

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COUNCIL held in CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER / STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 25 February 2026.

PRESENT: Councillor D B Dew – Chair.

Councillors T Alban, B S Banks, M L Beuttell, A Blackwell, M J Burke, E R Butler, S Bywater, J R Catmur, S Cawley, B S Chapman, J Clarke, S J Conboy, S J Corney, A E Costello, S J Criswell, L Davenport-Ray, S W Ferguson, I D Gardener, 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, S Mokbul, J Neish, Dr M Pickering, B M Pitt, T D Sanderson, D J Shaw, R A Slade, I P Taylor, D Terry, C H Tevlin, S Wakeford and N Wells.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors R J Brereton and S L Taylor.

65. THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

The Reverend Leo Orobor, of All Saints Church in Huntingdon, opened the meeting with a thought for the day

66. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Council held on the 17th December 2025 and 14th January 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

67. MEMBERS INTERESTS'

No declarations were received.

68. CHAIR'S 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).

Having noted that it was the last full Council meeting prior to the District Council elections on 7th May 2026, the Chair invited the Executive Leader, Councillor Conboy to address the Chamber.

The Executive Leader, Councillor S J Conboy, paid tribute to Councillor D Dew who was not re-standing for election and particularly reflected on his previous time in Cabinet, his role as Chair of Development Management Committee and more recently as Chair of the Council. Following which, Councillor Conboy reflected on the past four years of the joint administration and the collaborative work undertaken by the chamber over that time.

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor R Martin, addressed the Chamber also paying tribute to Councillor Dew and his role as ward councillor over the past 22 years. Tribute was also paid to Councillor S Criswell, who was also not standing for election, reflecting particularly on his previous time in Cabinet, his role as Chair of Overview and Scrutiny and also as Licensing Chair. A moments silence was held in memory of former Councillor Graham Welton who had passed away during the term of this administration.

The Deputy Leader and Executive Councillor for Planning, Councillor T D Sanderson, addressed the floor, paying tribute to Councillor Dew and reflecting upon his personal memories during their shared time as District Councillors. Sentiments which were echoed by Councillor S Wakeford, the Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing.

69. PETITION

The Chair invited Parish Councillors Robert Guinea, Paul Boothman and Ruth Southworth to present a petition submitted on behalf of 843 signatures regarding concerns around the implications of the recent Local Plan Preferred Options consultation.

The petition statement was as follows:

“Pause the Huntingdonshire District Council Local Plan

We are deeply concerned about the implications of the current Local Plan for Huntingdonshire, driven by a pressing need to protect our quality of life. If the plan proceeds without necessary amendments, our beloved community faces the risk of merging towns and villages into a concentrated, doughnut shaped sprawling conurbation. This not only threatens the character of Huntingdonshire but also places immense pressure on our infrastructure.

Potential Consequences of the Current Plan:

- ❖ Essential services, including roads, water, power, and sewage systems, are at risk of becoming overstretched—impacting daily life.
- ❖ Water resources could suffer, with potential rationing of less than 90 litres per day per person. Furthermore, river pollution could escalate if housing developments outpace necessary infrastructure improvements.
- ❖ The loss of prime farmland and devastating damage to Great Ouse Valley's scenic landscapes.
- ❖ Unsustainable commuting patterns to Cambridge and Bedfordshire will lead to increased congestion and pollution.
- ❖ A perception that the decision-making process lacks

transparency and breadth of public engagement.

Given these serious concerns, we the undersigned petition Huntingdonshire District Council to:

Pause the Local Plan (Update 2046) until the boundaries of the new Unitary Authority are precisely defined and understood, ensuring decisions are made with complete context. Other Councils have already done this.

Challenge the Inflated Housing Target, taking inspiration from successful challenges undertaken by other councils. Reducing expected targets could limit over-development pressure on the community.

Rely on Real Evidence, Not Assumptions: Conduct comprehensive infrastructure studies that examine the true capabilities and limit of current systems. Secure necessary funding prior to committing to large scale developments.

Our community's future depends on careful, participatory, and evidence-based planning rather than rushed approvals. Let us safeguard Huntingdonshire's unique character, wellbeing, and resources for current and future generations. Help us champion a local plan that reflects our shared values and needs."

