

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, 18 April 2007.

PRESENT: Councillor P A Swales – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, R W D Bailey, M G Baker, K M Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, I C Bates, J T Bell, Mrs B E Boddington, P L E Bucknell, E R Butler, Mrs J Chandler, K J Churchill, Mrs D E Collins, S J Criswell, J W Davies, D B Dew, P J Downes, J J Dutton, R W J Eaton, R S Farrer, J D Fell, J E Garner, D A Giles, P M D Godfrey, Mrs C A Godley, J A Gray, A Hansard, D Harty, C R Hyams, Mrs P J Longford, Mrs S A Menczer, P G Mitchell, I R Muir, M F Newman, R Powell, T V Rogers, J M Sadler, T D Sanderson, L M Simpson, C J Stephens, G S E Thorpe, P R Ward, J S Watt, R J West and Ms M Wheeler.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors A N Gilbert, D J Priestman, Mrs D C Reynolds, K Reynolds and R G Tuplin.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D H Bristow.

63. PRAYER

The Reverend M Savage, Team Vicar for Huntingdon opened the meeting with Prayer.

64. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) East of England RTPI Planning Achievement Award/ Partnership Working

Having announced that the Council had been awarded the East of England RTPI Planning Achievement Award for the Oxmoor Action Plan and second prize from the Association of Town Centre Management for the initiative which had provided retail training thereby contributing to the enhancement and increased vitality of Huntingdon Town Centre, the Chairman congratulated all those who had been involved in both projects.

(b) Council Membership

The Chairman referred to the impending retirement of

Councillors Mrs J Chandler and Mrs S A Menczer, both of whom were not seeking re-election to the District Council. Mention also was made of former Councillor N J Guyatt who had resigned from office since the previous meeting. The Council recorded their thanks to those Members for their services during their respective periods of office and extended best wishes to them and their families for the future.

65. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 21st February 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

66. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor I C Bates declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute No. 69(a) (Item No. 117) by virtue of his family relationship with the company involved in the purchase of land at Stukeley Road, Huntingdon.

Councillor P L E Bucknell declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute No. 69 (a), Item No. 117 by virtue of his friendship with the prospective purchaser of land at Stukeley Road, Huntingdon.

Councillor L M Simpson declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute No. 69 (h) (Item No. 23 (o)) by virtue of his family relationship with a potential tenderer under the Council's Code of Procurement.

Each Councillor left the meeting for the duration and voting on the respective items of business.

67. ADOPTION OF INTERIM PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT

By reference to a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Council were informed that it had become necessary, given advice from the Secretary of State and the Planning Inspectorate, to formally withdraw the Huntingdonshire Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2006 which had been submitted for confirmation.

Members were made aware, however, of the necessity of providing continuity of decision making for development control and other planning purposes in the period prior to re-issue of the Core Strategy document. It had therefore been decided to collate specific policies from adopted Structure and Local Plans, Supplementary Planning Policy Guidance and Chapters 3 – 8 from the (withdrawn) Huntingdonshire Core Strategy 2006 to form an Interim Planning Policy Statement. Having received confirmation that these areas of policy guidance would create a suitably robust interim policy position, it was

RESOLVED

that the Council adopt, for development control and other relevant decision making purposes, the Interim Planning Policy Statement as set out in the Appendix to the report

now submitted.

68. GAMBLING ACT 2005 - DELEGATIONS

The Chairman of the Licensing Committee presented a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the nature of the responsibilities to be undertaken by the Council under the Gambling Act 2005.

Although certain powers under the Act had been specifically reserved to Council, Members were advised that the Council had discretion to set its own fees and to delegate this function to the Licensing Committee, subject to the maximum amount stipulated in the Regulations and to income not exceeding the costs incurred. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Licensing Committee be authorised to determine fees for licences, permits etc. under the Gambling Act 2005 (where such discretion is provided for in the Act).

69. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, PANELS AND COMMITTEE

(a) Cabinet

Councillor I C Bates, Leader and Chairman of the Cabinet presented the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 22nd February, 15th March and 5th April 2007.

.....

In connection with Item Nos. 105 and 106 and in response to questions from Councillors Mrs M Banerjee and G S E Thorpe, the Executive Councillor for Finance, Councillor T V Rogers, explained that the cost of transferring the receipt of cash payments from the District Council's Cash Offices to alternative payment providers would amount to £12,000 in the first year and £5,000 per annum thereafter. He added that he too welcomed the initiative which would enhance customer services and present the opportunity for residents to make payments closer to home.

