

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, 27 March 2024

PRESENT: Councillor M J Burke – Chair.

Councillors T Alban, B S Banks, M L Beuttell, A Blackwell, R J Brereton, E R Butler, S Bywater, S Cawley, S J Conboy, S J Corney, A E Costello, L Davenport-Ray, S W Ferguson, C M Gleadow, J A Gray, K P Gulson, J E Harvey, M A Hassall, P J Hodgson-Jones, S A Howell, N J Hunt, A R Jennings, P A Jordan, M Kadewere, P Kadewere, D N Keane, J E Kerr, C Lowe, R Martin, S R McAdam, B A Mickelburgh, D L Mickelburgh, 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 and S Wakeford.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors J Clarke, S J Criswell, D B Dew, I D Gardener, S Mokbul, N Wells and G J Welton.

Prior to the start of the of the proceedings, the Chair reported that Members were joined in the public gallery by family and friends of Huntingdonshire resident and cycling campaigner, Mike Gough, who tragically lost his life in a road collision earlier this month. The Council were informed that Mike was a former employee of the District Council and was one of the founder members of Hunts Walking and Cycling Group. He was also an enthusiastic advocate for more cycling infrastructure and safer streets. The Council conveyed their best wishes to his family, friends and former colleagues at this sad time.

64 THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

A 'Thought for the Day' was presented by Councillor P J Hodgson-Jones.

65 MINUTES

Subject to the replacement of the initial N with the initial A for Councillor Jennings in the second paragraph of Minute Number 23/59, the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 21st February 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

66 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

67 CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR'S ENGAGEMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair reported on the resignation of ex Councillor Richard West as District Councillor for Great Paxton. Richard had served as a District Councillor for 18

consecutive years. Owing to his notable and distinguished service, the Council were informed that Group Leaders had agreed to convey to Richard the title of Honorary Alderman and this would be undertaken at a future meeting. A by-election for the Great Paxton seat would be held on Thursday 2nd May 2024.

Members were also advised that this would be the last meeting attended by Paul Fox, Interim Director for People who would be leaving the authority at the end of March. Members placed on record their gratitude to Paul for his support during the transitional period in which he had been employed.

The Council then noted those engagements attended by the Chair and Vice-Chair since the last meeting (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book).

68 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.

69 CORPORATE PLAN REFRESH 2024

With the assistance of a report by the Business Intelligence and Performance Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Executive Leader Councillor S J Conboy presented an updated Corporate Plan for 2023-24 to the Council for approval.

By way of introduction, the Executive Leader reminded the Council that the Corporate Plan set out the Council's priorities, desired outcomes and how it proposes to achieve these during the period.

In presenting the refreshed document, Councillor Conboy drew attention to the proposed amendments to the refreshed Plan. These included changes to the wording of the priority 'Doing our Core Work Well' to make it easier to understand and reference, together with the proposal to widen the lowering of carbon emissions to encourage the reduction across the District. Attention was also drawn to the proposed actions for 2024/25 and the amendments which were proposed to the operational performance indicators for 2024/25. The Council were informed that several additional indicators were expected to be required by the Office for Local Government to support local government to improve performance. It was hoped that these could be utilised to identify areas of strength and development as well as benchmarking so that the Authority could understand how to drive better value public sector value for money and improve performance on behalf of Huntingdonshire residents.

In responding to the remarks by the Executive Leader, the Leader of the Opposition Councillor J A Gray reiterated the importance in ensuring that targets were set appropriately. He also commented on the absence of any apparent self-reflection within the previous year, naming Civil Parking Enforcement and the pay negotiations as examples.

In terms of the number of actions within the refreshed Plan, Councillor Gray acknowledged that this was ambitious but urged the Joint Administration not to lose sight of the day-to-day functions that a growing number of residents were increasingly dissatisfied with. Reference was made specifically to grass cutting,

bin collections and the garden waste subscription scheme. Comments were made regarding the increasing problems with rubbish and litter and blocked drains in the rural areas which in his opinion were not being addressed as adequately as in the urban areas.

