

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COUNCIL held in Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 17 October 2018.

PRESENT: Councillor R J West – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, T D Alban,
B S Banks, R E Bellamy, L A Besley,
Mrs M L Beuttell, G J Bull, S M Burton,
E R Butler, S Bywater, B S Chapman,
J R Clarke, Mrs S Conboy, J C Cooper-
Marsh, S J Corney, S J Criswell, J W Davies,
Ms A Diaz, Mrs A Dickinson, R Fuller,
Dr P L R Gaskin, D A Giles, Mrs S A Giles,
J A Gray, M S Grice, K P Gulson,
M J Humphrey, Dr N Johnson, P Kadewere,
D N Keane, C J Maslen, H V Masson,
L W McGuire, J P Morris, J Neish,
J M Palmer, K I Prentice, T D Sanderson,
Mrs S Smith, Mrs J Tavener, D Terry,
R G Tuplin, D M Tysoe, D R Underwood,
S Wakeford, D J Wells and J E White.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors D B Dew, Mrs P A Jordan and D J Mead.

31. PRAYER

The Vicar of All Saints and St Mary's, Huntingdon, Reverend Andrew Milton, opened the meeting with a prayer. The Chairman presented Reverend Milton with a commemorative map of the District as a leaving gift and thanked Reverend Milton for his services to the area.

32. MINUTES

Following debate on the accuracy of Minute No. 22 by Councillor B S Chapman the Managing Director clarified the content and discussion held at the Council Programme Group and subject to the inclusion of the sentence "On being put to the vote the amendment was declared to be CARRIED and therefore became the substantive motion" immediately following Councillor Fuller's amended motion, the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 25th July 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

33. MEMBERS INTERESTS'

Councillor D R Underwood declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in Item No. 35 by virtue of his employment as Executive Manager of Disability Huntingdonshire.

34. CHAIRMAN'S ENGAGEMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Council noted those engagements attended by the Chairman and

Vice-Chairman since the last meeting (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), subject to the amendment of Sunday 14 to Friday 14 and the Chairman also conveyed his congratulations to the towns of Huntingdon and St Ives for their awards in the Anglia in Bloom competition.

In accordance with paragraph 9.9 of the Council procedure rules, the Chairman invited the Managing Director to present the question by a member of the public as follows –

‘Given that:

- 1) the current traffic congestion on Hinchingsbrooke Park Road is unsustainable and a likely risk to life with extremely restricted access to the Hinchingsbrooke Hospital which is regularly blocked off;
- 2) the position of the A14 consultation officers is that we expect a 30% increase in traffic on Hinchingsbrooke Park Road, and that, in their view the current traffic congestion will not be improved or alleviated by the A14 works; and
- 3) there is available funding - the council has not recently spent any CIL money, other than approximately 50% of receipts on Eddison Bell Way (according to a FOI request) and recent developments in Hinchingsbrooke will net almost £900,000 in CIL contributions

what plans are in place to alleviate the current congestion? If there are no plans in place, why not?’

In response, the Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning and Economic Development explained that a large part of the question should be directed towards Cambridgeshire County Council as they were highways matters and explained that the District Council had established a Growth and Infrastructure Thematic Group to assess and review infrastructure priorities for the spending of Community Infrastructure Levy through an agreed governance process, involving key stakeholders. Submissions for future spending priorities should be made through this forum for consideration.

35. CORPORATE PLAN 2018-22

(See Minute No 18/33 for Members’ interests).

In conjunction with the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) and recommendation of the Cabinet at their meeting held on 20th September 2018, Minute No. 26 refers, the Executive Leader, Councillor G J Bull introduced a report by the Corporate Team Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was attached the proposed Corporate Plan for the period 2018-22.

Members understood that the Corporate Plan contained the Council’s vision, strategic priorities and objectives for the next four years. The Plan also set out what the Council aimed to achieve in addition to the core statutory services.

Councillor Bull reported that the Plan had been based upon the Conservative Party’s manifesto commitments and vision for the District Council, the latter of which had been through the Overview and Scrutiny process, as well as being debated at Council through the

State of District Annual Report at the last meeting. He thanked his fellow Cabinet colleagues who had assisted in the development of the Plan, as well as Officers in the Corporate Team.