The Parish Councillors addressed the Chamber expressing their opinion that the six week public consultation period pre Christmas was too short. They noted that they were not opposed to the Plan in principle and noted it's many merits for Huntingdonshire and her residents, however they also felt that there were significant weaknesses in the Plan which they noted. They expressed concern that what they felt to be unresolved issues would resurface at the examination stage, potentially leading the Planning Inspector to find the Plan unsound. They stated that they were asking for the process to be paused now to avoid greater delays in the future by addressing the gaps in evidence within the Plan to truly reflect the best interests of Huntingdonshire.

In addressing the chamber, Councillor D Keane thanked those involved with the petition for their hard work and engagement with the community. The Councillor noted the importance of scrutiny in the Plan and noted that were it not to be adopted prior to the implementation of Local Government Review (LGR) it may be affected and amended by the resulting Unitary Authority creating a long-term risk for the residents and businesses of Huntingdonshire. He ended by questioning the petitioners on their expectations if the Plan were to be paused. In response, the petitioners advised that in their opinion the pause could be used to complete the vital infrastructure and viability work to bring a full evidence base in support of the Plan. They highlighted concerns of the Planning Inspector at the examination of the previous Local Plan in 2018 due to the proximity of two proposed sites. They expressed further concern that the proposed new sites in the new Plan did not utilise the recently improved infrastructure of the improved A14, A1307 or A1M. They further stated that the public consultation for the Local Plan following a public consultation for the 141 had created confusion for the general

public and as such a robust public consultation for the Local Plan had not been undertaken.

Councillor N J Hunt drew attention to Huntingdon being in tilted balance following changes to local housing targets by the Government, in part due to the context of the wider housing crisis, and noted that this tilted balance enabled speculative development without the supporting infrastructure, and that opposing the Local Plan would keep the district in tilted balance for longer. He questioned the petitioners on how they felt Huntingdon should deal with this issue should the Plan be paused and what harm they felt this would bring to the District. The petitioners responded that in their opinion not pausing the Plan would potentially prolong the tilted balance were the Inspector to find the Plan unsound.

It was questioned, by Councillor L Davenport-Ray, whether all of the 843 signatories lived or worked in Huntingdonshire, to which the petitioners responded that they were confident the majority did. They also stated that their influence had reached further than just the signatories, having presented to 11 town and parish councils, campaigned at St Ives Farmers Market and having handed out thousands of leaflets on the matter.

The Executive Councillor for Planning, Councillor T D Sanderson, formally received the petition and thanked the petitioners for their hard work in creating and gaining support for the petition. Councillor Sanderson further acknowledged that the Council had been in tilted balance since December 2024 due to the Government's new and increased housing targets and that the Council no longer had a 5 year supply of housing land which made it difficult for the Council to reject planning applications. It was the Executive Councillors view that should the Plan be paused this situation would be prolonged and may result in decisions which some parish councils may find disagreeable. He further noted the hard work and dedication from officers and elected members in progressing the Local Plan to this point since 2023 and noted that several public consultations had been carried out over that time encompassing a number of themes. It was also stated that the Plan must be submitted by the Governments deadline of 31st December 2026.

In conclusion, Councillor Sanderson advised that a formal response would be given to the petitioners outside of the meeting and recognised how that fit in line with LGR. He noted that the Council had voted for Option E, a standalone Huntingdonshire, and that the Council had a Plan to manage and support growth within Huntingdonshire. Furthermore, he noted that all documents relating to the development of the Local Plan could be seen on the Councils website.

70. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

No formal public questions were submitted for consideration at the meeting of the Council.

71. FINAL 2026/27 BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2027/28 TO 2029/30) INCLUDING CAPITAL PROGRAMME

In conjunction with a report by the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources and a PowerPoint presentation (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book), Councillor B A Mickelburgh, Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources presented to Members the 2026/27 Budget, the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2027/28 to 2030/31, the Fees and Charges Schedule for 2026/27, the Treasury Management Strategy, the Capital Strategy, the Investment Strategy, the Annual Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement for 2026/27 and other associated matters for the Council's consideration and approval.

In accordance with Section 30 (2) of the Local Finance Act 1992, the Council also considered proposals for levels of Council Tax in 2026/27 for various parts of Huntingdonshire District.

