

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, 26 February 2025

PRESENT: Councillor S R McAdam – Chair.

Councillors T Alban, B S Banks, M L Beuttell, A Blackwell, R J Brereton, M J Burke, E R Butler, S Bywater, Catmur, S Cawley, B S Chapman, J Clarke, S J Conboy, S J Corney, A E Costello, D B Dew, S W Ferguson, C M Gleadow, J A Gray, K P Gulson, J E Harvey, 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, 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 S J Criswell, L Davenport-Ray, I D Gardener, P J Hodgson-Jones and R A Slade.

62 THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Mr Chip Colquhoun opened the meeting with a thought for the day.

63 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 11th December 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

64 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

65 CHAIR'S ENGAGEMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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 remarked that it had been his privilege to attend the Holocaust Memorial Service at Peterborough City Council on 27th January 2025.

The Council also received details of the Chair's Charities for the 2024/25 year – the Papworth Trust and Magpas.

66 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10.1, the following Public Question was presented to the Council –

What plans does HDC have to invest in active travel in Huntingdonshire in 2025/26 and how much money will be ear marked to help to deliver some positive outcomes on the ground in the coming financial year?

In thanking the questioner for his question, the Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing Councillor S Wakeford began by reminding the Council that formal responsibility for active travel sat with Cambridgeshire County Council in their role as the local highway authority.

He explained that whilst the District Council did not invest directly in active travel, it did place great importance upon it and considered it carefully as part of its infrastructure planning. The significant role that active travel and other non-motorised user transport can play in supporting the health and wellbeing of Huntingdonshire residents and also the economic opportunities that can arise from a visitor economy with a strong leisure element was well recognised. As such, the District Council continued to work closely with the County Council and the Combined Authority in this regard and had influenced a range of their plans and strategies in promoting active travel and non-motorised user transport options.

Councillor Wakeford also reiterated that the District Council continued to negotiate active travel solutions as part of Section 106 Agreements to ensure new communities were well connected and had awarded CIL grants in recent years with active travel elements. Work was also ongoing with stakeholders over the active travel elements of the A428, East West Rail and the Fens Reservoir schemes and funding obtained through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund was being used to undertake feasibility work for potential future routes. Attention was also drawn to the active travel engagement exercise which was currently being undertaken and whose purpose was to provide evidence which could be used to secure investment to construct new and improved routes and for the new Council Local Plan.

In concluding his remarks, the Executive Councillor reiterated that given the responsibilities of the District Council in this area, it was leveraging the role it had to maximise the opportunities for active travel for the residents of Huntingdonshire into the future.

67 FINAL 2025/26 REVENUE BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2026/27 TO 2029/30)

In conjunction with a report by the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources and a PowerPoint presentation (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book), Councillor B A Mickelburgh, Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources presented to Members the 2025/26 Budget, the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2026/27 to 2029/30, the Fees and Charges Schedule for 2025/26, the Treasury Management Strategy, the Capital Strategy, the Investment Strategy, the Annual Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement for 2025/26 and other associated matters for the Council's consideration and approval.

In accordance with Section 30 (2) of the Local Finance Act 1992, the Council also considered proposals for levels of Council Tax in 2025/26 for various parts of Huntingdonshire District.

By way of introduction, the Executive Councillor explained that the Treasury Management Strategy was largely structured by government regulation and was very similar to the previous year. Although, there had been several small amendments in response to requirements of the Treasury Management Code and changes to the way in which Minimum Revenue Provision must be calculated. Council was informed that Counter Party limits remained unchanged from the previous year and that as Government Debt Management Office rates had remained in line with general interest rates it had been decided not to diversify into Environmental, Social and Governance Investments.

In terms of the Council Tax resolution, Members attention was drawn to the proposed increase of 3.11% or £5 a year in Council for a Band D property for 2025/26. In doing so, attention was drawn to changes to the rates of inflation over the course of the previous 10 years and the resulting impact on the need for Council Tax collection.

