the conclusion of a lengthy debate and following a requisition that voting on the Motion be recorded in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 16.4, the following Members voted in favour of the Motion:

Councillors Alban, Beuttell, Brereton, Bywater, Cawley, Clarke, Corney, Costello, Criswell, Gardener, Gray, Gulson, Jennings, Keane, Lowe, Martin, and Neish

The following Members voted against the Motion:

Councillors Blackwell, Burke, Catmur, Conboy, Davenport-Ray, Ferguson, Gleadow, Hassall, Jordan, Kadewere M, Kadewere P, Kerr, McAdam, Mickelburgh B, Mickelburgh D, Mokbul S, Pickering, Pitt, Sanderson, Shaw, Slade, Taylor I, Taylor S, Terry, Wakeford and Wells

The following Members abstained:

Councillors Banks, Chapman, Dew, Howell and Hunt

Whereupon, the Motion was declared to be LOST by 26 votes to 17

*(At 7.48pm Councillor C H Tevlin left the meeting and returned at 7.53pm. She did not vote on this item),*

## **38 QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET**

Councillor D Keane sought clarification from the Executive Councillor for Planning Services regarding planning decisions which were the subject of appeals to the planning inspectorate. In response to which Councillor T D Sanderson encouraged all interested parties to review the Government's online advice on the appeals process. Further advice was also available from the planning team and the Chief Planning Officer and Members were encouraged to speak directly with the respective case officers concerning specific cases. In terms of the factors that influenced the Council's position through the course of appeal, Members were reminded that each appeal was considered on its own merits and matters could evolve through the course of that appeal in accordance with appeal guidance. In terms of the numbers of cases, Council were advised that the Authority had received in the region of 2700 planning applications during the previous 12 months, during which time 53 appeals were lodged with the planning inspectorate, 10 of which were upheld.

In response to a question from Councillor A Jennings as to whether there were any plans to offer incentives for parking within the market towns at Christmas, the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene Councillor S Taylor explained that there were no plans at present, but she was happy to discuss the matter further outside of the Chamber. In response, Councillor Jennings made reference to the disruption in St Neots market square over the course of the past year and suggested in light of the receipt of additional interest income it might be a nice to incentivise the use of the high street at Christmas.

In response to a question from Councillor K P Gulson regarding future likely build requirements within the District, the Executive Councillor for Planning Services Councillor T D Sanderson reiterated that he did not believe that the development of the new Local Plan was being progressed with undue haste. Although the Development Strategy had not yet been decided, 369 sites had been submitted as part of the Call for Sites under the Local Plan such that the District Council would be in a good position to consider and respond to the numbers required under the National Planning Policy Framework. He also outlined his appreciation to those members who had sat on the Local Plan Advisory Group for their contributions to those documents which were now out for consultation.

With reference to the recent flooding incidents in the area, Councillor R Martin congratulated the District Council on their flood response in comparison to other agencies. In response to his question as to what extent the District Council would be reviewing the lessons learnt from the incidents and encouraging other agencies to do the same, the Executive Leader explained that the District Council will always undertake a review following a major incident. She made reference to her involvement in the review following the flooding in 2020 which had been cross party, involving ward members and all organisations. She went on to explain that following the flooding in 2020, the Council's website had been significantly updated with information to help householders understand how to prevent flooding and what to do should they be unfortunate enough for it to happen. Members were also reminded that there would be a briefing next month with a focus on flooding and providing emergency responses. She encouraged those councillors with any experience of dealing with flooding in their wards to share their experiences.

In response to a supplementary question regarding the difficulties which had been experienced with bin collection by residents in areas where streets were flooded, the Executive Leader reiterated some of the challenges faced by the Operations Team when undertaking collections in these areas, particularly when roads had been closed by County Council Highways. She undertook to discuss the matter further outside of the meeting, but in the meantime urged local councillors to provide any local intelligence regarding difficulties with collection or water levels to the Operations Team. The Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance, Councillor S W Ferguson also took the opportunity to explain that he sat on the Regional Flooding Coastal Committee which was the interface between the Environment Agency and the principal authorities and was scheduled to meet the following day. He suggested that Members with specific concerns should provide those to him in advance of this meeting, to enable him to put pressure on the Agency.

