

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, 26 September 2007.

PRESENT: Councillor P A Swales – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, M G Baker,
K M Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, I C Bates,
J T Bell, Mrs B E Boddington, P L E Bucknell,
K J Churchill, Cooper, S J Criswell,
P H Dakers, J W Davies, D B Dew,
P J Downes, R W J Eaton, R S Farrer,
J D Fell, J E Garner, A N Gilbert,
P M D Godfrey, Mrs C A Godley, J A Gray,
A Hansard, D Harty, C R Hyams,
Mrs P A Jordan, Ms S Kemp, L W McGuire,
I R Muir, M F Newman, D J Priestman,
T V Rogers, J M Sadler, T D Sanderson,
L M Simpson, C J Stephens, G S E Thorpe,
R G Tuplin, P K Ursell, P R Ward, J S Watt
and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors R W D Bailey, J J Dutton, P G Mitchell, R Powell, Mrs D C Reynolds and K Reynolds.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D L Hall.

30. PRAYER

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

31. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

Chairman's Reception

The Chairman announced that his Reception would be held at Hinchingsbrooke House on Friday 7th December 2007 and that formal invitations would be despatched in due course.

32. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 27th June 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

33. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillors I C Bates, Mrs B E Boddington, K J Churchill, S J Criswell, P J Downes, R S Farrer, D Harty, C R Hyams and L W McGuire declared a personal interest in Minute No. 35(a), Item No 26 by virtue of their membership of Cambridgeshire County Council.

Councillors Mrs K E Cooper, R W J Eaton, D Harty, G S E Thorpe and P K Ursell declared a personal interest in Minute No. 35(b), Item No 4 as trustees to the St Neots outdoor swimming pool.

34. ANNUAL STATE OF THE DISTRICT ADDRESS

In accordance with paragraph 12 of the Council's Procedure Rules, the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates, addressed the meeting on the State of the District (a précis of Councillor Bates address is appended in the Minute Book).

In his remarks, Councillor Bates indicated that it was his intention to focus upon the significant challenges that lay ahead for the District Council and to underline the importance of the involvement of all Members if the Council were to respond robustly on behalf of the communities it represented. In this regard, specific reference was made to the Core Strategy: Issues and Options process, the development of a new Sustainable Community Strategy, "Growing Success", the environment agenda and the new Headquarters and Other Accommodation Project.

In response, Councillor P J Downes, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group concurred with the Leader's plea for all Councillors to respond to the consultation exercise on the Core Strategy: Issues and Options, given its environmental and social consequences for communities in Huntingdonshire. Councillor Downes raised the possibility of widening the democratic process by establishing area groups which would enable town and parish councils, voluntary groups and the public to contribute to the debate. He also voiced his concern that the various tiers of local government in the County might not be working together as effectively as possible and suggested the need for effective partnerships if improvements were to be achieved. Lastly, Councillor Downes expressed his disappointment that the implementation of the Environment Strategy had not progressed as well as he had hoped.

35. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, PANELS AND COMMITTEES

(a) Cabinet

Councillor I C Bates, Leader and Chairman of the Cabinet presented the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 28th June, 19th July and 6th September 2007.

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Councillor T V Rogers, Executive Councillor for Finance presented the report and recommendation outlined in Item 24. In response to questions from Councillors T D Sanderson and Mrs M Banerjee, Councillor Rogers confirmed that uncertainty continued over future levels of Government grant and no indication had yet been received as to how funding for the concessionary fares scheme would be allocated.

On the same subject and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, the Leader, Councillor I C Bates,

concurred with the questioner's assertion that the area cost adjustment for Huntingdonshire should not be linked to that of the other Cambridgeshire Councils.

Upon being put to the vote, the recommendation in Item No. 24 was declared to be CARRIED.

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In connection with Item No. 37 and in response to a question from Councillor S J Criswell, Councillor P L E Bucknell acknowledged the opportunities presented by the award of £8.9million from the Heritage Lottery Fund to the Great Fen Project Partnership including the potential to develop a visitor centre, generate employment and make a positive contribution to the local economy in that part of the District. In inviting Members to visit the project, Councillor Bucknell added that a further report on its progress would be submitted to the Council in due course.

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Whereupon, it

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 28th June, 19th July and 6th September 2007 be received and adopted.

(b) Standards Committee

Mr D L Hall presented the Report of the meetings of the Standards Committee held on 5th July and 13th September 2007.

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Mr Hall encouraged those Councillors who had yet to do so to attend training on the revised Code of Conduct, with a further opportunity to attend a session which was to take place at the conclusion of the Council meeting.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Standards Committee held on 5th July and 13th September 2007 be received and adopted.

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

Councillor J A Gray presented the Report of the meeting of

the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) held on 4th September 2007.

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In connection with Item No. 3 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, Councillor Gray confirmed that it had been the Panel's understanding that the capital cost of the headquarters and other accommodation project would reduce following the decisions made by English Heritage in respect of Castle Hill House.

On the same subject and in response to a question from Councillor M G Baker, Councillor Gray commended those Officers who had been involved in arrangements for the successful transfer of services to Eastfield House and Centenary House.

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In connection with Item No. 5, Councillor Gray encouraged Members to attend the special meeting of the Panel to be held on 2nd October 2007 to consider the Sustainable Community Strategy.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) held on 4th September 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 & Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) held on 3rd July and 4th September 2007.

