

# HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COUNCIL held in the Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 4 December 2019

PRESENT: Councillor R J West – Chairman.

Councillors T D Alban, B S Banks, Mrs M L Beuttell, G J Bull, 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, D B Dew, Mrs A Dickinson, R Fuller, Dr P L R Gaskin, D A Giles, Mrs S A Giles, J A Gray, M S Grice, M J Humphrey, Dr N Johnson, Mrs P A Jordan, P Kadewere, D N Keane, C J Maslen, H V Masson, L W McGuire, D J Mead, J Neish, J M Palmer, K I Prentice, T D Sanderson, Mrs S Smith, D Terry, D M Tysoe, S Wakeford, D J Wells and Mrs S R Wilson.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors R E Bellamy, L A Besley, S M Burton, Ms A Diaz, K P Gulson, J P Morris, Mrs P E Shrapnel, Mrs J Tavener and R G Tuplin.

## 41 PRAYER

The Venerable Hugh McCurdy, Archdeacon of Huntingdon and Wisbech opened the meeting with prayer.

## 42 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 9th October 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## 43 MEMBERS INTERESTS'

No declarations were received.

## 44 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). The Chairman welcomed back Councillor T D Alban following his recent illness and conveyed the Council's best wishes to Councillor D A Giles for his onward recovery following his recent incapacitation.

The Chairman conveyed his thanks to the Managing Director, Elections and Democratic Services Manager, Section 151 Officer, Chief Operating Officer and Directors, as well as thanking their Teams for the tremendous work over the year, demonstrating the Council's ICARE Values.

In concluding and thanking the Vice-Chairman for his support, the Chairman reminded Members that the Chairman's Carol Service would be held on 20th December 2019 and the Council's Choir would be in attendance to support the event.

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

Arising from a question from Councillor T D Sanderson seeking clarification of the opportunity for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partnerships) to examine the impact of the changes to car parking charges within the District, Councillor Ms M L Beuttell Executive Councillor for Operations and Environment reported that this would be brought back to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partnerships) later in the following year.

In response to a question from Councillor S Corney requesting an update on the refurbishments at One Leisure and the projects completed so far in relation to attendances, Councillor J Palmer, Executive Councillor for Leisure and Health, explained that he had not received full details of attendance statistics thus far but initial suggestions had been positive. Attendance at One Leisure St Neots that week had been higher suggesting that the numbers of users had been returning following the upgrade. He further reported upon the very positive customer and staff feedback received following the upgrade.

Following a question raised by Councillor B S Chapman regarding the roles of Assistant Cabinet Members, Councillor G J Bull, Executive Leader explained that detailed job descriptions existed for these roles and confirmed that there was no provision within the District Council's Constitution for Assistant Cabinet Members to substitute for Cabinet Members on either the Cabinet, or any other Committee or Panel. He explained that Assistant Cabinet Members had been extensively involved in working alongside the Executive Councillors and observing the decision-making process.

Councillor D Terry raised a question in relation to the increasing numbers of rough sleepers and the homeless within the District and asked about the Council's scheme to support these individuals during periods of severe weather. In response, Councillor R Fuller, Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning and Economic Development, explained that the numbers had not been as high as the Member had perceived and outlined the circumstances of the Council's support surrounding the cold weather provision that kicked in when temperatures fell below sub-freezing levels. He further explained that generally rough sleepers were known to the Council and work was ongoing to engage with and support these individuals when weather conditions changed, through the provision of temporary accommodation.

With reference to improvements in technology and the growing use of electronic cars with a need for electronic charging points, Councillor C J Maslen enquired whether the provision of charging points would be extended to car parks in St Neots. In response, Councillor Ms M L Beuttell reported that charging points would be rolled out across the District.

In relation to a question raised by Councillor P Kadewere requesting an update on the crime reporting centre, the Managing Director suggested that Councillor

Kadewere should provide further detail after the meeting to enable a full response to be provided.

#### **46 TREASURY MANAGEMENT SIX MONTH PERFORMANCE**

Consideration was given to a report by the Finance Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on a six-month update in respect of treasury management activity, including investment and borrowing activity and treasury performance. Councillor J A Gray, Executive Councillor for Strategic Resources, drew Members attention to the economic review, the performance of the Council's funds and the political uncertainty regarding the UK leaving the European Union.

Arising from the report, Councillor B S Chapman raised a question in relation to the Council's Commercial Investment Strategy (CIS). He questioned how the capital values did not appear to be appreciated, with a reduction in the rate of return and a predicted lower demand for commercial building use in this area where the CIS had concentrated its funds and what was being done by the Council to protect these investments. Councillor Gray confirmed that uncertainty existed as economic growth remained low but he reassured Members that the CIS returns provided a higher rate of return, with £2.8m of investment income generated in 2018/19. This was necessary to achieve a balanced budget to support the provision of services to the District's residents. He further reported that since he had last spoken at Overview and Scrutiny a further 10 leases had been signed, with the value of the leases of the residual estate and the value in the accounts risen and the value on the open market for potential purchasers increasing. Councillor Gray reassured Members that the investments were overseen by the Commercial Estates Manager and her Team, who were keeping abreast of any changes in the market and taking these into account.

