

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, 17 December 2025.

PRESENT: Councillor D B Dew – Chair.

Councillors B S Banks, M L Beuttell,
A Blackwell, M J Burke, S Bywater,
S Cawley, B S Chapman, S J Conboy,
S J Criswell, L Davenport-Ray,
S W Ferguson, I D Gardener, C M Gleadow,
J A Gray, K P Gulson, M A Hassall,
P J Hodgson-Jones, S A Howell, N J Hunt,
A R Jennings, M Kadewere, D N Keane,
J E Kerr, R Martin, B A Mickelburgh,
D L Mickelburgh, S Mokbul, 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, S Wakeford and N Wells.

APOLOGIES: T Alban, R J Brereton, E R Butler, J Clarke,
S J Corney, A E Costello, J E Harvey,
P A Jordan, P Kadewere and C Lowe.

47. THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

The Reverend Mark Amey, of All Saints Parish Church in St Ives, opened the meeting with a thought for the day

48. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Council held on the 15th October 2025 and 19th November 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

49. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor S Bywater declared an other registerable interest in Minute No. 25/56 by virtue of being a Cambridgeshire County Councillor for that ward.

50. CHAIRS ENGAGEMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Council noted those engagements attended by the Chair and Vice-Chair since the last meeting (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). The Chair took the opportunity to thank those who attended the Annual Chair's Choir Service which took place on 11th December 2025, and expressed thanks to the Officers involved in the organisation of the event.

51. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Earlier this year, one of my close friends, Chris Penhall, tragically passed away. He suffered a heart attack in Huntingdon town centre during the day, and his heart stopped for 29 minutes before the paramedics arrived. He was in a coma for nearly two weeks, before passing away. Dozens, if not hundreds, of people would have walked passed, and if any of them knew how to perform CPR, or even knew how to contact a Town Ranger for them to perform CPR, then Chris would still be alive today.

I am interested in understanding how Huntingdonshire District Council is supporting community health and safety initiatives, specifically regarding CPR training and safety awareness for customers and local businesses. Could you please share what programs or resources are currently in place, and what actions are being taken to promote and facilitate CPR education and safety measures within our community?

Chris didn't deserve to die lying on a cold, concrete floor in fear, and we need to make sure that this doesn't happen again to anyone else.

The Executive Leader, Councillor S J Conboy offered her condolences to Mr Penhall's family and friends. She responded to the question by advising the significant amount of work being done by the Council to help communities do more to support residents, particularly around medical emergencies where quick assistance is vital. Councillor Conboy reflected on contributions and investments towards projects undertaken by MAGPAS, the new health facility at Alconbury Weald and improvements at the Godmanchester Roman Hicks surgery. She noted that through Section 106 and CIL funding, investments in GP surgeries and health facilities across the district as well as supporting Town and Parish Councils with equipment, training, first responder scheme and maintenance to support community health initiatives leading to the provision of 16 defibrillators in parishes across the district. Councillor Conboy highlighted the defibrillator awareness and training and getting devices installed where they are needed, she encouraged members to familiarise themselves with the defibrillator.co.uk website and also advised that 999 operatives were aware of defibrillator locations and could direct the general public to their location and give instructions to use in the event of a necessary call. It was advised that 95 Council staff were CPR trained with 33 of those having first aid emergency training, this was particularly of importance for Leisure Centre and Countryside staff and visitors. Councillor Conboy concluded that she hoped Chris's situation would not be repeated and thanked Miss Simpson for bringing the matter to the Council's attention, noting that the Council would continue to work hard to support the community to avoid similar outcomes in the future.

The Preferred Options Local Plan consultation opened on 5 November 2025, but the Stage 2 Water Cycle Study, a key piece of evidence on water capacity and deliverability was not published until 25 November 2025. Furthermore, the publication dates and integration of the Infrastructure Delivery Study (IDS) and Whole Plan Viability Assessment (WPVA) are not clearly

documented. Therefore, will the Council confirm whether the Preferred Options were prepared using the final Stage 2 Water Cycle Study findings, and whether the relevant evidence documents were complete and available at the point the consultation opened?

