

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, 7 December 2005.

PRESENT: Councillor J A P Eddy – Chairman.

Councillors M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, I C Bates, J T Bell, Mrs B E Boddington, P L E Bucknell, Mrs J Chandler, K J Churchill, W T Clough, Mrs D E Collins, S J Criswell, J W Davies, D B Dew, P J Downes, J J Dutton, J E Garner, 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, M F Newman, R Powell, Mrs D C Reynolds, K Reynolds, T V Rogers, J M Sadler, T D Sanderson, L M Simpson, A B Stenner, P A Swales, J Taylor, G S E Thorpe, R G Tuplin, Mrs S J Vanbergen, J S Watt and Ms M Wheeler.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors J D Ablewhite, E R Butler, J D Fell, D A Giles, Mrs C A Godley, I R Muir, C J Stephens and I P Taylor.

43. PRAYER

The Right Reverend Dr J Inge, Bishop of Huntingdon opened the meeting with prayer.

44. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Chairman's Reception

The Chairman thanked those Members who had supported his reception held at Hinchingsbrooke House on 25th November 2005.

(b) South Asian Earthquake Disaster

The Council noted that the Chairman had, on their behalf, donated £300 to a crisis appeal launched by the British Red Cross for those affected by the earthquake in northern Pakistan and India on 8th October 2005.

45. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 28th September 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

46. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillors I C Bates, Mrs B E Boddington, P J Downes, J J Dutton, J A P Eddy, C R Hyams and K Reynolds declared a personal interest in Minute No. 48 (a) (Item Nos. 63 and 81) and Minute No. 48(d) (Item No. 20) by virtue of their membership of Cambridgeshire County Council.

Councillor K Reynolds declared a personal interest in Minute No. 48 (a) (Item No. 63) by virtue of his membership of the District Council's Headquarters and Other Accommodation Members Advisory Group.

Councillor J A P Eddy declared a personal interest in Minute No.48 (d) (Item No. 17) by virtue of his membership of the Central Area Flood Defence Committee.

Councillors Mrs M Banerjee, Mrs B E Boddington, P L E Bucknell, W T Clough, D B Dew, J J Dutton, J A P Eddy, N J Guyatt, C R Hyams, P G Mitchell, R Powell, P A Swales, G S E Thorpe and R G Tuplin, as Members of the Development Control Panel, requested that it be recorded that their participation in debate and voting on Minute No. 48 (a) (Item No. 63) would be undertaken without prejudice to the consideration and/or determination of any relevant planning application subsequently by the Panel.

Councillor J M Sadler declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute No. 48 (a) (Item No.65) and Minute No. 48 (b) (Item No. 28) as a Member of and shareholder in Brampton Park Golf Club.

47. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: SECTION 84 - ST NEOTS, PRIORY PARK WARD

The Chief Executive reported the resignation of former Councillor N J Finnie with effect from 2nd December 2005 and that the vacancy in the Priory Park ward would be filled at a by election to be held in conjunction with the ordinary District Council elections on 4th May 2006.

In wishing former Councillor Finnie and his family well for the future, Members placed on record their gratitude for the contribution made by him to the work of the District Council.

48. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, COMMITTEE AND PANELS

(a) Cabinet

Councillor D P Holley, Leader and Chairman of the Cabinet presented the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 13th October and 3rd, 10th and 24th November 2005.

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In connection with Item No. 61, the Executive Councillor for Finance announced that the Council's Revenue Support Grant was likely to increase to £10.9m in 2006/07, an increase of 1.4m or 14.7% in comparison with the current year. He added that the figures would be incorporated,

together with other adjustments, in the budget and Medium Term Plan to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels, Cabinet and Council early in the new year. The Council were commended to read the Annex to Appendix A to the report to understand the approach that would be taken towards the review of the MTP.

On the same subject and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes regarding the predicted level of Government grant support in 2007/8, the Executive Councillor anticipated that the District Council would receive approximately £11.6m in that financial year.

Whereupon, on being put to the vote, the recommendation contained in Item No. 61 was declared to be CARRIED.

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Upon being put to the vote, the recommendation contained in Item No. 62 was declared to be CARRIED.

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In connection with Item No. 63, the Council agreed to defer consideration of the recommendations contained therein to the penultimate item of business at the meeting.

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In connection with Item No. 76 and for the purposes of clarification, the Executive Councillor for Environment and Transport, Councillor Mrs P J Longford, reported that the Director of Operational Services had been authorised to appoint persons to issue Fixed Penalty Notices under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 after consultation with the relevant Executive Councillor.

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In connection with Item No. 79 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, the Leader confirmed that no response had yet been received to the representations made by the Chief Executive to the Home Secretary for the retention of an existing single police force option in Cambridgeshire but that, in his view, Cambridgeshire Constabulary was unlikely to be retained as a single force.