With regards to the proposed Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy, Councillor Mickelburgh explained that circumstances over the course of the last year had changed to tighten the Council's finances and create a level of greater uncertainty. Members attention was drawn to the significant increase in Employers National Insurance Contributions, the increased cost of the Materials Recycling Facility Contract and the uncertainty surrounding forthcoming local government review. In respect of the latter, Members of the Council were informed that a £1m fund had been established from Council reserves should the need arise.

The Council's attention was then drawn to some of the successes achieved by the Administration's responsible management of the Budget. Members were advised that the Council's One Leisure Service was making a surplus for the first time and that work was planned to drive further budgetary improvements. Attention was also drawn to the success of the Council's Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil trial and the inhouse recruitment of the new Chief Digital Information Officer for 3C ICT which had generated financial savings.

With the assistance of PowerPoint Slides, the Council were then acquainted with some of the detailed figures within the budget. An explanation of turnover which was budgeted at just over £84.3m was also provided including expenditure, fees, business rates, grants, Council tax and contribution to reserves.

In terms of the Local Government Finance Settlement, Council was advised that this had been at the lower end at what had been anticipated and a two-year settlement had been promised going forward which would be welcomed for planning purposes. Progress continued to be made towards self-sufficiency, with the higher than anticipated uptake of the garden waste subscription service, alongside progressive optimisation across the Council.

Members were also advised that the Council continues to face several financial uncertainties, including the future of new homes bonus, fairer funding, national non-domestic rates and local government reorganisation which would all have an impact on the ability of the Council to plan financially.

In concluding the presentation, Councillor Mickelburgh reiterated that the foundations of the Council's finances were solid, and the Budget provided the

confidence to continue to take positive steps and apply forward thinking to meet the concerns Huntingdonshire residents for the year ahead.

Councillor Mickelburgh then moved the recommendations which were duly seconded by Councillor S J Conboy who reserved her right to speak.

In response and on behalf of the Conservative Group, the Leader of the Principal Opposition Group, Councillor R Martin then moved the following amendment which was duly seconded by Councillor A Jennings who also reserved his right to speak –

‘To provide one hours free parking in all Council short term car parks and to not proceed with the planned increase in market pitch fees, whilst all reducing the burden on reserves across the MTFS’

In introducing the amendment, the Leader of the Principal Opposition Group Councillor Martin explained that the amendment was designed to support the market towns and local businesses with the District and keep Council finances in check by reversing the increase in market traders fees and offering an hours free parking in short stay car parks. In addressing the Council, he also set out his proposals to fund these suggestions, whilst at the same time reducing the Council’s requirements to draw on reserves. These included proposals to not accept specific budget bids for the forthcoming financial year, to eliminate the use of consultants proposed for assistance with the Climate Strategy, Place Strategy and the Local Plan, small budget adjustments relating to staffing proposals for food waste collection, proposals for One Leisure pricing and changes to the assumptions for the estimation of income from interest rates.

In terms of the costs associated with the proposals, the Council were advised that the cost of choosing not to increase market trader pitch fees would be £9k per annum, whilst the proposal for one hour’s free car parking would cost £295k in the first year rising to £590k thereafter due to planned price increases. The proposals would also reduce the reliance on reserves by £806k over the MTFS period.

Members were urged to support the amendment which put residents first, gave them a reason to shop locally, supported the market towns and local businesses and kept Council finances in check.

In debating the matter, several councillors spoke against the proposed amendment and indicated that they would not be supporting it. Whilst a number of Councillors made reference to the short notice at which they had been provided with the proposals, Councillor S Wakeford and M Hassall reiterated that the budgetary proposal should have been submitted through the overview and scrutiny process to enable it to have received proper consideration as part of the budgetary process. Whilst the Executive Councillors for Planning and Resident Services and Corporate Performance made the case for the retention of the need for future budgetary provision to employ consultants for the Climate Change Strategy and the Local Plan and a Licensing Officer to fulfil the Council’s statutory responsibilities.