The Executive Councillor for Planning, Councillor T Sanderson responded to the question by advising that the preparation of evidence-based documents in support of the development of the local plan was an iterative process. He noted that regular meetings were held with consultants to talk through findings and discuss draft chapters and policy formation throughout the creation of evidence-based documents, discussions and updates on the water cycle study (WCS). He noted that the creation of a WCS was not legally required document as part of the Local Plan making process. However, the Council had decided to produce a WCS to inform growth in the area and identify areas to infrastructure providers where infrastructure would be required to support growth. It was noted that the Council had already completed a stage one water cycle study which was publicly available. A full draft of the interim stage 2 WCS was provided to the Council in early September and the full WCS would be used to inform the final policies of the Local Plan. It was noted that the process to develop the WCS had been ongoing and involved key stakeholders, it was advised that the final Stage 2 Water Cycle Study would be completed in Spring 2026 and that this would be used alongside responses from the Preferred Options Local Plan consultation to further refine policies ahead of the Plan's submission in summer 2026.

In regards to timescales, it was advised that the infrastructure delivery study and whole plan viability assessment were published on the local plan evidence library on 16th October 2025 and informed the development of the preferred options. Responses from statutory consultees on infrastructure matters including water were included in the development of these evidence bases. It was advised that as with the WCS, the development of policies was an iterative process using information from statutory consultees, national legislation and draft chapters and findings from the studies with minor amendments made to the policies following the final reports.

52. QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

In response to a question from the Executive for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene Councillor J E Kerr, the Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance, Councillor S W Ferguson gave his assurance, alongside the assurance of Councillor N Wells in his capacity as Chair of the Licensing and Protection Committee that a report would be brought to the next meeting of that committee addressing concerns of the taxi trade in relation to vehicle compliance certificates in particular the awarding of the contract to an operator who carries out the checks on behalf of the Council.

Following a question by councillor S Bywater, the Executive Councillor for Communities, Health and Leisure, Councillor S A Howell advised that the reopening of the leisure facilities at Sawtry was on track for Spring 2026 and that the team would ensure that

ward members were looped in to communications on the project.

In response to a question from Councillor D Keane, Councillor J Kerr advised the Council's position was that any legitimate claim for damage allegedly arising from Council assets, including trees, should be managed through the Council's established insurance arrangements which would ensure full investigation of complex issues by qualified experts using recognised industry protocols to ensure evidence based decisions which were consistent and legally robust. She also acknowledged that the tree strategy could be strengthened to state that in cases involving vulnerable residents, the Council would provide additional support to them in making a claim either via their own insurance or the Council's insurance as appropriate to the case. She further noted that the definition of vulnerability would need to be carefully defined in line with the Council's approach to vulnerable residents, however this was something which would be developed in line with Officer guidance.

Following a question from Councillor S Cawley in relation to the East Park Energy Development project consultation, and how Huntingdonshire District Council, as a statutory consultee intended to respond to this, Councillor T Sanderson advised that whilst he did not have the information to hand, he would work with Officers to get this information to Councillor Cawley and to ensure that a response be submitted in line with the deadlines of the consultation.

Following a question from Councillor N J Hunt, Councillor Howell advised that in relation to the proposed development at One Leisure Huntingdon, the current timescales should see work commence in Autumn 2026 with completion due in Spring 2028.

In response to a question from Councillor M Kadewere, the Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing, Councillor S Wakeford reflected on the Universal Studios development bordering the district not only for the major transformation and international investment that it would bring but also for the associated benefits for Huntingdonshire in particular tourism and employment. The Chamber were assured that collaborative conversations were ongoing with neighbouring Councils to maximise opportunities for the district, its residents and visitors.

Further to a question from Councillor Wells, Councillor Sanderson advised that a range of evidence based had been prepared including a strategic transport assessment and that the Council were working collaboratively with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) who were sponsors of the A141 and St Ives improvement project.

Councillor Chapman reflected on the recent Citizen Hub meeting in St Neots which the Executive Leader and Council's Chief Executive attended, in response, Councillor Conboy advised that collaborative conversations with communities and also bigger opportunities such as the Universal Studios development were ongoing in order to maximise opportunities for Huntingdonshire and its residents.

In response to a question from Councillor R Martin regarding timescales for the review of the Council's Constitution, the Executive

Leader advised that the Changes to the Constitution – Council Procedure Rules and Substitutes Policy would be considered later in the meeting and she would confirm the full timescales with Councillor Martin following the meeting. Both Councillors were in agreement that the review was needed and overdue and Councillor Conboy further clarified that all decisions being made in regard to the Constitution were fully transparent.