In responding to the comments which had been made, Councillor S Ferguson acknowledged the importance of setting realistic, appropriate, and stretch targets for the Council and undertook to work with the entire Council to ensure that this was achieved. He also acknowledged that there had been challenges over the course of the previous two years. With regards to the issue of blocked drains, Councillor Ferguson also took the opportunity to advise the Council that in 2023 in St Neots alone, Cambridgeshire County Council had cleared 6,099 drains compared to the 5 years prior to when he was elected in which there had been no clearing of drains in St Neots and Godmanchester under the previous administration. Councillor S L Taylor suggested that the introduction of the green waste subscription charge would enable additional budgetary provision to be spent on other statutory duties.

Councillor S Wakeford then took the opportunity to refute the suggestion that the Administration were primarily concerned with the urban areas of the District. He also commented on the continued focus which the refreshed Plan gave to the enabling and influencing of work outside of the District Council's control which would address some of the greater challenges facing the District's residents, for example rural transportation.

Councillor L Davenport-Ray took the opportunity to respond to comments which had been made regarding the relationship between the Joint Administration and the employees of the Council. In so doing, she referred to the recent agreement of the pay award which demonstrated the strides which had been made to improve relationships with the Council's employees and the aim within the Corporate Plan to be an employer with improved staff recruitment and retention.

With regards to target setting and the setting of challenging but realistic targets, Councillor P J Hodgson-Jones urged the Overview and Scrutiny Panels to assist with the scrutiny, delivery, and achievement of these targets.

During the debate, Councillor N J Hunt took the opportunity to highlight some of the successes of the Joint Administration during the previous year which were relevant to the younger residents of the District. These included the provision of 544 new affordable homes, an increasing number in users of new junior memberships at One Leisure, the approval of a new tenancy and housing strategy and the efforts being made to recruit graduates and apprentices to the Authority.

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

RESOLVED

that the refreshed Corporate Plan (as attached at Appendix 1 be approved).

With the assistance of a report by the Director of Finance and Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources, Councillor B A Mickelburgh presented a series of corrections to Annex A the Fees and Charges Schedule which had been approved at the previous meeting of the Council as part of the 2024/25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2028/29.

By way of introduction, the Executive Councillor for Resources and Finance explained that a review of the annex following the previous meeting had identified that several fees and charges had been omitted. These were highlighted within the agenda pack and included the statutory services set by Central Government for example zoo and bingo hall licensing fees. Members were assured that these had not affected the Core Budget or the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and had been reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) at their last meeting.

In commenting on the proposed schedule the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor J A Gray commented on the level of the increases in some areas which were significantly above levels of inflation. Specific reference being made to some One Leisure charges and those for houses for multiple occupation. Comment was also made with regards to the inclusion of the charge for the garden waste subscription charge and it was for this reason, Councillor Gray indicated that he would not be supporting the recommendation.

Whereupon, it was moved by Councillor B A Mickelburgh, duly seconded by Councillor S Wakeford and

RESOLVED

that the highlighted amendments to the Fees and Charges Schedule, Annex A of the 2024/25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2028/29 as set put in the report now submitted be approved.

71 QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

With reference to discussions at recent meetings of Parish Councils, Councillor S Cawley outlined the concerns which were being expressed regarding the potential for an increase in fly tipping following the implementation of the new green bin subscription service. An assurance was sought that the District Council would do all it could to enforce fly tipping and to have robust plans in place to tackle the issue. In response to which, the Executive Councillor for Customer Services, Councillor S Ferguson reiterated that the Enforcement Team continued to take the issue of fly tipping seriously and that a new schedule of fines for enforcement had recently been approved. He also reiterated the importance of education, so that residents did not find themselves being prosecuted when they passed their waste to commercial operators who later fly tipped. When prosecutions did take place, he was keen to ensure that they were publicised. The Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene, Councillor S L Taylor also took the opportunity to provide an update on the take-up rate for the garden waste subscription service and Members were informed that 42% of households had now taken up the scheme, against a target of 30%.