Also speaking against the proposed amendment, Councillor N Hunt drew attention to the negative impact of the proposed amendment upon the delivery of the Council’s Climate Change Strategy, at a time when it was delivering several

successes. In addition to the negative impact of deleting the proposal to establish a team to deliver and promote visual improvements to the state of the District, a matter which had been raised by the Opposition on a number of occasions. He also referred to the fact that the proposed amendment would in his opinion cut wide scale Council services to benefit a small few and reiterated that the Council's short stay car parking services were already well utilised.

Councillor S Taylor also indicated her surprise that the Opposition were willing to remove the proposal for an established Pride of Place Team from the Budget given their previous comments regarding the State of the District. In doing so, she outlined the areas that the proposed new team were intended to address in conjunction with Town and Parish Councils and Community Litter Groups. With regards to Market Pitch fees, the Council were reminded that these had not been increased since the pre Covid period and the proposed increase would help the Council achieve a breakeven point for the service.

The Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources Councillor Mickelburgh commented on the savings which would be achieved by individual car drivers from an hour's free car parking compared to the cost of £2.6m in Council funds over the course of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy period. However rather than simply cutting charges, he outlined the need for a more wide-reaching data driven Car Parking Strategy for the District, taking into account a variety of factors including the implications of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) which was expected to come into effect in August 2025. Council was advised that the Cabinet had indicated their intention to produce a revised Strategy once the impact of CPE was known in the Autumn.

Speaking in support of the amendment and the proposal to fund it through a reduction in the use of consultants, Councillor T D Alban reiterated that many of the issues for which consultants were currently employed could be achieved through proactive and creative working by Officers and Councillors. Councillor Bywater also expressed the view that significant sums of money were spent on consultants and quangos which would be better spent on front line services. He drew attention to the budget bid proposals which he suggested should not be accepted namely embedding Huntingdonshire Futures, Digital Communications, Let's Talk Huntingdonshire and the future employment of Consultants to support the Climate Change Strategy, Place Strategy and the Local Plan and his reasons for this. Instead, he reiterated the need to drive economic growth within the market towns by making them more accessible. The introduction of a free first hour parking would increase footfall, support the traders and revive the high street. Whilst maintaining market pitch fees would also make a difference to certain members of the community.

Also speaking in support of the amendment, Councillor J A Gray reiterated that the proposals which were being made by the Conservative Group were not being funded from cuts but from a reduction in proposals that were not currently in existence. He also took the opportunity to clarify that his previous comments concerning the state of the District had related to the state of the highways, a responsibility of the National Highways Agency. In addition, there were in the region of 180,000 residents within Huntingdonshire who had a responsibility for keeping the region clear and tidy. In terms of the provision of free parking, Councillor Gray reiterated that a number of Councillors on both sides had made reference to this within their election pledges and here was a credible option presented which would address an area that received a number of complaints

regarding expense. He also expressed his delight that a new Parking Strategy may be forthcoming in the near future, whether as a potential consequence of this amendment or not.

Finally in drawing the discussion on the amendment to a close, Councillor A Jennings addressed the Council in support of the amendment. He emphasised the need to take action in recognition of the declining high street. To encourage, those who had to pop to the chemist, or the building society not to park in loading bays or double yellow lines but to park in the car parks which may then encourage them to lengthen their stay and spend further sums of money. He urged members to show support for the market traders and the local businesses within the market towns and suggested that the amendment set out a proposed path to do this. In responding to the comments which had been made regarding the late presentation of the amendment, Councillor Jennings reiterated that the Conservative Group were operating within the parameters of the Council's Constitution and that it was difficult to make observations through the overview and scrutiny process when their first sight of the proposals was on the publication of that agenda. In drawing the discussion to a close he reminded the Council that the amendment would make a significant contribution back into general reserves.

Following debate and being put to the vote, the amendment was declared to be LOST.