Arising from a question from Councillor S Wakeford as to whether the Council had given consideration to building a local industrial strategy to support the potential of the property investments in the CIS, Councillor Gray explained that phase 1 of the CIS had now drawn to a close and there now existed an opportunity to intervene at town centre level to use and influence the land holdings held in the District to build up what the Council already had access to. Whereupon, it was

**RESOLVED**

that the Treasury Management Performance over the period April to September 2019 be noted.

#### **47 ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

*(Councillors D A Giles and Mrs S A Giles entered the meeting at 7.55pm).*

In conjunction with a report by the Managing Director (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) it was proposed by Councillor G J Bull, seconded by Councillor J A Gray and

**RESOLVED**

that Councillor R Fuller be elected Executive Leader of the Council for the for the period to the Annual Meeting in May 2022.

Councillor Bull reported that it had been two and a half years since he had been elected as Executive Leader and it had been an honour to hold the position. He was proud of his achievements during his tenure and of his members who had helped to deliver their Manifesto. However due to changes in his personal circumstances it was the now the right time to stand down. There still remained a lot of work to do, with many challenges for the new leadership which would require a great deal of enthusiasm. Leadership was hard, he reminded Members that he had held the position of Leader twice and the challenges were not getting any easier.

Councillor Bull paid credit to the dedication of the staff led by the Managing Director together with the effort and work time she personally had put into the organisation. He was eternally grateful for her support which had enabled him to speak openly and honestly. He also paid tribute to the Executive Support Team, as well as the Conservative Group for their support and encouragement. He explained that his Cabinet had been a tremendous source of strength and had acted as a united team.

In concluding his remarks Councillor Bull paid particular tribute to his Deputy, Councillor Fuller. It had been one of his first decisions as Executive Leader to appoint Councillor Fuller to this role. He had recognised his intelligence, energy and strength of character and was delighted that Councillor Fuller had been there to support him in his role as Executive Leader. In the two and half years that they had been working closely together, his respect and admiration for Councillor Fuller had grown and he expressed his delight in nominating Councillor Fuller for the role of Executive Leader.

Councillor T D Sanderson expressed his sadness at the resignation of Councillor Bull as Executive Leader and conveyed his best wishes to him and his family for the future. In doing so he paid tribute to the work that Councillor Bull had undertaken during his tenure, particularly the part that he had played in establishing more funding for Disabled Facilities Grants, together with his commitment to ending homelessness and rough sleeping.

On behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor Mrs S J Conboy expressed her eternal gratitude for the work of Councillor Bull and thanked him personally for the united way in which he had led the Council. She thanked him for his generosity of spirit, kindness to every Member of the Council and for his welcome of positive opposition, which spoke volumes about him as a Leader and as a person.

Councillor P Kadewere echoed the sentiments expressed by the other Members and on behalf of the Labour Group wished Councillor Bull well.

The Chairman of the Council, Councillor R W West, reported upon the success that had been achieved during Councillor Bull's term as Executive Leader in the reduction of staff sickness across the Council.

In his seconding of the motion, Councillor J A Gray commented upon the heartfelt tributes that had already been paid to Councillor Bull, who was a

tremendous gentlemen. He thanked Councillor Bull for his friendship and leadership and with great pleasure supported the motion.

In his concluding remarks, Councillor Bull expressed his desire to see Huntingdonshire thrive and was proud of the District that he had lived in for nearly his whole life. He supported Councillor Fuller in his determination and skills to take this Council forward.

In accepting his election as the new Executive Leader, Councillor Fuller expressed how touched he was with the words from his colleagues and also wished to pay his own tribute to Councillor Bull. Councillor Bull had diligently and selflessly stood as Executive Leader, Deputy and Chairman of an Overview and Scrutiny Panel. He had taken on the role of Executive Leader during difficult times, but had steered the Council into calmer waters and under his Leadership had provided more financial security for the Council as well as making great progress in affordable housing and homelessness, waste and recycling, green space provision and health and leisure. Members should be assured that his contributions had improved the prosperity of the District making it a better place. His selfless dedication to providing a better service for its residents made him a good example to follow.

Councillor Fuller, in his previous role as Deputy Executive Leader, commended Councillor Bull for his support in developing his role and referenced that there was no better teacher than him. Councillor Fuller expressed his eternal gratitude to Councillor Bull for his trust, guidance and leadership and, in particular, his friendship that had left the District Council in a better position. On behalf of the Council he thanked him for his contribution.