By way of introduction, the Executive Councillor introduced the report, confirmed that the Section 151 Officer was satisfied with the robustness of the budget and the adequacy of the reserves and reflected upon the previous four years of the administration.

Councillor A R Jennings proposed that the amendment as published alongside the agenda and presented to members (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), be moved and reserved his right to speak. This amendment, was then presented to the Chamber, following which it was seconded by Councillor R Martin.

The ensuing debate related to the proposed amendment, during which, Councillor B S Chapman observed that the proposed amendment included a free first hour of car parking but reflected that the Council had previously implemented a parking strategy which encouraged a longer dwell time in order to benefit High Streets and local businesses and that due to the location of many town centre carparks the impacts of this carparking amend would be minimal.

Councillor B Mickelburgh observed that the proposed amendment had some attractive sounding propositions but would not be sustainable, particularly in the uncertain future of LGR. He noted in particular that the garden bin waste subscription service was paying for itself and that any freezes to the Council Tax would have a lasting impact on the MTFS to the detriment of public services.

The Executive Councillor for Climate, Transformation and Workforce, Councillor L Davenport-Ray, agreed with the comments made by Councillor Mickelburgh and stated that she was not prepared to leave a legacy of underfunded budget assumptions which would create an obvious and predictable deficit in year one. She further commented that the proposed amendments effects on staff pay threatened the morale of Council officers and were insensitive particularly in the current period of uncertainty of the shadow of LGR.

Councillor P J Hodgson-Jones spoke in support of the amendment and focused his debate on the proposed changes to carparking, noting that they would be of benefit to the whole district and sought to

increase footfall for town centre businesses, which in turn would increase the desirability of those locations and result in an increased income from related Business Rates. He concluded by summarising that the amendment would seek to lower costs to residents, thereby improving the lives of residents.

In addressing the chamber, Councillor T Alban highlighted that the amendment also sought to increase funding for planning enforcement across the district which he felt would be of benefit to the district. A sentiment which was echoed by Councillor S Cawley who observed that planning enforcement rules were unviable if there was no mechanism to enforce them. He continued that whilst the proposed amendment did affect the MTFS, however this amount would be offset by opportunities identified within the proposal and that the net effect would strengthen future reserves. He noted the concerns of the Section 151 Officer but felt that it was the role of the chamber to weigh that advice against the mandate and priorities of the residents.

Councillor Sanderson advised that the planning enforcement service had greatly improved over the current administration having addressed a considerable backlog post COVID. He went on to highlight that Sawtry swimming pool was being reopened, having closed during the previous administration, and the future projects of the Huntingdon Health Hub.

It was corrected, by Councillor S Bywater, that an alternative operator had taken over Sawtry swimming pool under the previous administration and that they had been unable to reopen following COVID. He continued by noting the significant impact on residents due to increases to Council Tax, which were felt all the more due to the cost of living crisis.

Councillor Hunt felt that the hard working staff of the Council deserved to be recognised for their dedication and hard work with a fair pay. He noted that the proposed freeze on Council Tax was unachievable and questioned, should the Conservatives be part of the future administration, how long such a freeze would remain.

The achievements of the current administration were noted by Councillor M A Hassall, in particular the turnaround to profit making for One Leisure. He further noted that the CPCA Mayor had plans to implement free car parking across the district so queried why there was any need to accommodate it within the proposals. He also noted that it would be prudent to follow the advice of the Section 151 Officer so would therefore not be supporting the amendment.

The Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance, Councillor S W Ferguson, noted that the current administration had implemented changes to Council Tax Support to the benefit of the poorest members of the district and was proud of the progress made in supporting vulnerable residents. A sentiment which was echoed by Councillor S Wakeford, who reflected that, in his view, the opposition had had very different views on increases to Council Tax and was mindful that many of the points in the proposed amendment was unsubstantiated and rather wearing.

In addressing the chamber, Councillor J A Gray clarified the Council

Tax amends in the proposed amendment but noted that the introduction of a green bin waste subscription fee was essentially an increase to payments made to the Council by residents, in addition to Council Tax Bills. He noted the comments of the Section 151 Officer but highlighted that this did not mean that the amendment was not reasonable, more that the proposed Budget was preferable.