Referring to the recent correspondence which had been sent to Parish Councils for distribution to residents regarding the availability of green bin freighters, Councillor K Gulson commented on the complaints which were being fielded by Parish Councils from residents who were unaware of the community initiatives before they paid for a bin, together with the numerous questions and concerns regarding the operation of the initiatives. In response to which, the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene explained that she was concerned that residents were not aware of these initiatives given that they had been discussed at great length at Overview and Scrutiny, in workshops with members, towns and parish councils and community groups. Members were reminded that they had been put in place to address the concerns of those who had been unable to afford a green bin. Details regarding the operation of the schemes were available on the District Council website.

Comment was also made with regards to the inaccuracies of several freighter locations on the What3Words App. In response to which the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene, Councillor S L Taylor explained that officers were currently assessing the situation.

In response to a request from Councillor N J Hunt for an update regarding progress with the Shopfront Improvement Scheme in Huntingdon, Ramsey, St Ives and St Neots, the Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing Councillor S Wakeford reported on the number of applications received and awards made in each area. Members noted that he was pleased with the level of interest received thus far and the take up of the programme which was now operational in all four market towns.

In response to a request from Councillor D J Shaw for an update on the current backlog of planning applications and enforcement cases, the Executive Councillor for Planning Councillor T D Sanderson reported that the number of household applications determined on time remained above the target of 85% at the end of February. Although major applications had fallen slightly, they were getting back on track. There had also been a reduction in the backlog of cases. He was pleased to report that performance within the service had now been met or exceeded targets for nine consecutive months.

With reference to recent contact from a resident in his ward who was a member of the St Neots Swans Swimming Club, Councillor A Jennings drew attention to the discrepancies between the provision which had been made for swimming club training between different Leisure Centres within the District and asked the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene whether any action could be taken to assist the St Neots Club. In response to which, Councillor S L Taylor explained that she had already spoken to the Head of Leisure regarding the matter, and it would need to be considered in further detail. Given that the facility was also used by the public, the current shortage of swimming facilities within the District, and the need to accommodate general swimming there was a balance to be struck. She undertook to give the matter further consideration.

In response to a question from Councillor J Harvey regarding the methods by which residents might transport their green waste to the Saturday freighters, the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene suggested that this could be done using a reusable solid box. Although black bin liners could be

used, if necessary, these should always be taken away and disposed of afterwards.

In light of the comments made regarding public awareness of the garden waste community initiatives and his experience with his own residents Councillor R Martin questioned whether there was need to scrutinise the Council's Communications Strategy to explore whether there were alternative ways of communicating with local residents. Having noted in detail the communications which had taken place with town, parishes and community groups from September 2023 to-date, the Executive Councillor for Customer Services took the opportunity to explain that communications with regards to this decision had far exceeded any the Council had previously undertaken. He also reiterated the responsibility for all Councillors to report on the decisions of the District Council to the town and parish councils in their area.

In response to a further question from Councillor R Martin as to how the District Council was planning to support those Parish Council's that didn't own land or had nowhere to store extra community bins, the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene Councillor S L Taylor undertook to respond to this question in writing. She went on to explain that it would be the responsibility of Town and Parish Councils to ensure that there was no contamination of waste within the Community Bins and that they were ready for collection at the appropriate times. She also undertook to provide further details to Councillor M L Beutell as to when Parish Councils were informed of their responsibilities regarding contamination.

With reference to the recent increases in planning fees, Councillor J Neish sought assurances that residents and developers would see improved turnaround times in planning applications and confirmation that the increased income in planning would be ring fenced for the planning service. In response to which, the Executive Councillor for Planning Councillor T D Sanderson agreed to provide further details in writing. However, he reminded Members that applications continued to be determined in accordance with the Council's key performance indications and that the Council were seeing fewer applications being disputed by Parish Councils. In terms of income, he was pleased to report that a further grant had been received from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and he would endeavour to ensure that was reinvested into the department as much as possible.

With reference to an elderly and housebound resident within his ward who received assisted bin green bin collections, Councillor J Neish queried whether there were any concessions within the new subscription scheme. In response to which, the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene explained that although there were no specific concessionary elements, the community initiatives had been designed to assist those who were unable to afford the new charge. In terms of communications the Executive Councillor undertook to investigate further the potential to ensure that bin hangers were posted directly through the doors of those who received assisted collections.