Following a question from Councillor D Mickelburgh, Councillor Kerr advised that the Council's Operations Team had recently won the Most Improved and Best Performer for Refuge Collection at the Association for Public Service Excellence Awards. She praised the fantastic work undertaken by the Officers and thanked them for their dedication and hard work.

53. LICENSING ACT 2003: STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

Councillor N Wells, Chair of the Licensing Committee presented the Licensing Act 2003: Statement of Licensing Policy (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). It was noted that the draft Statement was considered and endorsed by the Licensing Committee at their meeting on 22nd October 2025 and it was recommended that it should be referred to the Council for approval.

In supporting the item, Councillor Hunt also expressed his thanks to Officers in their support of the Ask for Angela scheme which had previously been brought as a Motion before the Council.

Whereupon and it having been duly proposed and seconded it was

RESOLVED

that the Council's Licensing Act 2003: Statement of Policy be approved and adopted for a 5 year period ending no later than 7th January 2031.

54. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT 2026/27

The Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance, Councillor S W Ferguson presented the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2026/27 (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). In presenting the report, Councillor Ferguson reflected upon the current economic climate and the unprecedented financial pressures faced by many households but in particular those on a low income. In particular Councillor Ferguson noted that protecting the most financially vulnerable from disproportionate burden was both a social justice and an important responsibility of the Council which was taken very seriously.

In opening the debate, Councillor Martin addressed the Chamber in support of the proposal but expressed concerns in relation to the unknown future and potential changes to be brought by Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). He suggested that an analysis and review be brought back to the democratic cycle in late 2026 to ascertain how this scheme may be affected by LGR and how the Council could best support its most vulnerable residents in the future.

Councillor Wakeford echoed the comments of both Councillors Ferguson and Martin and was proud for the difference that the joint administration had been able to implement and improve the lives of residents.

This sentiment was shared by the Executive Councillor for Climate, Transformation and Workforce, Councillor L Davenport-Ray, who also reflected on the improvement to residents mental health created by this scheme.

Whereupon and it having been duly proposed and seconded it was

RESOLVED

that the scheme principles for 2026-27 remain unchanged, ensuring that the scheme continues to deliver support to low-income households across the district in line with the Council's Corporate Priority to improve the quality of life for local people and to deliver good quality, high value-for-money services.

55. PARKING CHARGES - IMPLEMENTATION OF INCREASE

Prior to the introduction of the report, the Council's Section 151 Officer who clarified the reasons for the inclusion of the report for consideration by Council. Following a question from Councillor Davenport-Ray, the Council were advised that through management of the Council's budget and finances, delegations were available to the Section 151 Officer to maintain a balanced budget through the management and performance of all services, it would not be prudent to advise to use reserves funding to cover a deficit which doesn't exist, furthermore the Officer assured the Chamber that the decision on the matter taken by Cabinet wouldn't put financial pressures on the operation of the Council or its Services.

In response to a question from Councillor Martin, the Section 151 Officer advised that through prudent financial management she would not be supporting the decision, however she also noted that the use of reserves was not required at the present time. It was further noted that a budget surplus reserve had been built up over time and set aside to support eventualities which arose in year and it would be normal practice to use this to meet any deficit that may arise.

It was clarified to the Chamber by the Section 151 Officer, in response to a question from Councillor Hodgson-Jones, that there was sufficient in year funds could accommodate the deficit and that there was no requirement to use reserves or a transfer of reserves for this matter.

Following a question from Councillor J A Gray, the Section 151 Officer advised that the Medium Term Financial Strategy would be updated and presented to the Council again in February 2026 alongside the new budget for 2026/27.

Following which, the Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources, Councillor B A Mickelburgh presented the Parking Charges – Implementation of Increase (a copy of which is appended in the

Minute Book) to the Chamber.