In summarising the debate, Councillor Martin, made some corrections to inaccuracies during the debate, clarifying that there were no suggested changes to staffing so there would not be additional costs incurred however he observed that the proposed budget included the addition of a Community Safety Officer which would be an increased cost. He further noted that the proposed pay increase within the amendment would be higher than 4 of the previous 5 pay increases which he felt to be prudent given the current rate of inflation. He further noted that whilst the issue of outstanding enforcement cases had been addressed, a good deal of those cases had been addressed during the previous administration but due to a system issue had not been correctly recorded as closed. He echoed Councillor Gray's comments that the opinion of the Section 151 Officer should be respected but did not have to be adhered to, as the Council had previously demonstrated in December 2025, he felt that today's decision should be a political decision based upon the best interests of residents and the balance of information, including the opinion of the Section 151 Officer.

Following debate the amendment in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 the following Members voted for, against or abstained from the Motion – To provide one hour free parking in all council short term car parks, to reduce the garden waste subscription, to provide additional funding for planning enforcement and handyman services, whilst freezing council tax and increasing the future financial stability reserve over the course of the MTF5.

For the Motion (18) – *Councillors Alban, Beuttell, Butler, Bywater, Cawley, Clarke, Corney, Costello, Criswell, Gardener, Gray, Gulson, Hodgson-Jones, Jennings, Keane, Lowe, Martin, Neish*

Against the Motion (32) – *Councillors Banks, Blackwell, Burke, Catmur, Chapman, Conboy, Davenport-Ray, Dew, Ferguson, Gleadow, Harvey, Hassall, Howell, Hunt, Jordan, Kadewere M, Kadewere P, Kerr, McAdam, Mickelburgh B, Mickelburgh D, Mokbul, Pickering, Pitt, Sanderson, Shaw, Slade, Taylor I, Terry, Tevlin, Wakeford, Wells*

Abstentions (0) – *None*

Following the conclusion of the recorded vote, the amendment was declared to be LOST.

In returning to the debate and discussion to the substantive motion, the Leader of the Opposition addressed the Council again. In doing so, Councillor Martin reflected that residents put a huge amount of trust in their Councillors when making decisions on the budget. He commented that the budget was not simply a balancing of accounts but a statement of intent and that the money discussed in the report

represented the hard earned money of the district's residents and businesses. He reflected on the increase in expenditure over the past six years and queried whether the same increase in value for residents was being returned. In conclusion he stated that the proposed budget was lacking ambition with no roadmap to the future of a leaner more agile authority.

Councillor Alban reflected upon his time as a District Councillor and the budgets of the previous Conservative administrations, the prudence of which had allowed for the good things which the Council were able to implement now.

In addressing the chamber, Councillor Hunt stated that he was proud to support the proposed budget, he reflected on the term of the administration and the improvements which had been made to the Council's finances over that period and was proud of the difference which the administration had been able to make to those living and working within the district.

The Executive Councillor for Governance and Democratic Services, Councillor J E Harvey, also reflected upon the positive improvements made by the administration over its four years and the work undertaken to improve the Council's internal audit system and scrutiny processes that has since taken place. She concluded that by supporting the proposed budget would allow for further robustness and improvements by Officers in governance and democratic processes.

Councillor S A Howell, the Executive Councillor for Leisure and Health, reflected on the improvements made by the Leisure service over the previous four years and that by supporting the proposed budget would allow for further growth and improvements in that area.

Councillor I P Taylor was in support of the proposed budget in particular noting that there was no increase to carparking charges and that the proposals would allow for further improvement works to pathways in parks.

The Executive Councillor for Parks and Countryside, Waste and Street Scene, Councillor J E Kerr reflected on the positive improvements within the Countryside and Waste services and how the proposed budget would support sustainability in these areas.

Councillor Gray stated, that in his opinion, there were still questions to be addressed in relation to the internal audit of the accounts and that he did not feel the proposed budget highlighted any additional projects to justify the additional income therefore he would be unable to support it.

Councillor Ferguson reflected on the business as usual work undertaken by council Officers on a daily basis and the real positive impact that this made to the lives of residents, in particular the reintroduction of full Council Tax Support.

Councillor Hodgson-Jones observed that more money did not necessarily mean better quality services, but that that would come with good policies and planning. He further questioned why more

money was being put into reserves without an obvious purpose as well as questioning the value for money which would be provided in the future.