It was reported by Councillor Bull that the District Council remained an autonomous, sovereign Council and was proud of being in charge of its destiny. It was managing its services in a prudent and sensitive way, living within the Council's means. It was adapting to changing circumstances but maintaining good quality value for money services.

Councillor Bull moved the recommendation and was duly seconded by Councillor Fuller.

By reference to discussion at the previous meeting on the Conservative Party's manifesto and the suggestion that Portfolio Holders will be able to hold Officers to account, Councillor B S Chapman referenced Officer pre-planning advice that had been given contrary to the Council's Policies and the Managing Director requested that Councillor Chapman provide details to substantiate his allegation for discussion outside of the meeting.

Councillor Mrs S J Conboy congratulated the Executive Leader on the production of the Plan and looked forward the content being delivered for the benefit of the residents of the District.

In congratulating Councillor Bull on the content of the Plan, Councillor T D Sanderson referenced the Integrated Performance Report for Quarter One and low rates of street cleansing inspections, whereby Councillor Bull explained that the Corporate Plan was the strategic document and such detail should be addressed through the Overview and Scrutiny process.

It having been previously moved and seconded, the Council

RESOLVED

that the Corporate Plan 2018-22 (attached at Appendix 1 to the report now submitted) be adopted.

36. EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR PRESENTATIONS

(a) Councillor D Tysoe, Executive Councillor for Digital and Customer

The Chairman invited Councillor D Tysoe, Executive Councillor for Digital and Customer to update the Council on Transformation. A copy of Councillor Tysoe's PowerPoint presentation is appended in the Minute Book.

Members' attention was drawn to the challenges and opportunities that faced the District Council and transformation through new ways of working was vital to this process. Councillor Tysoe highlighted the opportunities for growth in the District and the challenges of increasing house prices in the last five years, as well as increases in rent levels and the financial pressures with an ageing population.

The Council had embarked upon a Transformation programme through modern ways of working and Members noted the work that had already been achieved in delivering the programme and the development of the new employee ICARE values. Councillor Tysoe reported upon the creation of the right places for the residents to live and grow and by way of example Members' attention was drawn to a healthy living project in Ramsey and through the St Neots Masterplan the development of St Neots as the first 'Digital Town' for the District.

With focus on people, Councillor Tysoe provided details of progress with the successful co-location of Citizens Advice and Job Centre Plus at the Council's headquarters, improved access for the customer to services through the Customer Portal and early intervention to assist with the homelessness issues that District had been facing.

With the assistance of an unscripted staff video that was presented to Members on the Council's values, Councillor Tysoe explained that the values had been developed by the staff that would be used as part of the recruitment process, as well as inductions and appraisals.

Councillor B S Chapman supported the development of the video that had been presented at Employment Committee and requested that the values be extended to all Members, as well as staff.

In response to a question from Councillor S Smith on the 90% response rate of calls answered in the Call Centre, Councillor Tysoe explained that there was a likelihood of a few issues emerging with the development of a new call handling system but was confident that the changes made would result in an improvement to service delivery.

(b) Questions to Members of the Cabinet

Arising from a question from Councillor J White on his disappointment of the coverage of the recent press and social media coverage of the Council's Car Parking Strategy diverting away from the development of the Strategy in a timely manner, the Executive Councillor for Operations and Regulation, Councillor Ms M Beuttell explained that the charging model had not been discussed and currently no policy had been approved for any changes to car parking charges.

In response to a question by Councillor D A Giles on the recent integrated performance report that in Quarter One 575 street cleansing inspections had been carried out, with 389 recorded as in specification giving a 67.65% pass rate and whether the low pass rate could be attributed to an insufficient budget or insufficient training of operatives and managers. Councillor Beuttell apologised for the drop in service and undertook to provide a full response and explanation to Councillor Giles after the meeting.

Councillor T D Sanderson posed a question to Councillor R Fuller, Deputy Executive Leader and Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning and Economic Development on progress with the Task and Finish Group convened to examine the workings of the Development Management Committee and his perceived level of £16m Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) reserves. Whereby, it was explained that Development Management Committee Working Group's membership had been depleted following the elections in May and needed to be reconstituted to deliver any recommendations back to the Committee. Councillor Fuller undertook to invite a new Town/Parish Council representative onto the Growth and Infrastructure Thematic Group, as well providing an exact figure of CIL reserves after the meeting.