Upon opening the debate to the floor, and following an observation from Councillor A Jennings in relation to the recommendations, the Council were advised that the first recommendation was to note. Following which Councillor Jennings moved the amended proposed by the Conservative Group and published within the agenda. In supporting the proposed amendment, Councillor Jennings addressed the Chamber and advised he felt that this was about accountability and the management of public funds. He observed that following an earlier issue with planning charges, it had been agreed that further variations would be considered by a wider group of Councillors to include shadow portfolio holders to ensure transparency and cross party confidence. He noted that this process had not been applied in this case. He expressed further concern that that report was a significant budget variation which had not been properly debated nor did he feel that a sufficient agreement for how to address the resulting budget gap had been reached. He advised that the proposed amendment asked for a full and transparent cost analysis of the decision, including how the shortfall would be funded and be brought through the Council's scrutiny function, it was further noted that the December meeting of Scrutiny had been cancelled due to lack of business and argued that this report could have been properly scrutinised at that time.

Councillor Ferguson addressed the Chamber and noted that a proposed amendment to reverse a Cabinet decision to not increase car parking charges would be very brave in the run up to a local election.

In response Councillor Martin addressed the Chamber and noted that car parking was an Executive Function but that Council could add some scrutiny to the debate.

Councillor B Mickelburgh disputed the earlier claims about the lack of transparency on the matter and noted that the budget itself had been fully scrutinised through the democratic cycle earlier in the year and that robust data had been provided to Cabinet by Officers to support the recommendations at hand. He clarified that data was currently being collated to inform the future Parking Strategy and that the Budget for 2026/27 would be considered during the February 2026 cycle of meetings.

Councillor Hunt addressed the Chamber and advised as a point of clarity to the Chamber that the December meetings of both Overview and Scrutiny Panels had been cancelled in agreement with the Chairs following an unprecedented quantity of additional work and meetings in relation to LGR during November. He noted that there would be additional Overview and Scrutiny meetings incorporated into the diary in January 2026 to maintain the formal levels of scrutiny.

Councillor Wakeford addressed the Chamber and observed that the earlier comments from the Section 151 Officer did not contradict the proposed recommendations of the Executive Councillor and that he would be in support of those recommendations.

Councillor I Taylor enquired whether it would be possible for the

report to be seen retrospectively by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Following an enquiry from Councillor Davenport-Ray in relation to the proposed amendment, the Chief Executive advised that should the proposed amendment proceed, the Council would operationally need to reprioritise existing workloads to meet Committee deadlines and that due to the ongoing collection of data to inform the Parking Strategy it would not meet the previously mentioned January 2026 deadline.

Councillor Hodgson-Jones addressed the Chamber and clarified that he felt there was a lack of committed timescales in relation to the proposed recommendation and that the proposed amendment was seeking to bring back discipline over process. He expressed his view that there seemed to be a lack of scrutiny due to a disconnect between the executive and scrutiny functions and not through the Panels themselves.

Councillor M Hassall commented that whilst he was a firm believer in the scrutiny process, he felt that the proposed amendment had bundled many factors together and therefore he could not support it.

Councillor B S Chapman reflected on previous car parking charge increases over the years and particularly noted how they had previously affected the footfall for local businesses. He further noted that rebate schemes in conjunction with local supermarkets had been ongoing over time and that they also be reviewed to ensure a fair deal for all. Councillor Chapman expressed further concern over the deadlines in relation to the forthcoming Parking Strategy, having been noted during the discussion as unrealistic, and expressed his desire that this be dealt with fully and also observed that it may be prudent to work in collaboration with the CPCA who had announced their intention to look at local car parking.

Councillor Gray continued the debate by clarifying he felt that the Chamber were in agreement that there should not be increases to car parking charges in the district. He expressed dismay that the report had not been through the formal scrutiny process and did not feel that this had been sufficiently addressed during the meeting, further observing that comment had been made to earlier discuss the item in September, however it had not been brought forward until December. Furthermore he enquired about a realistic delivery date for the Parking Strategy, noting that the January 2026 date had been declared unrealistic during the meeting.

Councillor Jennings advised a point of order to withdraw the sentence "and that the strategy be published no later than 28th January 2026." from the proposed amendment in light of the conversations during the debate. Having been duly proposed and seconded this proposed variation to the amendment and upon being put to the vote, the proposed variation was agreed by the Council.

Councillor Conboy clarified to the Chamber that the report had come through at this time as it was prudent to do so and was not in order to actively avoid scrutiny. In response to a request from Councillor Conboy, the Monitoring Officer addressed the Chamber to confirm

that the matter of setting charges for off-street parking was an executive function and was brought to Cabinet at an appropriate time as advised by Officers.