In addressing the chamber, Councillor Sanderson reflected upon the improvements and achievements made within the planning service during the tenure of the current joint administration in particular the distribution of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding.

Councillor B Pitt reflected upon his personal experiences as a District Councillor and the notable achievements of the current joint administration, concluding that he was in support of the proposed budget.

Councillor Wakeford addressed the Chamber noting that with the proposed budget, the future administration would be able to tackle employment and housing within the district and would reinforce the economic development work to support residents and local businesses.

Councillor Jennings spoke to the chamber and noted that he was somewhat disappointed that Councillors had not taken full advantage of opportunities to scrutinise the proposed budget through the Council's Scrutiny process. He further noted that he could not support the proposed budget most notably due to the increase in costs without any obvious project or spend associated to it particularly in light of the forthcoming LGR.

The Executive Leader then addressed the chamber, reflecting upon budgets from the previous administration and also upon the budgets from the current administration which had addressed deficits from previous years. She thanked the Section 151 Officer and her predecessors for their support over the tenure of the current administration and was pleased to support and present a balanced budget to the Council for its approval.

Finally, in drawing the debate to a close, the Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources took the opportunity to respond to several points which had been made earlier in the debate concerning the reasonableness of the Council Tax increase and the value for money that the proposed budget would provide.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 the following Members voted for, against or abstained from the Motion as contained within the report now submitted -

For the Motion (32) – *Councillors Banks, Blackwell, Burke, Catmur, Chapman, Conboy, Davenport-Ray, Dew, Ferguson, Gleadow, Harvey, Hassall, Howell, Hunt, Jordan, Kadewere M, Kadewere P, Kerr, McAdam, Mickelburgh B, Mickelburgh D, Mokbul, Pickering, Pitt, Sanderson, Shaw, Slade, Taylor I, Terry, Tevlin, Wakeford, Wells*

Against the Motion (18) – *Alban, Beuttell, Butler, Bywater, Cawley, Clarke, Corney, Costello, Criswell, Gardener, Gray, Gulson, Hodgson-Jones, Jennings, Keane, Lowe, Martin, Neish*

Abstentions (0) - *None*

It having, been previously moved and seconded, and upon having being put to a recorded vote, it was

RESOLVED

that the overall budget 2026/27 as set out within the report be approved,

that the 2026/27 – 2029/30 Capital Programme as set out in Appendix 2b be approved,

that the Band D Council Tax rate for Huntingdonshire be set at £170.86 representing a £5 (3.01%) increase to the current charge,

that the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2027/28 – 2029/30, Capital Strategy, Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy be approved,

that the Council Tax Resolution as set out in Appendix B be approved,

that the statement of the Section 151 Officer on the robustness of the budget and the adequacy of the Council's reserves as set out in Appendix 9 be endorsed,

that the fees and charges 2026/27 as set out in Annexe B1 and B2 be noted; and

that the proposals for the setting of future parking charges and proposals within the main body of the report now submitted be noted.

72. ADJOURNMENT

At 10pm, it was

RESOLVED

that the meeting stand adjourned.

Upon resumption at 10.16pm

(At 10pm Councillor B Chapman left the meeting and did not return)

73. PAY POLICY STATEMENT

In compliance with the requirements of Sections 38-43 of the Localism Act 2011, Councillor L Daveport-Ray, the Executive Councillor for Climate, Transformation and Workforce, presented a report by the Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) in connection with the District Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2026/27.

The Statement, which is required to be approved by Council by 31st

March 2026 and produced annually, details the Council's policies relating to Officer remuneration.

Having noted that the Statement had been endorsed by the Employment Committee at their meeting on the 11th February 2026, it, was moved by Councillor Davenport-Ray, duly seconded by Councillor Conboy and

RESOLVED

that the Pay Policy Statement for 2026/27 be approved.

74. CORPORATE PLAN REFRESH 2026

In conjunction with a report by the Insights Co-ordinator (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), Councillor S J Conboy, the Executive Leader, presented to Members the Corporate Plan Refresh 2026 report for the Council's consideration and approval.

Councillor Conboy noted the forthcoming District Council Elections and the impending LGR and stated that the Corporate Plan Refresh would provide a period of stability and continuity for the following administration and residents alike.