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In connection with Item No. 82 and in response to a question by Councillor Mrs S A Menczer regarding the implications for the District of the Government's decision to introduce a free concessionary bus fare scheme for those over 60 years of age from April 2006, the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Councillor N J Guyatt, explained that some recipients would be worse off than previously given that concessionary travel would only be permitted within the

boundaries of a District after 9.30 am and that insufficient Government funding had been allocated to maintain the scheme permanently across the county without the need for additional funding which would be considered via a new MTP bid.

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In connection with Item No. 86 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, the Leader replied that it was his expectation that the cost of making permanent two temporary posts in the licensing section of the Central Services Directorate was likely to be met by the additional income that would be received from implementation of the Licensing Act 2003 and Gambling Act 2005.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, with the exception of Item No. 63 and subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 13th October and 3rd, 10th and 24th November 2005 be received and adopted.

(b) 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 11th October, 2nd and 8th November 2005 and of a joint meeting with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources) held on 22nd November 2005.

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In connection with Item No. 25 and in response to a question from Councillor T D Sanderson regarding the method by which the Panel would continue to monitor the use of funding negotiated under Section 106 Agreements, the Chairman explained that it was the Panel's intention to continue to monitor the use of Section 106 receipts on a quarterly basis and that he was confident that the new negotiation and monitoring processes which had been established would continue to improve.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Reports of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) held on 11th October, 2nd and 8th November 2005 and of a joint meeting with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel

(Service Delivery and Resources) held on 22nd November 2005 be received and adopted.

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(c) 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 4th October and 1st November 2005.

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In connection with Item No. 21 and in response to a question from Councillor M G Baker, the Chairman replied that the Panel would continue to monitor public awareness of the recycling scheme particularly should the service be extended to include the collection of glass. The Executive Councillor for Environment and Transport assured Members that the District Council had not used the services of Grosvenor Waste Management.

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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 4th October and 1st November 2005 be received and adopted.

(d) Development Control Panel

Councillor P G Mitchell presented the Report of the meetings of the Development Control Panel held on 17th October and 21st November 2005.

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In connection with Item No. 14 and in response to a question from Councillor R Powell on proposed development of the Grand Cinema site at Ramsey, the Chairman replied that he was not in a position to report any further progress on the matter.

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In connection with Item No. 15 and in response to a question from Councillor W T Clough regarding the draft Supplementary Planning Document on Wind Power, the Chairman explained that the document clearly indicated the locations where wind turbine developments would be acceptable and he assured the Council that every

application site would be considered as part of the normal planning process.

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In connection with Item No. 17 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, the Chairman undertook to confirm in writing to the questioner whether the guide for owners and developers on riparian responsibilities and developing near a water course would complement or replace existing guidance on this issue.

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In connection with Item No. 20 and in response to a question from Councillor A B Stenner regarding the effect on the village of Buckden of the proposals to create wetland and reed bed habitats on land north east and south west of Manor Farm, Diddington Road, Diddington, the Chairman replied that given the level of support for the application expressed by local representatives, the Panel had had no difficulty in recommending the application for approval to the County Council.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Development Control Panel held on 17th October and 21st November 2005 be received and adopted.

(e) Employment Panel

Councillor J W Davies presented the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 23rd November 2005.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 23rd November 2005 be received and adopted.

(f) Appointments Panel

Councillor L M Simpson presented the Report of the meeting of the Appointments Panel held on 10th November 2005.

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On behalf of the Council, the Chairman of the Panel

congratulated Mr M Sharp on his appointment as Director of Operational Services.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Appointments Panel held on 10th November 2005 be received and adopted.

(g) Licensing and Protection Panel

Councillor J M Sadler presented the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 20th October 2005.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 20th October 2005 be received and adopted.

(h) Licensing Committee

Councillor J M Sadler presented the Report of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 20th October 2005.

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In connection with Item No. 5, the Chairman placed on record the Council's gratitude to Members of the Committee and relevant Officers for their contribution to the implementation of the Licensing Act 2003.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 20th October 2005 be received and adopted.

(i) Elections Panel

Councillor D Harty presented the Report of the meeting of the Elections Panel held on 31st October 2005.

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In connection with Item No. 1 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes regarding the Council's preferred option for electoral arrangements in the future, the Chairman replied that the Panel had considered a response to the Electoral Commission on the undertaking of periodic electoral reviews via the completion of a questionnaire which had not included any reference to election cycles and that a copy of the Panel's response to the Commission was available on request.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Elections Panel held on 31st October 2005 be received and adopted.

(j) Corporate Governance Panel

Councillor I C Bates presented the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 29th September 2005.