With reference to the recent agreement of a pay settlement for District Council employees for 2024/25, Councillor D Mickleburgh queried the affordability of the agreement and asked how it would influence staff recruitment and the ongoing Workforce Strategy. The Executive Councillor for Climate and Environment,

Councillor L Davenport-Ray confirmed that the award was affordable and within the Budget approved by the Council the previous month. It was her understanding that the 2024/25 award had been influential to staff who may have been considering departing the Council and it was the belief of both Council and staff representatives that it would improve the attractiveness of the authority to new employees over the coming year. She was pleased to report that Huntingdonshire was the first authority within Cambridgeshire to reach an agreement upon pay for 2024/25 and expressed her appreciation to all those who had been involved in the process.

With reference to recent discussions by the Corporate Governance Committee on the Risk Register, Councillor E R Butler sought comments from the Executive Councillor for Planning on the risk identified for Development Management regarding the failure to achieve commitments. In response to which, the Executive Councillor for Planning explained that this emphasised the importance of updating the Local Plan for the District, and that the planning service would continue to work towards achieving its targets. He also drew attention to the continuing difficulties in employing and retaining staff within the planning service and the role that the new Workforce Strategy would play in helping to improve this position. The Executive Councillor with responsibility for employment matters also reiterated that the approach towards the attraction and retention of planning staff had been altered in recent months and this was being to show some positive results.

With reference to her recent attendance at a Phoenix Futures event, Councillor C H Tevlin requested an update on the Huntingdonshire Place Strategy. The Executive Leader advised the Council that an update on the Festival of Place would be presented to Overview and Scrutiny shortly and it was hoped that the Council may then be able to move forward with the offer of the grant scheme.

In response to a question from Councillor T D Alban as to whether any consideration had been given to offering charitable relief to churches and other charitable organisations for the garden waste subscription service, the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene explained that the issue had been considered but would be very difficult to administer. The Executive Councillor for Customer Services Councillor S W Ferguson reiterated that the cost of doing so would significantly reduce the effectiveness of the scheme and referred his colleagues to the previous discussions on the matter prior to the implementation of the scheme.

In response to a request for clarification on the closing date for requests for refunds for those who had already paid for the subscription service, the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene Councillor S L Taylor explained that requests must be received before the 1st April 2024. She also undertook to establish if requests received on Bank Holiday Good Friday - 31st March 2024, would also be honoured.

In response to a request from Councillor C A Lowe for an update regarding the replanting of trees on the A14, the Executive Councillor for Climate and Environment undertook to respond outside the meeting in writing to ensure that she was providing the most recent information.

In response to a subsequent question from Councillor C A Lowe as to whether it was possible to undertake a tour of the Mechanical Biological Treatment Plant Facility at Waterbeach, Members were advised that a tour had been offered upon their election to the Council. Whilst it may be possible in the future, it was not currently feasible as the County Council were currently investigating upgrading the facility to comply with recent European legislation which had resulted in the closure of two of the treatment lines.

Councillor P J Hodgson-Jones reported on his recent attendance at a meeting of the A141 Working Group and outlined his concerns that the studies which had been undertaken to alleviate the traffic and congestion on the road would not be progressed. In responding to the concerns raised, the Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing Councillor S Wakeford and the Huntingdonshire representative on the Transport and Infrastructure Committee of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority outlined his disappointment that the Councillor had interpreted the meeting in this way. Council were informed that the CPCA had commissioned Cambridgeshire County Council to take this forward and that proposals were being reviewed in light of the update of government policies concerning the impact on the environment. Further engagement would take place in due course. Councillor P Hodgson-Jones went on to reiterate that whilst sustainable transportation was important, given the scale of development in the area, road improvements were also required. The Executive Councillor clarified that these were still being considered.

