

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COUNCIL held in the Council Chamber, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 16 February 2005.

PRESENT: Councillor J A P Eddy - Chairman

Councillors J D Ablewhite, M G Baker,
Mrs M Banjeree, I C Bates, J T Bell,
Mrs B E Boddington, P L E Bucknell,
Mrs J Chandler, S J Criswell, J W Davies,
D B Dew, P J Downes, J J Dutton, N J Finnie,
J E Garner, D A Giles, Mrs C A Godley,
J A Gray, Mrs K P Gregory, N J Guyatt,
A Hansard, D Harty, D P Holley, C R Hyams,
Mrs P J Longford, Mrs S A Menczer,
P G Mitchell, I R Muir, M F Newman,
R Powell, Mrs D C Reynolds, K Reynolds,
J M Sadler, T D Sanderson, L M Simpson,
A B Stenner, C J Stephens, P A Swales,
J Taylor, G S E Thorpe, R G Tuplin,
Mrs S J Vanbergen and Ms M Wheeler.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors R L Clarke, W T Clough, Mrs D E Collins, J D Fell, T V Rogers, I P Taylor and J S Watt.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D H Bristow.

43. PRAYER

The Canon R Longford, Rural Dean of Yaxley, opened the meeting with prayer.

44. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) The High Sheriff

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Sir Charles Chadwyck-Healey, High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire.

(b) Tsunami Appeal

The Council were informed that a donation of £1,050 had been made on behalf of Members and Officers to the International Tsunami Appeal and that a further £715 had been collected by District Council staff.

(c) Civic Ball

The Chairman announced that his Civic Ball would be held on 15th April 2005 at the Burgess Hall, St. Ivo Leisure Centre and that formal invitations for the event would be sent in due course.

45. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 20th December 2004 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

46. BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM PLAN 2006 - 2010

In conjunction with a report by the Director of Commerce and Technology (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) and Item No. 117 of the Report of the Cabinet, the Leader addressed the Council on the Medium Term Plan for 2006/10, the 2005/06 budget and related prudential indicators.

Members were reminded of the decisions that they had previously approved in respect of the Council's financial strategy which incorporated a minimum increase in Band D Council Tax for 2005/06 amounting to £12 per annum. Reference also was made to potential variations to the approved Medium Term Plan, the base budget review and early consideration of the Government's efficiency review. Having regard to the level of revenue support grant announced, the Leader emphasised that the Council remained the most under-funded District Council in cash terms in England by a total £748,000 which would have obviated the need for an increase in Council Tax at the level proposed.

Attention was drawn to the observations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels and to the views expressed by the business community at a consultation meeting held on 26th January 2005.

Turning specifically to the recommendations of the Cabinet, the Leader anticipated that the efficiency savings target would be difficult to achieve given the low spending base of the Authority. In addition, the Leader drew attention to additional duties which had been imposed on the District Council without any corresponding increase in funding from Government and to the significant investment which continued to be made to Council services. Notwithstanding the proposed increase of £12 per annum in Council Tax for a Band D property, Councillor Holley added that this was still 25% below the average council tax level for District Councils in England. On behalf of the Council, the Leader thanked Officers and Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels for their constructive contributions to the budgetary exercise at each stage.

On behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillors Downes acknowledged the opportunities afforded to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels to contribute to the budget process but questioned the reality of the budget given the continuing uncertainty in terms of the Council's future office accommodation requirements. Regarding the detailed budget, Councillor Downes welcomed reductions which had been proposed amounting to £500,000 per annum but questioned why these had not been identified earlier. Councillor Downes also drew attention to the commitment made to the customer first project which was contrary to the findings of a recent customer survey as to the support for such an option. Whilst not proposing an alternative budget or MTP, Councillor Downes indicated his regret at the proposal not to lend further support to a number of schemes

comprising the Summer Outdoor Arts Event, Youth Participation Project, Grant Aid to Voluntary Organisations and Members' Support Assistant.

RESOLVED

- (a) that a net revenue budget of £17.373m and a net capital budget of £23,087m for 2005/06 be approved;
- (b) that revenue reserves of £1.826m be made available for expenditure in 2005/06;
- (c) that a Council Tax increase of £12 on a Band D property in 2005/06 be approved;
- (d) that the Capital Programme for 2006/07 be approved to increase opportunities for obtaining lower tender prices;
- (e) that, subject to annual review, the remainder of the Medium Term Plan for 2006 – 2010 be approved; and
- (f) that the prudential indicators as set out in Appendix C to the report now submitted be approved.

47. COUNCIL TAX 2005/06

In accordance with Section 30 (2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and with reference to a report by the Director of Commerce and Technology which had been circulated at the meeting (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Leader proposed the determination of levels of Council Tax for 2005/06 for the various parts of the Huntingdonshire District.