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Upon being put to the vote, the recommendations contained in Item No.8 were declared to be CARRIED.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraph, the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 29th September 2005 be received and adopted.

49. ORAL QUESTIONS

In accordance with the Council 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 W T Clough to the Deputy Leader, Councillor I C Bates

In response to a question regarding the protocol which might be adopted towards the opposition party under new leadership arrangements, the Deputy Leader was of the view that whilst any reply would be premature, it would be his intention should he be elected to continue in accordance with the example set by the current

Leader.

Question from Councillor K Churchill to the Executive Councillor for Environment and Transport, Councillor Mrs P J Longford

In response to a question regarding the current disappointing performance of the Ouse Valley Transport Scheme, Councillor Mrs Longford replied that she shared the questioner's concerns particularly given accessibility problems in the more remote wards and assured the Council that every effort was being made to improve the current situation.

Question from Councillor T D Sanderson to the Executive Councillor for Environment and Transport, Councillor Mrs P J Longford

In response to a question regarding the proposed scheme for junction improvements at Hinchingbrooke Park Road/Brampton Road, Huntingdon, Councillor Mrs Longford indicated her willingness to attend, together with the questioner and other appropriate Ward Councillors, any meeting held with the County Council to discuss progress of the scheme.

50. 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.

51. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the press and public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to terms proposed to the Council in the course of negotiations for the acquisition and disposal of property and the supply of goods and services.

52. CABINET (CONTINUED)

Further to Minute No. 48(a) and in connection with Item No. 63 of the Report of the Cabinet, the Council considered information relating to the final evaluation of tenders for the procurement of new headquarters and other accommodation on behalf of the District Council, together with analysis of a scheme for the refurbishment of Pathfinder House.

At the conclusion of a lengthy debate and following a requisition that voting on the Motion for approval of the recommendations be recorded in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 14.4, the following Members voted in favour of the Motion:

Councillors Mrs Banerjee, Bates, Bell, Mrs Boddington, Bucknell, Chandler, Churchill, Criswell, Davies, Dew, Dutton, Eddy, Garner, Gray, Mrs Gregory, Guyatt, Hansard, Harty, Holley, Hyams, Mrs Longford, Mitchell, Newman, Mrs

Reynolds, Reynolds, Rogers, Sadler, Sanderson, Simpson, Stenner, Swales, Tuplin, Mrs Vanbergen, Watt and Ms Wheeler.

The following Members voted against the Motion:

Councillors Baker, Clough, Mrs Collins, Downes, Mrs Menczer, Powell, J Taylor and Thorpe.

Whereupon, the Motion was declared to CARRIED by 35 votes to 8.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the recommendations contained in paragraphs 2.4 (i) – (v) of the Report of the District Council Headquarters and Other Office Accommodation Members' Advisory Group be approved.

53. ADJOURNMENT

At 4.14 pm, it was

RESOLVED

that the meeting stand adjourned. Upon resumption at 4.31 pm.

54. RE ADMISSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the press and public be re admitted to the meeting.

55. ELECTION OF LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Arising from the resignation of Councillor D P Holley as Leader of the Council with effect from the end of the meeting, the Chairman paid tribute to the contribution made by Councillor Holley to the District Council over his terms of office over 18 years and, in particular, as Leader of the Council.

As Deputy Leader, Councillor Bates commended Councillor Holley's service to the Council and his commitment to the people of the District. On behalf of the Council he extended to Councillor Holley the gratitude of all Members, both past and present and their best wishes for the future.

Councillors J W Davies, P J Downes, J Garner, J A Gray, Mrs K P Gregory and M F Newman added their own individual tributes following which it was proposed by Councillor J M Sadler, seconded by Councillor T V Rogers and

RESOLVED

that Councillor I C Bates be elected Leader of the Council and

Chairman of the Cabinet for the remainder of the current Municipal Year.

As a consequence of the election of Councillor Bates as Leader, it was proposed by Councillor N J Guyatt, seconded by Councillor P G Mitchell and

RESOLVED

that Councillor L M Simpson be appointed Deputy Leader of the Council and Vice-Chairman of the Cabinet for the remainder of the current Municipal Year.

As a further consequence of the election of the Leader and the appointment of the Deputy Leader, it was proposed by Councillor I C Bates, seconded by Councillor L M Simpson and

RESOLVED

that Councillor D P Holley be appointed as a member of the Cabinet for the remainder of the Municipal Year and in accordance with the Cabinet Procedure Rules appointed as Executive Councillor for the office and other accommodation project, for economic development and regeneration, the development of the Community Strategy and the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership and to represent the Council on Cambridgeshire Horizons and other organisations.

The meeting concluded at 5.00 pm.

Chairman