.....

In connection with Item No. 115 and in response to questions from Councillors D A Giles, D Harty and R Powell, the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Councillor P L E Bucknell confirmed that consideration had yet to be given to the question of charging for car parking at the Riverside Car Park, St. Neots and the use of additional land at Mews Close, Ramsey for car parking. He advised that these and other issues would be considered by the Members' Car Parking Strategy Working Group which would present its conclusions to the Cabinet later in the year.

.....

In connection with Item No. 116 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes regarding the cost in future years of undertaking the enforcement of the requirements of the Health Act 2006 in terms of the prohibition of smoking, the Leader, Councillor I C Bates undertook to respond in detail to the questioner in writing.

.....

In connection with Item No. 117 and having regard to the confidential nature of the business to be considered, the Council

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information in relation to terms for the disposal of Council property.

On the same subject and in response to a question from Councillor R W J Eaton, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support), Councillor J A Gray replied that the issue of consultation with Ward Councillors prior to the potential sale of District Council owned land would be examined under the scrutiny "call-in" procedure and the Deputy Leader, Councillor L M Simpson, added that Councillors should be informed of matters relating to their Wards as a matter of course.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the public be re-admitted to the meeting.

.....

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 22nd February, 15th March and 5th April 2007 be received and adopted.

(b) Standards Committee

Mr D H Bristow presented the Report of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 8th March 2007.

.....

Upon being put to the vote, the recommendation contained in Item No. 14 was declared to be CARRIED.

On the same subject and having been advised that Mr Bristow would not be seeking re-appointment as an Independent Member of the Committee, the Chairman, on behalf of the Council, extended his gratitude for the contribution and commitment given by Mr Bristow the first independent person to act as Chairman of the Committee in promoting high ethical standards at District, town and parish levels.

.....
Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraph, the Report of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 8th March 2007 be received and adopted.

(c) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework)

Councillor S J Criswell presented the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) held on 20th February 2007.

.....
In connection with Item No. 9 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, Councillor Criswell confirmed that there would be further opportunities to discuss and influence the framework, style and content of the environment strategy prior to its adoption.

.....
Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) held on 20th February 2007 be received and adopted.

(d) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery)

Councillor S J Criswell presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) held on 6th March and 3rd April 2007.

.....
In connection with Item No. 30 and in response to questions from Councillors P J Downes, R W J Eaton and G S E Thorpe, Councillor Criswell concurred with the views expressed that the Council should seek to encourage

developers to incorporate energy efficiency and renewable energy measures in new developments. Further consideration could be given to the possibility of increased flexibility in the support of local bus and taxi services as part of the ongoing discussion on the preparation of the environment strategy.

.....

In connection with Item No. 34 and in response to a question from Councillor R W J Eaton, Councillor Criswell indicated that the possibility of extending the shop mobility scheme to St. Neots and other towns in the District could be considered as part of the Disability Access Study.

.....

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) held on 6th March and 3rd April 2007 be received and adopted.

(e) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support)

Councillor J A Gray presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) held on 13th February and 13th March 2007.

.....

In connection with Item No. 35 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, Councillor Gray advised the questioner that it was for the Ward Councillors in Huntingdon and Godmanchester to pursue any interest that they might have in terms of the implications of the A14 improvements on congestion, in Huntingdon town centre and between Huntingdon and Brampton. However, Councillor Gray added that the Panel might pursue the issue if it was considered appropriate to do so in the future.

.....

In connection with Item No. 36 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes regarding the call for a 30 mph speed limit in villages in Huntingdonshire, Councillor Gray concurred with the views of the questioner and invited County Councillors to use their influence at that authority to support the Panel's request.

.....

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) held on 13th February and 13th March 2007 be received and adopted.

(f) Development Control Panel

Councillor P G Mitchell presented the Report of the meetings of the Development Control Panel held on 26th February and 18th March 2007.

.....

In connection with Item No. 35, Councillor Mitchell invited the Head of Planning Services to address the Council on an application for planning permission for residential development on land at London Road, St Ives. It was reported that an additional representation had been received from Fenstanton Parish Council (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book).

Following discussion and upon being put to the vote, the recommendations contained in Item No. 35 were declared to be CARRIED.