Councillor Martin addressed the chamber and stated that the priorities in the business case did not align with those of the Conservatives should they be in the administration following the election, therefore they would not be supporting the recommendations.

Having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED

that the refreshed Corporate Plan (as detailed at Appendix A) be approved; and

that the Key Performance Indicator Changes (as detailed at Appendix D) be approved.

75. LEAD INDEPENDENT PERSON

In conjunction with a report by the Elections and Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), Councillor M J Burke, Chair of the Corporate Governance Committee, presented to Members the Appointment of Lead Independent Person report for the Council's consideration and approval.

Councillor Hodgson-Jones, in addressing the chamber, noted that there remained a vacancy for the Deputy Independent Person and that having discussed the matter at the Corporate Governance Committee meeting, he was minded to strongly recommend that the recruitment process to fulfil this vacancy be undertaken.

Having noted that the report had been endorsed by the Corporate Governance Committee at their meeting on the 28th January 2026, and having been duly proposed and seconded, it was

RESOLVED

that for the purposes of Section of 28 of the Localism Act 2011, the re-appointment of Gillian Holmes to the post of Lead Independent Person for a further two-year period to 1st April 2028 and without the need for further ratification in each year by the Council at its Annual Meeting be approved.

76. QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

Councillor Hunt asked that with the Representation of the People Bill being introduced allowing 16 and 17 year olds to vote, what work has the Council done to prepare for these changes and engage with young people who are voting for the first time? In thanking Councillor Hunt for his question, the Executive Councillor for Governance and Democratic Services, Councillor Harvey, noted that the Chief Executive in her role as Returning Officer for the Council was very enthusiastic about engaging young people in the democratic process. It was noted that the Council's elections team already undertook work with educational establishments to encourage young people to engage in the voting process and that work in this area would be increased to strengthen links with education providers in the run up to the introduction of the policy as well as taking guidance from the Electoral Commission. This will be further strengthened with a targeted awareness campaign from the Council's Communications Team to ensure a smooth implementation process. Councillor Hunt thanked the Councillor for her support and further passed on his thanks and respect to the Democratic Services Manager and her team for the work which they undertake whilst ensuring a smooth democratic process for Councillors.

Following a question from Councillor I Taylor in relation to whether the Empty Homes Strategy included residential properties above or linked to commercial businesses, with the example of residential flats above a commercial unit being given, and the request for an update on the Old Falcon property in St Neots, the Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing, Councillor Wakeford, confirmed that residential properties within commercial units were covered by the Empty Homes Strategy. In relation to the Old Falcon, the Executive Councillor further confirmed that planning permission had now been granted and that the Council were working collaboratively with the owner with a view to entering a construction phase.

Councillor S Cawley advised that he, along with representatives from Ellington Parish Council, had met with the Head of Planning to discuss enforcement issues and potential applications related to a local business in the area but that they were yet to receive answers following this. The Executive Councillor for Planning noted this and resolved to follow up with the Councillor following the meeting.

Whilst appreciating that highways were a responsibility of the County Council, Councillor P Kadewere asked whether the Executive Councillor Economy, Regeneration and Housing recognised an opportunity, in light of the impending Local Government Reorganisation, for the two Councils to work collaboratively in order to

improve the state of the roads within Huntingdonshire, furthermore would the Council commit to engaging with colleagues to ensure that lessons learnt from the transition period inform planning for the incoming unitary authority so that residents can benefit from a lasting improvement. Councillor Wakeford agreed that the opportunity to engage with County colleagues on such an issue would be a benefit of the impending LGR and that he would encourage the next administration to avail themselves of the opportunity. He further noted the concerns of residents relating to the state of the districts roads and encouraged the new administration to take advantages of collaborative working for the benefit of the district.

An increase of fly tipping in the north of the district, was noted by Councillor Alban who further requested social media communication from the Council to advise residents and parish councils on the best way to official report such instances and also to note that regardless of their best intentions residents should not clear such issues and instead leave it to Council professionals to allow it to be properly investigated and cleared. In response, Councillor Ferguson, the Executive Councillor for Resident Services and Corporate Performance, acknowledged the issue raised and noted that there may have previously been a disconnect between teams wishing to investigate and teams wishing to clear the matter. He took on board the comments relating to clarifying the process and undertook to take this forward with the Communications Manager.