Councillor Martin added that another option open to members to ensure full scrutiny would be to call in the decision however he was mindful that the resulting follow up would fall in between Christmas and New Year however by supporting the proposed amendment, would ensure that the report be seen by the relevant Scrutiny Panel in January 2026. Further to this the Deputy Monitoring Officer clarified the call in procedure to the Council and that this would apply to decisions made by the Executive rather than the Council.

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

Following which, and it having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED

that the 20p increase as set out in the MTFS should not be implemented and;

that authority be delegated to the Corporate Director (Finance and Resources) and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Finance & Resources to make necessary changes to the Councils finances, including movements from Reserves, to ensure that a balanced MTFS position for 25/26 is maintained.

56. REORGANISATION OF COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE ORDER - GLATTON AND CONINGTON

Councillor M J Burke, Chair of the Corporate Governance Committee presented the Reorganisation of Community Governance Order – Glatton and Conington (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to the Council and noted that the report had been endorsed by the Corporate Governance Committee at their meeting on 9th July 2025.

Councillor Hodgson-Jones addressed the Chamber and advised that Glatton Parish Council had put forward the proposal as they wished to initiate a Neighbourhood Plan process and wanted their boundaries clarifying in advance of this.

Whereupon, having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED

that the drafting of a Reorganisation of Community Governance Order to be made in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 for the amendment of the parish boundaries between the parishes of Glatton and Conington be approved.

57. CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION - COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES AND SUBSTITUTES POLICY

Councillor M J Burke, Chair of the Corporate Governance Committee presented the Changes to the Constitution – Council Procedure Rules and Substitutes Policy (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to the Council and noted that the report had been endorsed by the Corporate Governance Committee at their meeting on 26th November 2025.

Councillor Hodgson-Jones addressed the Chamber and welcomed the report which he felt was part of the further work to be undertaken on the Council's constitution.

It was clarified to the Council, following a query from Councillor Hunt that the Policy excluded the ability to act as a substitute on the Cabinet.

Following which, and it having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED

that the revised Council Procedure Rules and the Substitutes Policy for insertion into the Council's Constitution be approved.

58. TREASURY MANAGEMENT 6 MONTH PERFORMANCE REVIEW

The Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources, Councillor B A Mickelburgh presented the Treasury Management 6 Month Performance Review (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to the Chamber.

Councillor Mickelburgh highlighted key market Treasury Management issues through the first half of the year as noted within the report. And in summarising the report, it was noted that it demonstrated the Council's approach to Treasury Management in the first six months of the current financial year was prudent.

Following which it was

RESOLVED

that the Council note the contents of the report.

59. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY UPDATE

In conjunction with the decision summaries of the recent meetings of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, copies of the decision summaries are appended in the Minute Book.

Councillor Hunt noted the impact Councillor Wakeford had made on lobbying the CPCA in relation to the under 25 Tiger Bus Pass scheme and noted that an extraordinary meeting of the CPCA would be held to discuss extending the scheme through to April 2027. In response, Councillor Wakeford noted that the benefits of the scheme to the

younger residents of the district should be considered when making a decision in relation to the longevity of the scheme and would look forward to seeing the outcome of the aforementioned extraordinary meeting.

In response to a question from Councillor C M Gleadow, Councillor Conboy expressed sympathy and understanding for her concerns in relation to the A141 project, however she had been assured by CPCA colleagues that work was ongoing and a further update would be provided in early 2026 on how best to progress.

Following a question from Councillor D J Shaw, Councillor Conboy assured that colleagues who represented the Council to the CPCA were engaging in communication supporting the development of infrastructure improvements in Huntingdonshire whilst noting that this was imperative to the growth and development of the district.

In response to a question from Councillor Davenport-Ray, Councillor Conboy assured that communication was ongoing in relation to the East West Rail proposed routes and stations and its related benefits for the district and its residents.

60. OUTCOMES FROM COMMITTEES AND PANELS

A copy of the list of meetings held since the last meeting of the Council held on 15th October 2025 is appended in the Minute Book and Members were advised that any issues or questions could be raised in relation to these meetings. There were no questions raised.

61. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY JOINT GROUP

Councillor Jennings advised that he was not a member of the St Neots Town Council but did attend in his capacity as a ward member. That being noted, the Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Joint Group held on 12th November 2025 were noted.

62. VARIATIONS TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

There were no changes to report.

Chair

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