In response to a request from Councillor N Hunt for an update on the latest planning service statistics and the current status of the Local Plan consultation, the Executive Councillor for Planning provided an update for the Council. In doing so, Members noted that over the course of a year the backlog for major applications had reduced from 180 to 60 as at March of 2024, whilst the backlog for non-major applications had reduced from 140 to 100 in the period from September 2023 to September 2024. Whilst the Planning Enforcement Team had now cleared their backlog they now had in the region of 400 live cases. With regards to the Local Plan, it was reported that the Exhibitions around the District had been well received and would continue throughout October 2024.

With reference to the recent partnership between social enterprise Hey Girls and Huntingdonshire District Council to provide residents of Huntingdonshire with free reusable period products to help with period poverty and reduce waste within the District, Councillor D Shaw requested further information regarding the uptake of the initiative. In response to which the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene, Councillor S Taylor provided some statistics on the levels of menstrual waste generated nationally and in Huntingdonshire each year and explained that by offering reusable alternatives the District Council was seeking to tackle this growing environmental problem. The Council were informed that the reusable products had been well received and that the team were currently seeking to source more funding to try and continue the programme.

In response to a request from Councillor M J Burke for an update on the latest financial performance of One Leisure in light of the significant deficit projected in 2022, the Executive Councillor for Communities, Health and Leisure, Councillor B Pitt provided an update for the Council. In doing so, the Council were informed that One Leisure had in the six months to September 2024 for the first time seen total monthly income exceed expenditure, at a figure of 9%. Since August 2023 there had also been a 39% growth in memberships and a 71% increase in the Active Lifestyles programme. Work was now ongoing to consolidate this position through the investment of facilities including new gym equipment in St Neots and St Ives, increasing the availability of exercise classes and updating the website. Councillor Pitt thanked all those involved in helping One Leisure to reach this position over the course of the past two years and also took the opportunity to outline the human benefits achieved from getting an increasing number of people active in the district.

With reference to the Saturday freighter green waste collection service, Councillor T D Alban enquired as to what performance measures were going to be used to assess the success of the initiative and when that information would be made available. In response to which, the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene, Councillor S Taylor reminded the Council that the freighter collection service was only one of a range of garden waste initiatives. Whilst the service had now concluded for the season, the data which had been collected would now be assessed before making a decision on the impact of the service and its future provision. In responding to this, Councillor Alban sought and received a reassurance that the performance data and any decision on the future of the service be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships).

As the Chair drew questions to Cabinet Members to a close, Councillor J A Gray expressed his disappointment that the meeting was operating to a timed schedule.

## **39 HUNTINGDONSHIRE PRIORITY NATURAL LANDSCAPES**

The Council considered a report by the Parks and Countryside Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which had been approved by the Cabinet the previous evening formally recognising and adopting the Priority Landscapes of Huntingdonshire.



By way of introduction, the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene, Councillor S Taylor explained that the report marked a significant step forward in the Council's commitment to enhancing the natural environment in Huntingdonshire and to making sure it is well placed to take advantage of opportunities to invest in and enhance the district's rich diversity.

The Council were advised that by formerly recognising these landscapes, the Council was ensuring that future development was guided by the principles of biodiversity net gain, allowing the restoration and enhancement of vital habitats whilst continuing to accommodate the needs of a growing population. The work aligned with the Council's Corporate Plan and Climate Strategy and also contributed to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), led by Cambridgeshire County Council.

Members were also advised that the Cabinet had agreed with the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) that the report and presentation should be forwarded to the Local Plan Advisory Group for their consideration.

In welcoming the preparation of the report and the identification of the priority areas, Members of the Council made several comments regarding the report. With reference to the forthcoming production of the Countywide LNRS, Councillor Davenport-Ray commented on the fact that Huntingdonshire as a District would have a document to directly contribute to this Strategy. Whilst Councillor M Hassall reiterated the importance of the Local Plan Advisory Group being educated on the priority areas and receiving the presentation from the Wildlife Trust.