Councillor J A Gray asked the Executive Leader for her view on whether car parking fees should be used to deter individuals from using their cars to drive into town centres or reduced to incentivise people to use the town centres and facilities within the market towns. In response to which, the Executive Leader explained that this was not an easy answer and would form part of an ongoing dialogue. One of the real challenges was not just about the philosophy of what the Council should do but was also about the practicalities of looking at the Council's fees and charges and up until now parking charges have been crucial to balancing that. She was hopeful that the Council would be able to have that philosophical discussion as it moves forward with a sustainable forward-looking Budget, as it was an important matter for discussion for the District's high streets and town centres.

Finally, in response to a question from Councillor S Wakeford as to whether it might be helpful for Executive Councillors to be given advance notice of those questions which required multi part or detailed answers, the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene Councillor S L Taylor agreed that Members would get a more detailed response if she was given prior warning. Within this in mind, she encouraged any members who had issues to make contact with her in advance of the meeting. In response to which, Councillor T D Alban reiterated that the Constitution did not require advance notice to be provided and there was a danger of Council meetings appearing pre-rehearsed. He argued that perhaps there was a balance to be struck.

In conjunction with the decision summaries of the recent meetings of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book), the Council received an update on the activities of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board (CPCA). Copies of the decision summaries are appended in the Minute Book.

With the assistance of a PowerPoint presentation, Councillor M A Hassall provided an update on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee. As part of the presentation, Council Hassall drew attention to the challenges to the Improvement Plan arising from the imposition of a Best Value Notice for a further 6 months. These could be split into 3 categories – Strategic Alignment, Delivery Confidence and Cross-Partnership challenges and Councillor Hassall provided further information on each point in turn.

Council was then advised of the measures that had been put in place to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. These were in the areas of Forward Planning, Agenda Management, Formal Feedback to the Board and Staff Support. Councillor Hassall reiterated the importance of effective Overview and Scrutiny in improving the outcomes for residents and ensuring that issues were accurately represented.

In responding to the presentation, Councillor J A Gray commented on the impression that he had received that the Board was not aligned and questioned whether this was a reflection of ineffective leadership. In response to which, Councillor Hassall explained that his comments concerning the need to look at the strength of the governance arrangements were independent of the mayor and concerned the governance of the Authority as a whole. He made reference to the setting of the Mayoral precept which permitted a situation whereby the mayor could set an increase of 200% provided that a two thirds majority of the Board did not vote against it and the need to establish better links between the CPCA and Constituent Councils. Councillor Gray also commented on the irony of an Authority which was under a Best Value Notice increasing its precept by 200%.

Members were provided with an update on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Audit and Governance Committee by Councillor S Corney. In doing so, the Council were advised that discussions had centred around the Auditors Annual Report and the Improvement Framework. Members noted that the imposition of the Best Value Notice had resulted in a substantial increase in costs over the course of the past year. However, on a more positive note Councillor Corney went on to report that the Chair of the Improvement Board had met with Board Members and Constituent Council Chief Executives to develop a clear vision and ambition to promote investment and opportunities for the region and it had been reported that relationships had improved with the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities. Arising from Councillor Corney's presentation and from the previous comments which had been made concerning governance, a suggestion was made by Councillor P Hodgson Jones regarding the potential establishment of a working group involving members of the Audit and Governance Committee, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Board to look further at the Authority's Governance structure and operation.

The Executive Leader, Councillor S J Conboy then addressed the Council on the activities of the Combined Authority Board. As part of her presentation, Councillor Conboy explained that the Governance review was now in place, however there was an impatience to be getting on and making things work better. The issues which Councillor Hassall had raised had been shared with the Combined Authorities Monitoring Officer, together with the lead member Councillor E Murphy.

Councillor Conboy reiterated that the Combined Authority had made significant progress within the past twenty months, it now had a stable and secure officer structure and there had also significant changes to the way the Board works politically which had resulted in improved operation and working relationships. Inevitably there would always be disagreements and different interests to be met but that was a fundamental part of democracy, and it would be unreasonable to expect Members of the Board to agree on all matters all of the time.