In expressing his gratitude to Members present this evening, Councillor Fuller had been touched by the cross party support he had received in his election as Executive Leader. He was well aware of the trust that had been placed in him and the high level of responsibility for the tasks ahead for the authority. Huntingdonshire as a District had good strategic transport links, low unemployment, prosperous towns and a well-cared for environment. It was vital to ensure good stewardship so that Huntingdonshire remained a success under his party's administration. As a Leader it was necessary to remain pragmatic with a plan to deliver jobs, homes and access to services through more proactive engagement with the community, focussing on rural isolation, regeneration projects to help High Streets and tackling homelessness and housing affordability. In order to achieve these actions, Councillor Fuller explained that the Council needed to be ambitious and not hold back from championing and highlighting the excellent services that are already provided to residents. As well as striving for the best outcome for residents and to provide support for the most vulnerable, through championing inequality and removing barriers.

Councillor Fuller informed Members it was his privilege to be elected as Executive Leader and he was honoured to serve the District in an area that his family had lived for hundreds of years. It was his aim to bring together Huntingdonshire's communities, with a focus on people not simply places. In so doing, he made a plea to all Members to work together to deliver the aspirations of the residents of Huntingdonshire.

The Executive Leader, Councillor R Fuller, announced that he had appointed Councillors Ms M L Beuttell, J A Gray, D N Keane, J Neish, J M Palmer, and K I Prentice to join him as Members of the Cabinet for the remainder of the Municipal Year. He also announced that Councillor J Neish would be the Deputy Executive Leader and Vice-Chairman of the Cabinet.

Councillor Fuller presented details of the Cabinet Portfolios for the remainder of the 2019/20 Municipal Year:-

Councillor Ms M L Beuttell	Operations and Environment
Councillor R Fuller	Executive Leader and Housing and Economic Development
Councillor J A Gray	Resources
Councillor D N Keane	Corporate Services
Councillor J Neish	Deputy Executive Leader and Strategic Planning
Councillor J M Palmer	Leisure and Health
Councillor K I Prentice	Communities

Councillor Fuller also reported that Councillors J Neish, D N Keane and K I Prentice were the consequent ex-officio appointments to the Development Management, Employment, Licensing and Protection and Licensing Committees respectively.

#### **49 CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY - UPDATE**

In conjunction with the decision summaries of the recent meetings of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, Councillor R Fuller presented an update of their activities. (Copies of the decision summaries are appended in the Minute Book). Particular attention was drawn to the change in committee structure which came into effect in November 2019 and was intended to ensure representation from each constituent authority on every committee. Councillor Fuller further outlined the support for the Mayor's vision of £100k homes, the plans for tackling climate change and explained that a panel of experts had been engaged to analyse data to inform the Combined Authority decisions / policies going forward.

Councillors D B Dew provided an update on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members received information on the meetings held in November 2019 which had involved scrutiny of the draft budget for 2020/21, the establishment of two task and finish groups on transport and plans to work closely with the Board on the climate change agenda.

#### **50 CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY - MEMBERSHIP AND APPOINTMENTS**

Following the election of a new Executive Leader, it was necessary to review representation on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that Councillor R Fuller, Executive Leader of Council be appointed to act as the Council's appointee to the Combined Authority and Councillor J Neish be appointed as the substitute member.

## **51 OUTCOMES FROM COMMITTEES AND PANELS**

A copy of the list of meetings held since the last meeting of the Council held on 9th October 2019 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 congratulated Councillors R Fuller and J Neish on their appointments, together with the new Members appointed to the Executive positions.

Councillor Ms M L Beuttell reported upon negotiations with Cambridgeshire County Council regarding the Country Park at Hinchingsbrooke and would be reporting back on progress in due course.

In response to a question by Councillor S Wakeford on the sufficiency of the time to scrutinise the draft budget, Councillor D B Dew explained that there was an opportunity at his Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) meetings in January and February 2020 for a robust look at the budget coming forward. He encouraged Members to make use of this opportunity to add value to the process.

Councillor T D Alban thanked Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partnerships) involved with the Lifelong Health Task and Finish Group and thanked the Cabinet for the positive response and feedback to the Panel.

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

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

RESOLVED

- (a) that Councillors G J Bull and R J West be appointed to the Corporate Governance Committee in place of Councillors D N Keane and D J Wells;
- (b) that Councillors G J Bull and D M Tysoe be appointed to the Development Management Committee in place of Councillors R Fuller and K I Prentice;
- (c) that Councillor K I Prentice be appointed to the Licensing and Protection and Licensing Committees in place of Councillor Ms M L Beuttell;
- (d) that Councillor J W Davies be appointed to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partnerships) in place of Councillor K I Prentice;
- (e) that Councillor D N Keane be appointed to the Senior Officers Committee in place of D M Tysoe;

- (f) that Councillors G J Bull and D B Dew be appointed to the Section 106 Advisory Group in place of Councillors J Neish and K I Prentice; and
- (g) that Councillor D M Tysoe be appointed to the HDC Ventures Shareholder Reference Group in place of K I Prentice.

The meeting ended at 8.17pm.

Chairman