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

For the Motion (15) – *Councillors Alban, Beuttell, Brereton, Bywater, Cawley, Clarke, Corney, Costello, Gray, Gulson, Jennings, Keane, Lowe, Martin, Neish*

Against the Motion (30) – *Councillors Banks, Blackwell, Burke, Catmur, Chapman, Conboy, Dew, Gleadow, Harvey, Hassall, Howell, Hunt, Jordan, Kadewere M, Kadewere P, Kerr, McAdam, Mickelburgh B, Mickelburgh D, Mokbul, Pickering, Pitt, Sanderson, Shaw, Taylor I, Taylor S, Terry, Tevlin, Wakeford, Wells*

Abstentions (1) – *Councillor Ferguson*

In returning the debate and discussion to the substantive motion, the Leader of the Opposition addressed the Council again. In doing so, Councillor R Martin made claims that the budget left a £6.5m deficit, despite the introduction of the green waste subscription service and a greater than expected return from interest rates. He also drew attention to the underspends over the course of the previous three years and made reference to the fact that in the previous year the Administration had criticised the Opposition's amendment for utilising reserves.

With reference to the proposed increase in Council tax, Councillor Martin explained that the opposition had felt unable to propose a Council Tax freeze for the current year due to the potential negative impact that this might have on the funding settlement from central government. However, he reiterated his Group's belief that the Administration had been overly conservative with their assumptions, which might have provided an opportunity to ease the tax burden on residents, reduce car parking charges and provide relief for residents. He also

took the opportunity to outline concerns at the proposals for increased expenditure within the Budget and MTFS than in the current year.

In the ensuing debate, the Executive Councillor for Governance and Democratic Services Councillor J E Harvey spoke in support of the proposed Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy. In doing so, she reiterated that she was pleased at a time when many authorities were struggling, the Council was able to present a balanced budget particularly in light of the significant risks which had been faced arising from the change in national government, higher than anticipated interest rates, the continuing cost of living crisis and the impending local government review. She further reiterated that she was proud to be part of a Joint Administration which took tough decisions as needed, whilst also supporting the District's most vulnerable residents.

In addressing the Council on the proposed Budget, the Executive Leader explained that over the course of the previous two years the Joint Administration had taken a series of difficult but prudent decisions to tackle the budget deficit which they had inherited on entering office, which would continue going forward.

In referring to the amendment proposed by the Leader of the Opposition, the Executive Leader also reminded Council that the issue of car parking had been discussed recently by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and it was unfortunate that the matter had not been raised at that stage. She reiterated that the Joint Administration had committed to producing a new holistic Car Parking Strategy for the District, which would seek contributions from all Members of the Council.

In terms of the proposed Budget, Members were advised that this reflected the Council's agreed budget principles and continued to demonstrate that the Council was delivering for its residents. Councillor Conboy also took the opportunity to reiterate the importance of including additional budget bids within the Budget for embedding the Place Strategy and developing digital communications.

Councillor J A Gray spoke against the proposed Budget and the suggestion that it was the activities of the Joint Administration that made any difference to the Budget deficit. In doing so, he reasserted the assertion of his Group Leader that expenditure was increasing at a significant rate, compared to income and expressed concern at the inclusion of a number of items which were not current expenditure and whether they were actually affordable.

Finally, in drawing the debate to a close, the Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources took the opportunity to respond to several points which had been made earlier in the debate concerning the budget deficit, the new budget bids, the uncertainties the Council may face and the reasonableness of the Council tax increase.

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

RESOLVED

- a) that the proposed overall Budget 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2026/27 to 2029/30 (Appendix 1) to include the Revenue Budgets at Section 2, the Capital Programme at Section 3 and the 2025/26 Fees and Charges at Section 7, Annex A be approved;

b) that an increase of 3.11% Council Tax for 2025/26 be approved, i.e., the Band D Charge will increase to £165.86;

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 Chair of Corporate Governance Committee and Section 151 Officer on the 19th December 2024 (and subsequent publication as a key decision);**

The tax base (T) which is the amount anticipated from a District Council Tax of £1 is £66,638.00

d) that the following amounts calculated by the Council for 2025/26 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 - £94,379,079**

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 - £73,295,187**

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 - £21,083,892**

iv. the Council Tax requirement for 2025/26 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 tax base) - £316.39**