On being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Revenue Budget for 2005/06 as submitted be approved;
- (b) that the following amounts be calculated by the Council for 2005/06 in accordance with Sections 32 to 36 of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 (the Act):-

	£
(i) the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32(2) (a) to (e) of the Act	58,230,502
(ii) the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 32 (3) (a) to (c) of the Act	39,572,110
(iii) the amount by which the aggregate at (b) (i) above	18,658,392

- exceeds the aggregate at
(b) (ii) above in accordance
with Section 32 (4) of the Act
- (iv) the aggregate of the amounts payable into the General Fund for the items set out in Section 33 (1) of the Act **9,508,211**
 - (v) the aggregate of the amounts payable from the General Fund for the items set out in Section 33 (3) of the Act **3,550**
 - (vi) the basic amount of Council Tax for 2005/06 in accordance with Section 33 (1) **161.39**
per band D
property
 - (vii) the aggregate of special items referred to in Section 34 (1) **3,110,997**
 - (viii) the basic amount of Council Tax for 2005/06 for those parts of the District to which no special item relates **106.54**
 - (ix) the basic amounts of Council Tax for 2005/06 for those parts of the District to which one or more special items 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 hereto
 - (x) the amounts to be taken into account for 2005/06 in respect of categories of dwellings listed in the different valuation bands in accordance with Section 36 (1) of the Act are shown by adding the Huntingdonshire District Council amount to the appropriate Parish Council amount for each of the valuation bands in the columns "bands A to H" set out in table 1 hereto;
- (c) that the amounts of precept issued to the Council by Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Police Authority and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Fire Authority for each of the categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands in accordance with Section 40 of the Act shown in table 1 hereto be noted; and
- (d) that, having regard to the calculations above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30 (2) of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of Council Tax for 2005/06 for each of the categories of dwelling shown in table 2 hereto.

*(For sight of Tables 1 and 2 please refer to
Council Agenda: 16th February 2005 Item No. 5 [Council Tax
2005/06])*

**48. A14 - PROPOSALS FOR UPGRADE: BRAMPTON HUT TO FEN
DITTON**

(The Chairman announced that he proposed to allow consideration of the following item as a matter of urgency in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972 in view of the very high levels of interest in this issue locally, Councillor Guyatt's wish to keep District Councillors informed of developments and the need to maintain pressure for a start on upgrading work on the A14 as soon as possible.)

With the assistance of a written statement (a copy of which was circulated at the meeting) Councillor N J Guyatt, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy addressed the Council on the situation with regard to upgrading the A14 between Brampton Hut and Fen Ditton and on the progress of improvements to the road. In so doing, he reminded Members of the position that he had maintained on behalf of the Council in discussions with the Highways Agency.

Following discussion and having indicated their support for their previous resolutions in this respect as set out in Annexes A and B to the statement appended in the Minute Book, the Council

RESOLVED

that the content of Councillor Guyatt's statement be received and noted.

49. CABINET

Councillor D P Holley, Leader and Chairman of the Cabinet presented the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 16th December 2004, 13th January and 3rd February 2005.

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In connection with Item No. 114 and in response to a question from Councillor J A Gray regarding the potential for action to be taken against householders for misuse of the wheeled bin refuse system, the Leader replied that since its inception there had been relatively few incidents of misuse. However, where this occurred efforts would be made to resolve problems with households by personal visits and other advice on recycling options.

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In connection with Item No. 116 and in response to a question from Councillor T D Sanderson, the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy reported that the decision to defer the funding of an affordable housing scheme at Parkway, Huntingdon would be reconsidered in conjunction with the Medium Term Plan once it became clear that the scheme would proceed.

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In connection with Item No. 117, it was noted that the recommendations had previously been considered under Minute Nos. 46 and 47 ante.

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Upon being put to the vote, the recommendations contained in Item No. 118 were declared to be CARRIED.

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(Councillors J A P Eddy and A Hansard declared personal interests in Item No. 120 by virtue of their membership of the Great Ouse Local Flood Defence Committee and Councillor Mrs S J Vanbergen declared a personal and prejudicial interest and left the meeting for the same Item.)

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In connection with Item No. 123 and in response to a question from Councillor P G Mitchell, the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy confirmed that the Chequers Court Urban Design Framework had been adopted, following amendment, as Interim Planning Guidance.

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In connection with Item No. 125 and in response to a question from Councillor Mrs S A Menczer regarding the promotion by the District Council's Leisure Centres of sunbeds as part of the Impressions range of health suite facilities, the Leader reminded the Council that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources) had recently conducted a review on the use of sun beds and had concluded that they were being appropriately managed by the Leisure Centres within a strict operating criteria.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 16th December 2004, 13th January and 3rd February 2005 be received and adopted.

50. STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Mr D H Bristow presented the Report of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 9th December 2004.

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In connection with Item No. 10, the Chairman informed the Council that Regulations had recently come into force which authorised Monitoring Officers to undertake investigations into alleged breaches

by councillors of their respective codes of conduct and that Standards Committees would be able to make determinations following Monitoring Officer reports on the investigation of such breaches.

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Referring to Item No. 11, the Chairman also welcomed the action taken by The Standards Board for England to implement a new referral process to reduce the time being taken by the Board to process cases involving allegations of misconduct.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 9th December 2004 be received and adopted.

51. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PLANNING AND FINANCE)

Councillor P A Swales presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) held on 14th December 2004 and 11th January 2005 and of a joint meeting with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources) held on 25th January 2005.