In response to a suggestion from Councillor B S Chapman regarding the need to protect the flood plains from development and the potential for the inclusion of further information within the report regarding the protection of these areas, the Executive Councillor explained that the report made reference to nine areas and the river corridors. She encouraged the councillor to refer to the Overview and Scrutiny presentation for further information.

Having outlined his support for the policy and the discussions at Overview and Scrutiny, Councillor R Martin welcomed the forward-thinking approach to new legislation regarding biodiversity net gain and suggested that he would like to see the document incorporated into planning policy. In response to his concerns that the work would duplicate that being undertaken by the County Council, the Council were advised that it would directly contribute to the County Council work. Whilst the Executive Councillor for Planning Services suggested that the integration of the two service areas could be further explored.

Councillor I D Gardener then outlined his concerns regarding potential future development within the Grafham Water area and the need to retain this as a rural natural landscape. In response to which and with reference to the points which had also been made regarding development on the flood plain, the Council were reminded that the document was not a planning document and merely highlighted the Council's priorities for nature. The Local Plan consultation was the mechanism through which views and opinions were sought on future developments and related issues. The opportunity was also taken to remind Members that 369 sites had been put forward by developers, members of the

public, parish councils and various groups and these were being explored within this consultation.

Comment was made by Councillor J A Gray regarding the potential impact on the biodiversity within the district from the placement of solar farms by central government. Finally Councillor T Alban took the opportunity to reiterate that the problems relating to flooding were not just confined to those marker towns located adjacent to the river Ouse and he was pleased that this has been recognised within the report.

Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be received and noted.

*(At 8.27pm Councillor J Catmur left the meeting and returned at 8.31pm).*

*(At 8.42pm Councillor S Howell left the meeting and returned at 8.44pm).*

#### **40 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE**

With the assistance of a report by the Chief Executive and a power-point presentation (copies of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Executive Leader provided an update on the actions which had been taken since the Local Government Peer Challenge which took place in May 2024.

By way of background the Council were reminded that the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) formed a key part of the improvement and assurance framework for local government. The Challenge also assisted councils to meeting part of their Best Value duty, with the UK Government expecting all local authorities to have a CPC at least every five years.

In terms of the Council's position, Members were advised that the Council had formally accepted the report and was now required to publish an Action Plan in response by 17th October 2025. The Peer Team would then return to the Council by the end of January 2025 to follow up on progress.

In terms of the Action Plan, Council were advised that the Plan contained 27 actions which were linked to 8 formal recommendations. Seven additional recommendations had also been identified. Members were then provided with an overview of the current status of these actions.

The Executive Leader then proceeded to provide more detailed information regarding the progress made with each of the eight recommendations in turn. Members were advised that a lead member had been identified for each activity to assist with political accountability and ownership, although overall responsibility would remain within the remit of the Leader and Chief Executive.

Finally, the Executive Leader took the opportunity to remind Members that the Action Plan would evolve and be subject to change as various activities were scoped, shaped and delivered and as such would be a 'living' document.

Arising from the presentation, Councillor R Martin thanked the Executive Leader and the Chief Executive for the work which had been undertaken to-date and requested that further consideration be given to establishing a mechanism to provide an update on the progress being made on a more regular basis to Members. In terms of the recommendations, Councillor Martin outlined his perception that some of the recommendations could have been strengthened and gone further in some areas. He referred to recommendations 1, 3 and 4 as examples.

Councillor B Pitt, the Executive Councillor for Communities, Health and Leisure welcomed the recommendation relating to strengthening the Council's approach to engagement. In doing so, he took the opportunity to explain that the District Council had now commenced community co-production workshops as part of its engagement on the Community Health and Wealth Building Strategy. He reiterated that this was a new form of engagement for the District Council and sought the support of the Executive Leader for embedding that as part of the way in which the Council did business.

In responding to the comments which had been made, the Executive Leader undertook to establish an appropriate mechanism for reporting back to Council Members on progress and welcomed the support from all Members as the Council strives to improve. She also welcomed the use of co-production as a consultation option and outlined her intention to attend a future engagement session.

Whereupon and having been proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED

that the Action Plan prepared in response to the Corporate Peer Challenge be noted, together with the progress made to date.

#### **41 ADJOURNMENT**

At 9.12pm, it was

RESOLVED

that the meeting stand adjourned.