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 - £10,031,601**

vi. the Basic Amount of Council Tax for 2025/26 being item iii 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 2025/26 - £165.86**

vii. the basic amounts of Council Tax for 2025/26 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 2025/26 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 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 the precept issued to the Council by Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined 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 2025/26 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 Council Tax for 2025/26 is not excessive. **The basic amount at b(vi) above is not excessive as defined by the Government.**

Tax Base 2025/26

Abbotsley	269.6
Abbots Ripton	141.8
Alconbury	549.5
Alconbury Weston	300.1
Alwalton	120.0
Barham & Woolley	29.4
Bluntisham	782.6
Brampton	2,537.6
Brington & Molesworth	191.2
Broughton	104.3
Buckden	1,339.8
Buckworth	55.4
Bury	784.9
Bythorn & Keyston	156.9
Catworth	162.4
Chesterton	69.0
Colne	394.7
Conington	74.9
Covington	48.0
Denton & Caldecote	29.3
Earith	604.0
Easton	82.5

Ellington	237.6
Elton	298.3
Farcet	544.0
Fenstanton	1,336.9
Folksworth & Washingley	355.7
Glatton	136.9
Godmanchester	3,161.1
Grafham	235.9
Great & Little Gidding	126.4
Great Gransden	494.9
Great Paxton	367.4
Great Staughton	335.6
Haddon	23.7
Hail Weston	245.4
Hamerton & Steeple Gidding	53.5
Hemingford Abbots	340.7
Hemingford Grey	1,298.3
Hilton	453.3
Holme	250.0
Holywell-cum-Needingworth	1,101.6
Houghton & Wyton	843.8
Huntingdon	7,726.5
Kimbolton & Stonely	617.8
Kings Ripton	81.5
Leighton Bromswold	79.4
Little Paxton	1,738.5
Morborne	12.2
Offord Cluny & Offord D'Arcy	538.8
Old Weston	106.5
Oldhurst	103.7
Perry	256.8
Pidley-cum-Fenton	204.7
Ramsey	3,247.8
Sawtry	2,092.6
Sibson-cum-Stibbington	234.2
Somersham	1,425.4
Southoe & Midloe	158.9
Spaldwick	260.8
St Ives	6,070.8
St Neots	11,694.4
Stilton	822.3
Stow Longa	73.6
The Stukeleys	1,448.4
Tilbrook	129.0
Toseland	35.9
Upton & Coppingford	91.3
Upwood & The Raveleys	460.0
Warboys	1,592.8
Waresley-cum-Tetworth	149.3
Water Newton	41.2
Winwick	54.0
Wistow	231.2

Woodhurst	155.3
Woodwalton	82.5
Wyton-on-the-Hill	454.9
Yaxley	2,945.9
Yelling	150.3
Total	66,638.0

h) that the 2025/26 Treasury Management, Capital and Investment Strategies, MRP Statement and Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy be approved (Appendix 2).

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

For the Motion (31) – *Councillors Banks, Blackwell, Burke, Catmur, Chapman, Conboy, Dew, Ferguson, Gleadow, Harvey, Hassall, Howell, Hunt, Jordan, Kadewere M, Kadewere P, Kerr, McAdam, Mickelburgh B, Mickelburgh D, Mokbul, Pickering, Pitt, Sanderson, Shaw, Taylor I, Taylor S, Terry, Tevlin, Wakeford, Wells*

Against the Motion (15) – *Councillors Alban, Beuttell, Brereton, Bywater, Cawley, Clarke, Corney, Costello, Gray, Gulson, Jennings, Keane, Lowe, Martin, Neish*

Abstentions (0) - *None*

68 ADJOURNMENT

At 8.56pm, it was

RESOLVED

that the meeting stand adjourned.

Upon resumption at 9.06pm

(At 8.56pm Councillor J Catmur left the meeting and did not return).

69 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2025-26

In compliance with the requirements of Sections 38-43 of the Localism Act 2011, Councillor S Conboy the Executive Leader presented a report by the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) in connection with the District Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2025/26.