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The Chairman reminded the Council that a training session on scrutiny would be held at the Dolphin Hotel, St Ives on 18th February 2005 and that all Members would be welcome to attend.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) held on 14th December 2004 and 11th January 2005 and of a joint meeting with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources) held on 25th January 2005 be received and adopted.

52. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SERVICE DELIVERY AND RESOURCES)

Councillor K Reynolds presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources) held on 7th December 2004, 4th January and 1st February 2005.

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Further to Item No. 35, the Chairman announced that the visit by Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels to Maidstone Borough

Council to observe that Council's scrutiny performance had been re-scheduled to 15th March 2005.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources) held on 7th December, 4th January and 1st February 2005 be received and adopted.

53. DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PANEL

Councillor P G Mitchell presented the Report of the meetings of the Development Control Panel held on 20th December 2004 and 17th January 2005.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Development Control Panel held on 20th December 2004 and 17th January 2005 be received and adopted.

54. EMPLOYMENT PANEL

Councillor J W Davies presented the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 2nd February 2005.

In connection with Item No. 20, the Chairman expressed his appreciation to the Employees' Side for their contribution towards the resolution of negotiations on the annual pay award.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 2nd February 2005 be received and adopted.

55. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE PANEL

Councillor I C Bates presented the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 8th December 2004.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 8th December 2004 be received and adopted.

56. LICENSING AND PROTECTION PANEL

Councillor J D Sadler presented the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 19th January 2005.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 19th January 2005 be received and adopted.

57. LICENSING COMMITTEE

Councillor J D Sadler presented the Report of the meetings of the Licensing Committee held on 8th December 2004 and 19th January 2005.

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The Chairman informed the Council that the Regulations under the Licensing Act 2003 had been published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sports only two weeks prior to the first appointed date of 7th February for implementation of the Act, that application forms for various licences had been subject to modification until the weekend prior to the first appointed day and that the District Council had given presentations throughout the District and attended numerous meetings to explain the implications of the Act to licensees, clubs and the public.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Licensing Committee held on 8th December 2004 and 19th January 2005 be received and adopted.

58. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES/PANELS

Upon a proposal by the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, it was,

RESOLVED

that Councillor D A Giles be appointed to the Development Control Panel in place of Councillor W T Clough.

59. ORAL QUESTIONS

In accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules (Section 8.3) of the Council's Constitution, the Chairman proceeded to conduct a period of oral questions addressed to Executive Councillors and Panel Chairmen as follows:-

Question from Councillor P A Swales to the Executive Councillor for Public Health and Community Safety, Councillor Mrs D C Reynolds

In response to a question regarding the potential cost to the Council of a scheme to install replacement pumps at St. Germans pumping station, Councillor Mrs Reynolds reported that the District Council was awaiting information from the Middle Level Commissioners and that she would advise the questioner when this became available.

Question from Councillor J A Gray to the Leader of the Council, Councillor D P Holley

In response to a question regarding the alleged failure by the utility companies to reinstate the street scene adequately on completion of repair works in Kimbolton, the Leader explained that the utility companies had a statutory duty to undertake reinstatements. Whilst he also deplored unsatisfactory reinstatement, the Leader indicated that responsibility in this matter lay with the County Council as highways authority. However, the Leader added that if the questioner could supply him with details of the locations which had raised concern, he would draw them to the attention of the County Council.

Question from Councillor C J Stephens to the Leader, Councillor D P Holley

In response to a question regarding the accumulation of rubbish on the verge of the A14 where it passed through the District, the Leader commented that he was aware of the problem and that he would seek to establish whether any pressure could be applied to the Highways Agency as the authority responsible for trunk roads.

Question from Councillor J Taylor to the Leader of the Council, Councillor D P Holley

In response to a question regarding the percentage take-up of blue wheeled bins in the District, the Leader undertook to arrange for a written reply to be sent to the questioner.

Question from Councillor J J Dutton to the Leader of the Council, Councillor D P Holley

In response to a question seeking clarification of the amount of the Council's income and expenditure, including existing balances as a result of various projects at Oxmoor, the Leader undertook to arrange for a written reply to be sent to the questioner.

Question from Councillor Mrs S A Menczer to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Councillor N J Guyatt

In response to a question regarding the population forecast used for planning purposes by the District Council, Councillor Guyatt replied that he would arrange for a written reply to be sent to the questioner.

Question from Councillor T D Sanderson to the Leader of the Council, Councillor D P Holley

In response to a question on the current position regarding the possibility of residents of St. Mary's Street and The Walks East being able to obtain parking permits for Mill Common Car Park, Huntingdon, the Leader replied that once the new car parking order was operational he would arrange for the Councillor to be advised of progress in this matter.

Question from Councillor R G Tuplin to the Leader of the Council, Councillor D P Holley

In response to a question regarding the possibility of including all public notices in the weekly edition of Huntingdonshire Matters, the Leader agreed that those public notices placed by the Council, would in future, be incorporated within the weekly despatch of newspaper cuttings.

60. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: SECTION 85

The Chief Executive reported that there were no absences of Members from meetings for consideration in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The meeting concluded at 3.57 pm.

Chairman