In light of a question raised by Councillor J D Ablewhite on the offer of training to support St Neots Town Council following a recent Development Management Committee meeting and contrary views presented by a representative of the Town Council at the meeting to the comments submitted by the Town Council on an application, Councillor Fuller shared his concerns on the issue and suggested that he would continue to look at ways to mitigate a repeat of this occurrence but felt that this was largely attributed to a change in membership and election of new inexperienced councillors at the elections in May on the Town Council. He undertook to provide an offer of support and training to the Chairman and Town Council and Councillor B S Chapman confirmed that he had already arranged training of all of his new Members.

Arising from a question from Councillor Dr N Johnson on whether consideration had been given to utilising the Council's car parks for residents' permits and consider offering the first hour free of charge, Councillor Ms Beuttell confirmed that no consideration had been given to this issue.

Councillor C J Maslen questioned whether consideration would be given to an equity of car parking charges across the District, as well as clarification on Sunday charging, whereby Councillor Ms Beuttell reported that car parking charges had not been discussed as part of the Car Parking Strategy and there were no plans for Sunday charging for car parks.

In response to a question by Councillor B S Chapman on his recent attendance at a public meeting with concerned residents, as well as his concerns that he had previously expressed to the Leader and Chief Executives of both the District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council on the public open spaces maintained by the District Council being put up for auction, the Managing Director confirmed that Officers at both authorities had been working on the issue with a view to providing a response the following week.

Councillor Ms S Smith raised a question in relation to

Quarter One of the Integrated Performance report that reported that the average length of stay for the 32 households leaving bed and breakfast accommodation was 7.2 weeks against a target of less than 6 weeks and why this was the case. Councillor Fuller explained that he was happy to meet with Councillor Smith to provide more clarity but could be attributed to the lack of affordable housing to enable such households to move into and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 had enabled the Council to focus upon prevention rather than having to house such families in temporary accommodation.

37. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY - UPDATE

In conjunction with the decision summaries of the recent meetings of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, Councillor G J Bull presented an update of their activities. Copies of the decision summaries are appended in the Minute Book.

Councillor Bull explained that the Combined Authority had been through a number of staff changes with the departure of the Chief Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been investigating this. A new Finance Director had been appointed. Following his appointment, he had focussed upon the prioritisation of schemes into a list of deliverable projects. It was reported that the Business Board that had replaced the Local Enterprise Partnership had been formed and appointments made from an industrial sector basis.

It was further reported upon the new governance arrangements of the establishment of transport, housing and skills committees and Councillor Bull explained that he was a member of the transport and skills committees and had asked Councillor Fuller to represent the Council on the housing committee.

Members were provided with an update on the Mayor's work on the Cambridge Autonomous Metro (CAM) with the Greater Cambridgeshire Partnership and a route to be announced for Cambridge to Cambourne and Councillor Bull also appraised Members with an update of items for their next meeting in October.

Councillor Mrs S J Conboy thanked the Managing Director and Combined Authority for sharing the Industrial Strategy document and reported that a number of members had met informally with the Mayor to raise the question regarding impact at parish level and was disappointed with his response and suggestion of responsibility, whereby Councillor Bull undertook to take this issue back to raise at a future meeting.

Councillor B S Chapman highlighted his impression of the Mayor's progress, but also indicated his concern that provision for the Metro into the development at Loves Farm and Wintringham Park had not been highlighted and undertook to bring to the attention at the Combined Authority Working Party on St Neots regeneration. As well as the infrastructure, Councillor Chapman indicated his concern that there was a requirement for the digital infrastructure to be in place

alongside such development, whereby Councillor Bull reported that digital communications was high on their Agenda and routes for the CAM had yet to be decided.

Arising from concern expressed by Councillor D R Underwood that feeder bus services would be side-lined at the expense of development of the Mayoral Transport Strategy, Councillor Bull reported that the Mayor had been looking at bus provision including the potential for a subsidy to increase specific services and dialogue between the District Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council on bus provision cross border would continue.

Councillors and T D Sanderson and J Neish provided an update on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in particular their focus upon the recent staff turnover with the recruitment processes undertaken and regard to shortlisting practices in the future.

Members were provided with an update on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Audit and Governance Committee by Councillor L W McGuire and it was confirmed that the Committee were reassured that there was enough finance available to support the current projects, with the exception of the University of Peterborough and Mass Rapid Transport further funding options would need to be investigated. Attention was drawn to the forthcoming Agenda in November 2018 where Members would be looking at the Medium Term Financial Plan and the recommendations of the Committee to follow best HR practice in any future short listing and recruitment.

38. REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL - SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

The Managing Director presented a report by the Elections and Democratic Services Manager, to which was appended the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) summarising the outcome of the eighth review of the Members' Allowances Scheme by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

Attention was drawn to the current Scheme that dated back to 2011, despite a further review in 2015. All Members had been invited to participate in the review, with some Members directly addressing the Panel and the final proposals would result in no overall increase to the budget.

Councillor J A Gray moved the recommendations and was duly seconded by Councillor J D Ablewhite.

At 8.36pm Cllr J P Morris entered the meeting.

Councillor Gray commented that budget was an essential part of the process and as the Scheme dated back over 10 years there had been considerable changes since then. He reflected that he felt the report was fair and balanced and thanked those Members that had addressed the Panel. In light of the suggested increase to the Executive Leader and Deputy Executive Leader, Councillor Gray drew Members' attention to the increased volume of work with the

Combined Authority and the suggested increases and decreases in Members' Allowances was not inconsistent with practices elsewhere.

Councillor B S Chapman suggested that as the Scheme referred to the inclusion of the an allowance for the Assistant Cabinet Members, as the item was referred to later in the Agenda and currently had not be agreed, Members agreed to suspend the debate on the item pending a decision on Assistant Cabinet Members.

At 8.44pm the item was adjourned.

39. ASSISTANT CABINET MEMBERS - VARIATION TO ARTICLE 7 OF THE CONSTITUTION

In conjunction with Item No. 16 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 21st June 2018 and Item No. 20 of the Corporate Governance Committee held on 26th July 2018, consideration was given to a report by the Elections and Democratic Services Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). Councillor G J Bull reported that the introduction of Assistant Cabinet Members would allow an opportunity for new Members on the Council to develop further and provide support for the existing Cabinet Members with larger portfolios following the reduction in the number of Members in the Cabinet.

Councillor Bull moved the recommendations and was duly seconded by Councillor R Fuller.

Councillor B S Chapman questioned the legality of taking the decision as his understanding was that any changes to the Constitution had to be reported back to the following meeting of the Council. Councillor Chapman was requested to provide reference in the Council's Constitution to reflect his understanding. With this in mind, the meeting was adjourned to enable clarification to be sought.

At 8.50pm the meeting was adjourned.

At 9.05pm the meeting resumed.

The Monitoring Officer, Mr T Lewis, confirmed that in the absence of no apparent discrepancy as highlighted by Councillor Chapman the process being followed was correct and in accordance with the Council's Constitution. Whereupon, it having been previously moved and seconded, the Council

RESOLVED

that amendment of Article 7 of the District Council's Constitution as outlined in paragraph 3.3 of the report now submitted be approved to reflect the incorporation of Assistant Cabinet Members as attached to the Officer's report.

The Executive Leader, Councillor G J Bull, announced that he had appointed Councillor D N Keane as Assistant Cabinet Member for the ensuing Municipal Year.

40. REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL - SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

Further to Minute No. 18/38 ante, discussion continued on the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel summarising the outcome of the eighth review of the Members' Allowances Scheme by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

Councillor Dr N Johnson acknowledged the work of the Panel and in light of the current financial restraints Councillor Johnson moved the following amendment to the recommendations which were duly seconded by Councillor Ms Smith -

"that no increase be made to the level of basic allowance for all District Councillors and no increase be made to the Special Responsibility Allowances for the Executive Leader and Deputy Executive Leader".

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

Councillor J D Ablewhite welcomed the proposals as contained in the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel and such proposals represented the cost for democracy but also to support younger people coming into local government and in light of the proposed defeated motion outlined previously reminded Members that they also had the right to decline a basic allowance to be paid to them.

Councillor T D Sanderson indicated his concern for such increases in allowances and although accepting that any increases remained in budget, his recent attendance at the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group that had highlighted staffing pressures with vacancies, he was unsure as to how well any such increases in Members' Allowances would be accepted by staff.