The Statement, which is required to be approved by Council by 31st March 2025 and produced annually, details the Council's policies relating to Officer remuneration.

Having noted that the Statement had been endorsed by the Employment Committee at their meeting on the 25th February 2025, it, was moved by Councillor S Conboy, duly seconded by Councillor S Wakeford and

RESOLVED

that the Pay Policy Statement for 2025/26 be approved.

70 QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

With reference to residents in the northern part of the District, Councillor Bywater drew attention to the impact of the decision by Peterborough City Council to impose a residents only permit parking scheme at Fengate Household Recycling Centre. Given that the Alconbury Household Waste Recycling Centre no longer accepted the disposal of paint products, clarification was sought as to whether the City Council had consulted with the District Council about the decision to implement permit parking and whether any other option has been given for Huntingdonshire residents to access Fengate recycling centre. The Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene reiterated that responsibility for Household Waste Recycling Centres sat with Cambridgeshire County Council but undertook to respond to the Councillor in writing and agreed that a meeting to explore potential solutions with relevant officers and members or the RECAP partnership might be appropriate.

Councillor J A Gray reiterated previous concerns regarding the absence of any comprehensive monitoring report on the impact of the green bin subscription service since its introduction and sought an undertaking from the Executive Councillor that this be brought through the Overview and Scrutiny process within the next two months. In response to which, the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene sought clarification on the information which would be required from such a report and undertook to discuss the matter further with Officers. She also took the opportunity to reiterate that it was a matter for Overview and Scrutiny to lead their own work programme.

With reference to recent discussions in Parliament concerning Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and grooming, Councillor K P Gulson expressed concern at the absence of any information on the District Council website for signposting and reporting. He also drew attention to the Community Safety Strategic Assessment for Huntingdonshire which had identified Huntingdonshire as having the largest proportion of CSE Crimes in Cambridgeshire and sought clarification as to whether the recommendations within the report had been implemented. In responding to the issues raised, the Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance outlined the ongoing work which was undertaken to address CSE. He reiterated that CSE was a key objective for the Police and Crime Commissioner and for Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership, who had established a multi-agency working group to discuss issues involving children and young people at risk. Attention was also drawn to the role of District Council Officers in shutting down a café in Huntingdon after allegations of exploitation. In terms of the District Council's website, Councillor Ferguson undertook to ensure that specific reference was made to CSE and Grooming Gangs within the Community Safety pages.

With reference to the recent failure to secure CIL funding to contribute towards the new Warboys Community Centre and the difficulties being encountered with the build, Councillor C A Lowe sought a commitment from the Executive Councillor that he would meet with the local District Councillors and the Parish Clerk to discuss potential way forward.

In response to a request from Councillor J E Kerr for details of tree and bulb planting undertaken within the District, the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste & Street Scene provided an update for the Council. Councillor Taylor was pleased to report that 5000 trees have now been planted, enabling the 2025 target to be achieved. She also took the opportunity to draw attention to various planting initiatives within the District. Members were also advised that 90,000 bulbs had now been planted by the Grounds Maintenance Team.

With reference to a specific case which had recently been highlighted within the local press and issues within in his own ward, Councillor N Hunt enquired what the District Council was doing to put pressure on Housing Associations to ensure that their properties are maintained and fit for people to live in. In response to which, the Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing explained that the District Council engages frequently with its Housing Association Partners. Whilst maintenance issues should initially be reported to the relevant landlord or housing association, these could be escalated to the District Council's Environmental Health team who have a range of enforcement options available should they not be undertaking their responsibilities appropriately. Council was advised that Members could also have a positive impact by assisting residents directly and representing their needs to housing associations.

In response to a request from Councillor C H Tevlin for an update on the last Planning Service statistics, the Executive Councillor for Planning provided an update for the Council. An update was also provided to Members on the implications of the new targets for house building within the District and tilted balance. The Council were also informed that a revised edition of the Local Development Scheme had been considered by the Cabinet at their February meeting to enable submission to Government by their deadline of 6th March 2025.