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In connection with Item No. 7 and in response to questions from Councillors P J Downes and Ms S Kemp, Councillor Criswell advised that local organisations and ward Councillors should seek to influence negotiations on funding to ensure that resources were directed to those projects for young people which they consider to be a priority and he concurred with the view that the District Council's involvement in the 2012 Olympics should encourage greater public participation in sports and leisure activities.

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In connection with Item No. 9 and in response to a question from Councillor R W J Eaton, Councillor Criswell advised

that a number of completed questionnaires issued as part of the Panel's study on disability access still were awaited from town and parish councils.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) held on 3rd July and 4th September 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 & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) held on 10th July and 11th September 2007.

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In connection with Item No. 15 and in response to questions from Councillor P J Downes and T D Sanderson, Councillor Gray indicated that he too was pleased with the outcome of the Panel's involvement in monitoring the receipt and expenditure of money negotiated under Section 106 Agreements and he encouraged Members to continue to be pro-active in pursuing the expenditure of sums.

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In connection with Item No. 16, Councillor Gray advised the Council that the Panel shortly would consider a procedure for handling on-line petitions before making their recommendations on the wider use of electronic means of communication with the Council.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) held on 10th July and 11th September 2007 be received and adopted.

ADJOURNMENT

At 3.30pm it was

RESOLVED

that the meeting stand adjourned.

Upon resumption at 3.35pm.

**REPORTS OF THE CABINET, PANELS AND COMMITTEES
(CONTINUED)**

(f) Development Control Panel

Councillor D B Dew presented the Report of the meetings of the Development Control Panel held on 16th July, 20th August and 17th September 2007.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Development Control Panel held on 16th July, 20th August and 17th September 2007 be received and adopted.

(g) Corporate Governance Panel

Councillor C J Stephens presented the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 26th June 2007.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 26th June 2007 be received and adopted.

36. ORAL QUESTIONS

In accordance with the Council's Procedure Rules (paragraph 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 T D Sanderson to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Environment and Transport, Councillor P L E Bucknell.

In response to a question regarding the need to update the Huntingdon Market Town Strategy to provide an improved foundation for consultation with key stakeholders and other groups, Councillor Bucknell replied that the Strategy was intended to cover the period to 2011 and would be reviewed in the light of the forthcoming Northbridge development.

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Question from Councillor R J West to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Environment and Transport, Councillor P L E Bucknell.

In response to a question regarding traffic congestion on major routes in the District, the consequential deterioration of air quality and support for the lobby to transport freight by rail, Councillor Bucknell reported that he had indicated his support for the early delivery of the Felixstowe to Nuneaton rail improvement scheme as a way of transferring freight from the A14 and other routes to rail. Although he indicated that he would draw the questioner's comments to the East of England Regional Assembly, Councillor Bucknell urged town and parish councils to similarly press the Regional Assembly to consider the environmental impact of increased road traffic on communities in Huntingdonshire.

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Question from Councillor M G Baker to the Executive Councillor for Operations, Councillor C R Hyams.

In response to a question regarding the proposed closure of the household recycling centre at Brampton in 2008, Councillor Hyams confirmed that he was continuing to do all that he could do to prevent its closure.

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

In response to a question regarding the announcement that Little Paxton had recently received the accolade of Huntingdonshire Village of the Year, Councillor Bates congratulated those who had worked in partnership to contribute to the success of Little Paxton which, in his view, demonstrated the spirit of communities in the District.

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Question from Councillor Ms S Kemp to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates.

Following a question relating to the length of time that properties in The Whaddons, Huntingdon, had remained unoccupied having regard to the size of the waiting list for accommodation, Councillor Bates replied that he did not have the detailed information to hand but that he would respond to the questioner in writing after the meeting.

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Question from Councillor Mrs B E Boddington to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Environment and Transport, Councillor P L E Bucknell.

In response to a question regarding the proposed scheme of improvements to the A14 between Ellington and Fen Ditton, Councillor Bucknell anticipated that an announcement on the preferred route would be made shortly and that he understood that sufficient lay-bys would be provided on the new sections of road.

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Question from Councillor P J Downes to the Executive Councillor for Operations, Councillor C R Hyams.

In response to a question regarding the impact, if any, on the volume of waste collected as a result of recent changes to the refuse collection arrangements, Councillor Hyams replied that it remained too early to assess whether the revised arrangements had had any effect in this respect and that a clearer picture would emerge once the new regime had been operating for a longer period.

37. NOTICE OF MOTION

Before proceeding to the Motion on the Agenda, the Chairman announced his intention to invoke the discretion awarded to him under Paragraph 9.5(iii) of the Council Procedure Rules and to rule that the Motion submitted by Councillor A N Gilbert, on being moved and seconded, would be dealt with at the meeting in the interests of the convenient and conducive despatch of the Council's business.

It was moved by Councillor A N Gilbert and duly seconded –

“that all food and drink provided as a part of Council meetings, functions and meals be procured from Fairtrade sources as far as is practical within existing UK and European legislation”.

Whereupon, and having been put to the vote, the Motion was declared to be CARRIED.

38. 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.

39. MEMBERSHIP OF CABINET, COMMITTEES AND PANELS

RESOLVED

- (a) that Councillor D B Dew be appointed to the Cabinet;
- (b) that Councillor J D Ablewhite be appointed to the Development Control Panel in place of Councillor D B Dew; and
- (c) that Councillor R W D Bailey be appointed to the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) in place of Councillor D B Dew.

The meeting concluded at 4.05pm.

Chairman