Upon resumption at 9.20pm

#### **42 CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY - QUESTIONS**

The Council received and noted copies of the decision summaries from recent meetings of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and Members were advised that any issues could be raised in relation to these meetings.

In response to a request by Councillor B S Chapman for an update on the proposed improvements to the connection for EWR to St Neots, Councillor S

Wakeford reported on the discussions at the meeting of the Transport and Infrastructure Committee on 18th September 2024. The Council were informed that the Combined Authority had delegated authority to respond to the consultation should the timeline preclude further discussion at their November meeting. Members were informed that the Authority had been undertaking significant work to influence the proposals and would not be letting drop the concerns around the opportunities regarding growth and regeneration that were at risk of being missed if connectivity was not improved.

With reference to the current consultation on bus franchising, Councillor R Martin sought the views of the Executive Leader on the matter. In response to which Councillor Conboy explained that it was not appropriate for her to lobby whilst the consultation was ongoing but she reiterated her desire to endeavour to ensure that all villages had connectivity. With this in mind she urged Members to encourage those who lived in those villages which would benefit from increased connectivity to respond to the public consultation.

Having been advised that the in-person consultation had taken place in Huntingdon on a day of the week in which buses did not travel from villages to the town, the Executive Leader undertook to raise this issue with the Combined Authority directly.

With reference to the significant increase in the mayoral precept in April 2024 to pay for bus services, Councillor Jennings enquired whether any regular reports were received by the Executive Leader or Deputy Assistant Leader as to the value of the additional bus services that have been made in the District. In response to which Councillor Wakeford explained that the Combined Authority was interested in understanding the value of bus use and data as to the usage and value of the additional services which were coming on board at different times would not be available at this stage. He undertook to speak to Councillor Jennings regarding any specific concerns outside of the meeting.

In response to a question from Councillor M Hassall, Councillor J Neish reported that the issue with timescales between meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the CPCA Board had now been improved. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee were currently engaged in discussions as to how to become more effective, although there were ongoing concerns as to how to ensure that their suggestions were given consideration by the Board.

## **43 OUTCOMES FROM COMMITTEES AND PANELS**

A copy of the list of meetings held since the last meeting of the Council held on 17th July 2024 is appended in the Minute Book and Members were advised that any issues or questions could be raised in relation to these meetings.

With reference to the meeting of the Corporate Government Committee which was held on 25th September 2024, Councillor M L Beuttell requested an update from the Vice-Chair on the progress being made by the Constitution Review Working Group. In response to which it was agreed that a written response would be provided.

Councillor C H Tevlin took the opportunity to update Members on her attendance at the Cambridgeshire County Council Adult and Health Care Committee and

drew attention to the update on Hinchingsbrooke Hospital which had been received. With reference to the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) meeting held in September she also drew attention to the development of the Community Health and Wealth Building Strategy.

With reference to the implementation of the garden waste collection service, Councillor J A Gray commented on the absence of any regular updates or any detailed report on its performance to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships). He outlined his continuing concerns that a major policy change was not being adequately monitored and that Members had requested information which had not yet been forthcoming. In response to which the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) reminded the Council that all Members were welcome to bring issues to Overview and Scrutiny for consideration. The Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance went on to explain that some performance information was available within the quarterly performance report which was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) and available for scrutiny.

#### **44 REPRESENTATION OF POLITICAL GROUPS ON DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND PANELS**

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 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 200 following the by-election held on 19th September 2024 in the St Neots Eaton's Ward.

Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

- a) that the allocation of seats on Committees and Panels to political groups and non-aligned Members be determined as set out in the report now submitted; and
- b) that the requirements for appointments to advisory / sub-groups in paragraph 5.3 be noted.

#### **45 VARIATIONS TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS**

On the recommendation of Councillors S J Conboy, R Martin and T D Sanderson, it was

RESOLVED

- a) that Councillor J E Harvey be appointed to the Member Development Working Group;

- b) that Councillor N Wells be appointed to the membership of the Corporate Governance Committee in place of Councillor C H Tevlin;
- c) that Councillor B S Chapman be appointed to the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) in place of Councillor S Cawley.

The meeting ended at 9.40pm.

Chair