In response to a question from Councillor I P Taylor regarding the difficulties he was experiencing in securing the installation of two Community Access Defibrillators onto buildings owned by the Council, the Executive Councillor for Communities, Health and Leisure Councillor S Howell explained that whilst the Council has a policy in place for buildings which it owns and operates, requests for those which it does not operate have to be dealt with on a case by case basis. Details of the reasons for the delay in the specific case referred to were also provided.

With reference to an undertaking which had been made at a previous meeting regarding the provision of updates to Members on progress which was been made against the actions agreed as part of the Local Government Association Peer Review, the Executive Leader agreed to provide an update in advance of the Review Team's imminent return.

With reference to the detrimental impact that he believed the previous Car Parking Strategy had had upon St Neots High Street, Councillor B S Chapman asked the Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene to ensure that any solution supported the needs of residents and businesses. In response to which the Executive Councillor, Councillor S Taylor responded that she was passionate about providing a better solution for parking

across all the market towns and was keen to work with all Members and adopt a holistic approach to achieve this.

With reference to the increased government figures for housing development for the District, Councillor J Neish enquired whether the Administration had made any formal response on the new targets to government. The Executive Councillor for Planning explained that this was a national issue, with East Cambridgeshire being the only local authority area in Cambridgeshire that had not seen an increase in housing targets. He acknowledged it would be a challenge to meet the targets, especially given that during the previous 4 years targets had already been exceeded by 164%. However, he recognised the commitment of Members of Local Plan Advisory Group and the Development Management Committee to work together to tackle the situation.

71 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 (CPCA) and Members were advised that any issues could be raised in relation to these meetings.

Arising from which, comments were made by Councillor R Martin regarding the recent approval of bus franchising and the problems experienced with the last round of the procurement process. In response to which the Executive Leader explained that whilst she was not able to comment on the procurement process for legal reasons, public procurement was not an easy process and there would be a review of lessons learnt which would be valuable for both the CPCA and the District Council.

In response to a question regarding the forthcoming election of a new Mayor and their ability to set their own vision for the Authority, the Executive Leader reminded the Council that inevitably all individuals entering into the role would bring fresh ideas and inspiration. However, the majority of decisions taken at the Authority were undertaken at Board level, with a number of issues already in progress. In addition, as local government reorganisation progresses, a change in needs and priorities will be inevitable.

72 OUTCOMES FROM COMMITTEES AND PANELS

A copy of the list of meetings held since the last meeting of the Council held on 11th December 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 positive discussion by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) on the Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil Trial which had resulted in the submission of a number of recommendations to the Cabinet, Councillor T D Alban expressed his disappointment at the response of the Cabinet to the Panel's proposals. Having been asked for her own views on the matter and having concurred that she had also been disappointed with the outcome, the Chair of the Panel Councillor J E Kerr reported that it was her understanding that the recommendations had been discussed thoroughly and arrangements were being put in place to provide feedback on future

recommendations as part of the efforts to improve the Overview and Scrutiny process.

In terms of the improvements to the effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny, a suggestion was made by Councillor M A Hassall regarding the need for a formal response from Cabinet to individual recommendations. It was also suggested that the wording of recommendations should be agreed at Panel meetings to avoid any later misinterpretation at Cabinet meetings. In response to which, the Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment Communities and Partnerships) Councillor N Hunt undertook to discuss the matter informally with members of the Cabinet and took the opportunity to thank all Members for their contributions to the efforts to improve the effectiveness of the Panels. He also indicated that a further area of work may be to review areas of best practice from other Councils.

73 VARIATIONS TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

The Executive Leader reported formally on the appointment of Councillor Sally Howell to the Cabinet as the Executive Councillor for Communities, Health and Leisure. In doing so, Councillor Conboy took to the opportunity to record her appreciation to Councillor B Pitt for his contribution and service to the Cabinet following his resignation from the role of Executive Councillor.

On the recommendation of Councillor S J Conboy, it was

RESOLVED

that Councillor B Pitt be appointed to the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Performance and Growth) in place of Councillor S A Howell.

The meeting ended at 9.56pm.

Chair