Councillor B S Chapman outlined his support for the proposed reduction in his Special Responsibility Allowance as Leader of the Principal Opposition and suggested that any reduction be passed onto the staff. Councillor Chapman moved the following amendment to the recommendations which were duly seconded by Councillor Dr Johnson -

"that no increase be made to the level of basic allowance for all District Councillors and no increase be made to the Special Responsibility Allowances for the Executive Leader and Deputy Executive Leader nor the inclusion of a Special Responsibility Allowance for Assistant Cabinet Members".

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

Councillor J P Morris moved the following amendment to the recommendations which were duly seconded by Councillor B S Chapman –

"the addition of recommendation (j) that Members who have sufficient

financial means should consider donating the increase in their basic allowance to the Chairman's Charity or a charity on their choice".

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

Councillor T D Alban referred to a Freedom of Information request made to Cambridgeshire County Council on any members that had declined to receive their allowance and in response the County Council had confirmed that that had no record of any Member that had declined their basic allowance or Special Responsibility Allowance and suggested that some of the opposition Members had double standards with their proposed amendments.

Councillor Mrs S J Conboy indicated her frustration at some of the Members' comments, insofar as all Members had already had an opportunity to contribute to the Independent Review.

In conclusion, Councillor Fuller commented that the size of the Cabinet had reduced significantly from 10 to 6 members, resulting in a saving of over £33K and the proposals in the report would also be imposing a sliding scale on the Special Responsibility Allowance paid to Cabinet Members dependent upon the number of other Cabinet Members. On behalf of the Leader, Councillor Fuller outlined his exception to comments made previously and the allowances proposed in this Independent Report did not fully remunerate Members for their time as many Members here at this meeting were here for the purpose of Huntingdonshire.

It having been previously moved and seconded (Minute No. 18/38 refers), the Council

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Managing Director be authorised to prepare a new scheme of Members' Allowances to come into effect on 17th October 2018 to include the following changes -
- ◆ the level of basic allowance for all District Councillors as outlined in the Appendix to the report now submitted;
 - ◆ the discontinuation of the Members IT and telephone support allowance;
 - ◆ the levels of special responsibility allowances outlined in the Appendix to the report now submitted;
 - ◆ the continuation of the one Special Responsibility Allowance rule, with the exception of the Members of the Development Management Committee;
 - ◆ the continuation of payment of the Independent Person and Deputy Independent Person allowance of £1,000 and £500 respectively per annum;
 - ◆ the continuation of the arrangements for the payment of dependant carer's allowances;

- ◆ the level of child care rates be amended and set at the National Living Wage;
- ◆ the continuation of the terms and conditions and the rates payable for travel and subsistence based on the mileage rates published by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs for reimbursement of mileage incurred in undertaking approved duties;
- ◆ the indices to be used for indexation purposes to enable the Members' Allowances Scheme to be adjusted until 30th April 2022 as outlined in the attached Appendix; and

(b) that, upon the coming into effect of the revised Members' Allowances Scheme with effect from 17th October 2018, the existing Scheme be revoked.

41. CHANGE TO THE CONSTITUTION - HDC VENTURES LTD - SHAREHOLDER REPRESENTATIVE AND REFERENCE GROUP

Further to Item No. 27 of the meeting of the Council held on 25th July 2018 and in conjunction with the deliberations of the Corporate Governance Committee, Minute No. 21 refers, Executive Councillor D Tysoe presented a report by the Managing Director (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the Arrangements and Terms of Reference for the Shareholder Representative and Shareholder Reference Group of HDC Ventures Limited and minor changes that were suggested by the Corporate Governance Committee and supported by the Cabinet.

Having confirmed the support of the Corporate Governance Committee, it was moved, seconded and

RESOLVED

that the Arrangements for the Shareholder Representative and Shareholder Reference Group of HDC Ventures Limited to be inserted in Part 3 - Responsibility for Functions of the District Council's Constitution be approved to incorporate the requirements as detailed in the report now submitted.

42. OUTCOMES FROM COMMITTEES AND PANELS

A copy of the list of meetings held since the last meeting of the Council held on 25th July 2018 is appended in the Minute Book and Members were advised that any issues or questions could be raised in relation to these meetings.

Councillor T D Sanderson raised a question in relation to the Integrated Performance Report of Quarter One and the overspend in One Leisure against the level of income generated, whereby Councillor J A Gray explained that the report that was submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) had provided the reasons.

43. VARIATIONS TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

There were no changes to report.

The meeting ended at 9.40pm.

Chairman