Councillor Conboy went on to explain that the Board was starting to move forward and agree upon the issues that the Authority could stand behind collectively and the work for the UKREiiF Event was an important driver for that. In terms of the Department of Levelling Up's requirement for strategic alignment, Councillor Conboy explained that she did not believe it was a reasonable expectation to secure agreement on every occasion and she had fed that back to the DHCLU. Whilst the Authority still had more to do in terms of improvements, and there would always be new matters to address, there was now more bringing the Board together than ever before and there was a clear direction of travel. She would continue to represent Huntingdonshire to obtain the greatest benefit from the arrangement for the residents of the District.

Arising from the presentation, Councillor L Davenport-Ray commented on the positive and collaborative way in which Constituent Council representatives sitting upon the Combined Authority Committees worked. However, she expressed concerns at the negative and unconstructive way in which some of the members of the Board appeared. Having been asked to give her thoughts on how the Best Value Notice may be moved without the camaraderie and support of all Board Members, the Executive Leader explained that the Board needed to focus upon the issues on which it could unite whilst accepting that they had differences. However, this did require a will on behalf of each individual, she could only take responsibility and control for her own decisions and behaviour.

Councillor S Cawley reported on the discontent of his residents in West Huntingdonshire at the increase in the Mayoral precept, given that they had no bus services within the area. He urged the Executive Leader to continue to press for additional services within the area. In response to which the Executive Leader explained that Huntingdonshire was the beneficiary of future change and undertook to respond directly to Councillor Cawley outside of the meeting. She also took the opportunity to remind all Councillors with an interest in bus related issues to engage with the bus working group and the lead councillors who sat upon the Transport and Infrastructure Community Committee.

With reference to the recent decision summary for the Transport and Infrastructure Committee, Councillor A Jennings sought further information on the proposed boundary change to the existing area for the E-scooter trial. In

response to which the Executive Leader undertook to provide further information outside of the meeting.

Having outlined his support for the suggestion made by Councillor P Hodgson-Jones regarding a possible working group to consider governance issues and the comments made by Councillor Davenport-Ray at the constructive manner in which committees work within the Combined Authority, Councillor Hassall took the opportunity to make a further point regarding their governance arrangements. Whilst he recognised that the Executive Leader was reflective of the viewpoints and opinions of the District Council, there was in fact nothing to prevent a leader taking a completely different view if they so wish which reflected a further weakness in the arrangements. He also suggested there was a need to have stronger links between the respective councils and their leaders.

Finally, Councillor J Neish made reference to the concerns of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which had been expressed during the setting of the Mayoral precept, that there had been limited information as to why the precept was to be set at that level. However, information appeared now to be much more forthcoming on schemes that might be funded.

In concluding the discussion, the Executive Leader thanked Members for their comments and suggested that these might be best directed to the Combined Authority Chief Executive and respective officers and fed into the organisation.

73 OUTCOMES FROM COMMITTEES AND PANELS

A copy of the list of meetings held since the last meeting of the Council held on 21st February 2024 is appended in the Minute Book and Members were advised that any issues or questions could be raised in relation to these meetings.

Councillor C H Tevlin drew attention to the reduced attendance of the District Council's representative at meetings of the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel. It was agreed that the Chief Executive would review the matter outside of the meeting.

With reference to the recent meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee, Councillor J A Gray took the opportunity to draw attention to issues relating to staffing levels around procurement. Members were advised that a significant number of the internal audit actions currently had procurement issues addressed against them and procurement regulations were about to get more complicated and would require additional staffing resources. The Executive Councillor for Customer Services agreed with the observations which had been made regarding the need for additional staffing and had already raised the matter with the Chief Executive.

Also, with reference to the meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee, Councillor P Hodgson-Jones reported that the process for appointing Independent Persons to the Committee had been ongoing and would be reported to a future meeting of the Council. However, in view of the impact of these appointments on the size of the Committee a working group had been established to consider the terms of reference and the structure of the Committee. This would provide an opportunity to consider the way the

Committee works to delivery proper scrutiny of the Council's operations and support policy direction. A report would be forthcoming to Council in due course.

74 VARIATIONS TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

There were no changes to report.

The meeting ended at 21.26pm.

Chair