.....

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meetings of the Development Control Panel held on 26th February and 18th March 2007 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 19th February 2007.

.....

In connection with Item No. 9, Councillor Sadler reported that five representations had been received to date in support of a proposal to make a Designated Public Places Order for the Wheatfields area in St. Ives and that, should no objections be received before the expiry of the consultation period, the Order would be made in early May.

.....

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 19th February 2007 be received and adopted.

(h) Corporate Governance Panel

Councillor C J Stephens presented the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 28th March 2007.

.....
In connection with Item No. 23, it was moved by the Leader, Councillor I C Bates moved and it was duly seconded –

“that the words “by the Service Delivery Overview and Scrutiny Panel” be inserted after the word “given” in recommendation (l)”.
.....

Following debate and on being put to the vote the amendment was declared to be CARRIED.

Whereupon, upon being put to the vote recommendations (a) to (e) inclusive, (l) as amended, (k) and (m) to (p) inclusive contained in Item No. 23 were declared to be CARRIED.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 20.2, recommendations (f) to (j) inclusive having been moved and seconded were adjourned, without discussion, to the next ordinary meeting of the Council.

.....
Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 28th March 2007 be received and adopted.

(i) Elections Panel

Councillor D Harty presented the Report of the meeting of the Elections Panel held on 19th February 2007.

.....
In connection with Item No. 4 and in response to questions from Councillors M G Baker and P L E Bucknell, Councillor Harty confirmed that representations received in respect of proposals for the Ellington Ward, as part of the Parish Electoral Review, would be considered by the Panel and that

he had been pleased to visit Bury Parish to discuss the implications of the Panel's proposals.

.....
Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Elections Panel held on 19th February 2007 be received and adopted.

70. 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 J E Garner to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates

In response to a question regarding the possibility of publishing a book of the former Mayors of authorities in Huntingdonshire, Councillor Bates expressed an interest in viewing a similar publication on Sheriffs of Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire and offered to discuss the suggestion with the questioner after the meeting.

Question from Councillor M G Baker to the Executive Councillor for Operations, Councillor Mrs P J Longford

In response to a question regarding the implications for the District of the decision by Cambridgeshire County Council to close the household recycling centre at Brampton in 2008, Councillor Mrs Longford concurred with the concerns expressed by the questioner and confirmed that she had submitted representations to the Cambridgeshire Councils Waste Forum and had lobbied for the closure to be postponed.

Question from Councillor P J Downes to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates

In response to a question regarding the outcome of the report of the Lyons Inquiry into Local Government, Councillor Bates indicated that he was disappointed that an Inquiry of such length did not appear to suggest solutions to the reliance on Council Tax for local authority revenue generation and that the exercise appeared to have been fruitless having regard to the Government's initial response.

Question from Councillor K M Baker to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Councillor P L E Bucknell

In response to a question regarding the likely adverse consequences for the District of the proposed closure of the overnight truckstop for HGVs at Alconbury, Councillor Bucknell concurred with the opinion of the questioner and confirmed that discussions were ongoing with

Cambridgeshire County Council with a view to securing an alternative location for this purpose.

Question from Councillor R W J Eaton to the Chairman of the Council, Councillor P A Swales

In response to a question as to whether the Council intended to commemorate the 90th Anniversary of the Royal Air Force, Councillor Swales replied that he was unaware of any specific plans for the event but that he would confirm the position with the questioner after the meeting.

Question from Councillor R W D Bailey to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Councillor P L E Bucknell

In response to a question which highlighted the concerns of local residents at the perceived increase in caravans and holiday homes on a site in Mill Lane, Buckden, Councillor Bucknell invited the questioner to consider instituting a review of the licence for the site.

Question from Councillor J J Dutton to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates

In response to a question regarding the issue of discretionary rate relief to St. John's Ambulance, Councillor Bates undertook to liaise with the Executive Councillor for Finance, Councillor T V Rogers and to reply to the questioner in writing.

Question from Councillor K J Churchill to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates

In response to a question regarding the appointment of the District Council's Strategic Directors as champions for each of the market towns, Councillor Bates confirmed that each Director had been allocated specific responsibility for a market town as a way of demonstrating the District Council's commitment to the towns in Huntingdonshire and to enhance and develop the existing working relationship between the District and the respective town councils/town centre initiatives.

71. 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 3.55 pm.

Chairman