Having received a question from Councillor C Lowe requesting an update on the A14 tree planting project, the Executive Councillor for Climate, Transformation and the Workplace, Councillor Davenport-Ray advised that an update would be sought and shared with the Councillor following the meeting.

Councillor Neish raised the case of Holywell cum Needingworth Primary School who were looking to replace the previous caretakers bungalow which had already been demolished. It was noted that weeds had grown on the site whilst the planning process had been followed and that because of this there was now a requirement to balance Biodiversity Net Gain due to the planned removal of the weeds which may cost the school £4000. Councillor Neish asked if this was appropriate in the case of an educational Facility as due to the implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain, they now had to produce a 30-year plan to increase their biodiversity. Councillor Neish further noted that he was aware that the local MP had also visited the school and was awaiting a similar response. The Executive Councillor for Planning, Councillor Sanderson, advised that he would seek the answer and reply.

Councillor Pitt advised that in the latest round of CIL applications, the St Neots Youth Centre proposal had come directly from young residents of St Neots and welcomed Councillors to speak to the Town Council to further understand this request. The Executive Councillor for Planning, Councillor Sanderson, noted that he would not wish to predetermine any future Cabinet decisions but would welcome the opportunity to have such discussions at an appropriate time in the future.

Councillor Gray advised that a resident within his ward had received a Liberal Democrat leaflet campaigning that it was time for change, however he noted that both Cambridgeshire County Council and by means of the joint administration the District Council were being run by Liberal Democrats, therefore questioned what change was being alluded to. In response, the Executive Leader Councillor Conboy responded that she would not delve into the political angle but did note that the previous administration had campaigned to residents to demand better at the previous administration.

77. REPRESENTATION OF POLITICAL GROUPS ON DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE AND PANELS

By means of a report by the Elections and Democratic Services Manager (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book) the Representation of Political Groups on District Council Committee and Panels was presented to the Chamber.

Following an enquiry from Councillor Martin, it was confirmed that each of the three recommendations would be considered separately. Councillor Hodgson- Jones then queried the need for the report given the point in the municipal cycle following which the Chamber were advised that there was a legal requirement to consider and vote on the report during the meeting.

Councillor Wakeford acknowledged the legal requirement to consider the report however agreed with the sentiment of Councillor Hodgson-Jones in maintaining the status quo for the final portion of the municipal calendar however he indicated that he would not support option B.

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

RESOLVED

that the allocation of seats on the District Council Committees and Panels to political groups be determined in accordance with the distribution illustrated at Appendix A; and

that the requirements for appointments to advisory/sub groups in paragraph 5.3 be noted.

78. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY UPDATE

In conjunction with the decision summaries of the recent meetings of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA), copies of the decision summaries are appended in the Minute Book, questions on which were invited.

Following a question from Councillor Davenport-Ray, the Council heard that following CPCA funding which was allocated in 2024, training opportunities for young people had been identified in the St Neots area, mainly linked to the increase in construction employment in the area, and that relevant education opportunities were coming online across the district to address that issue.

79. OUTCOMES FROM COMMITTEES AND PANELS

A copy of the list of meetings held since the last meeting of the Council held on 17th December 2025 is appended in the Minute Book and Members were advised that any issues or questions could be raised in relation to these meetings.

Following a question from Councillor Martin, Councillor Gleadow as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny (Performance and Growth) Panel advised that the use of Special Urgency Proceedings relating to the Parking Charges – Implementation of Increase Report which was seen by Cabinet and Council in December 2025 had initially been communicated to her via email which had then been followed by a telephone conversation.

80. VARIATIONS TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES

On the recommendation of Councillor Conboy, having consulted with group leaders, it was

RESOLVED

that Councillors Keane and Davenport-Ray be appointed to the membership of the Development Management Committee in place of Councillors Brereton and Pitt.

that Councillor Pitt be appointed to the membership of Licensing Committee in place of Councillor Tevlin.

that Councillor Tevlin be appointed to the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny (Environment, Communities and Partnerships) Committee in place of Councillor Hassall.

that Councillor Hassall be appointed to the membership of the Employment Committee in place of Councillor P Kadewere.

that Councillor P Kadewere be appointed to the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny (Performance and Growth) in place of Councillor McAdam.

The meeting ended at 11pm.

Chair

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