

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COUNCIL held in the Burgess Hall, St Ivo Leisure Centre, Westwood Road, St Ives on Wednesday, 5 December 2007.

PRESENT: Councillor P A Swales – Chairman.

Councillors M G Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, I C Bates, J T Bell, Mrs B E Boddington, P L E Bucknell, E R Butler, Mrs K E Cooper, S J Criswell, P H Dakers, J W Davies, D B Dew, J J Dutton, R W J Eaton, R S Farrer, J D Fell, J E Garner, A N Gilbert, D A Giles, 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, P G Mitchell, R Powell, D J Priestman, Mrs D C Reynolds, K Reynolds, T V Rogers, J M Sadler, T D Sanderson, L M Simpson, C J Stephens, G S E Thorpe, R G Tuplin, P R Ward, J S Watt and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors J D Ablewhite, K M Baker, P J Downes, I R Muir, M F Newman and P K Ursell.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D L Hall.

### **40. PRAYER**

The Reverend E B Atling, Rural Dean of Huntingdon opened the meeting with Prayer.

### **41. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chairman reminded Members that his Reception would be held at Hinchingbrooke House on Friday 7th December 2007.

### **42. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 26th September 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **43. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillor R W J Eaton declared a personal interest in Minute No. 47 (a) Item Nos. 45 and 50 by virtue of his role as Adviser for the Huntingdonshire Citizens Advice Bureau and as a resident in St. Neots living in close proximity to the railway station respectively.

Councillor Mrs K E Cooper declared a personal interest in Minute No. 47 (a) Item No. 50 as a resident of St. Neots living in close proximity to the railway station.

**44. DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION (0501658OUT) - ERECTION OF FOODSTORE, PETROL FILLING STATION, RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND ASSOCIATED HIGHWAYS AND INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS, LAND AT THE CORNER OF STOCKING FEN ROAD AND ST MARY'S ROAD, RAMSEY**

In conjunction with the Report of the Development Control Panel (Minute No. 47(f) refers), the Development Control Manager introduced a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding an outline planning application for the erection of a foodstore, petrol filling station, residential development, community facilities and associated highways and infrastructure on land at the corner of Stocking Fen Road and St. Mary's Road, Ramsey.

Mr C Akrell, from the Development Plan Partnership, agent for the applicant, addressed the Council on the application. The Chairman of the Development Control Panel, Councillor P G Mitchell, drew attention to those issues which had led the Panel to indicate its support for the application and to recommend its approval. Principally these related to the impact the proposal would have in fulfilling the vision identified for the Ramsey Gateway Urban Development Framework and its intention to provide a mixed housing development, community facilities and employment opportunities.

Having confirmed that the applicant had consented to the provision of a community centre and road infrastructure prior to the opening of the foodstore or the occupation of any of the market dwellings, whichever was the sooner, it was moved by Councillor Mitchell, duly seconded and

RESOLVED

- (i) that, subject to conditions to be determined by the Head of Planning Services to include surface water drainage, no new adverse material considerations being raised to the scheme in respect of the impact of the development on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and to the completion of an Agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the application for the erection of a foodstore, petrol filling station, residential development, community facilities and associated highways and infrastructure works on land at the corner of Stocking Fen Road and St. Mary's Road, Ramsey be supported;
- (ii) that the Government Office for the Eastern Region be requested to consider whether they wish to call in the proposal; and
- (iii) that, in the event that the proposal is not called in by the Government Office, the application be approved and the Director of Operational Services authorised to advertise the application as a departure from the

**45. PARISH ELECTORAL REVIEW IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE: FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

By way of a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), Councillor D Harty, Chairman of the Elections Panel presented the outcome of an exercise to review the electoral arrangements in the parishes of Huntingdonshire which had commenced in December 2006. An additional paper containing proposed amendments to Annexes A and B of the report now submitted was circulated at the meeting (a copy of which also is appended in the Minute Book).

Councillor Harty added that since the last review in 1980, the population of the District had increased to around 160,000 and was forecast to grow to 163,700 by 2011. This growth had been taken into account in ensuring that parish arrangements continued to reflect local identities as communities had expanded. Councillor Harty also made reference to the Appendix and a summary of representations received from parishes including comments on a new scale of parish council representation. Having drawn the Council's attention to the draft recommendations to be made to the Secretary of State and to the Electoral Commission on the consequential electoral arrangements, Councillor Harty thanked Members and Officers for their contributions and support in undertaking the review.

Councillor M G Baker, expressed his appreciation to Councillor Harty and the Elections Panel for their attention to detail and willingness to receive the representations made by the parishes and, in particular, those in his ward.

In response to a question from Councillor Mrs B E Boddington, Councillor Harty explained that alterations to parish electoral arrangements and the grouping of parishes under a common parish council, provided there were no changes to a County or District ward boundary, could be dealt with reasonably quickly by Order. However, Orders to implement changes that affected upper tier council boundaries would have to be made by the Secretary of State on the recommendation of the Boundary Commission and this process might take some time. Further to a question from Councillor G S E Thorpe, Councillor Harty indicated that it was the intention of the Panel to consider the issue of multi-Councillor wards and the position of the towns in due course.

Regarding the proposed amalgamation of the parishes of Steeple Gidding and Hamerton to create a combined parish, Councillor Harty indicated his support for a suggestion from Councillor J E Garner that the new Parish should be entitled Hamerton and Steeple Gidding Parish Council.

The recommendations in paragraph 8.1 of the report having been moved and seconded, it was

**RESOLVED**

- (a) that the new scale of parish council representation as

outlined in paragraph 5.3 of the report now submitted be approved;

- (b) that the final recommendations for changes to parish electoral arrangements as detailed in Annex A (as amended by the paper circulated at the meeting) enabling the Council to implement these changes by Order at the next scheduled parish elections, be approved;
- (c) that the proposal to invite the parishes of Buckden and Diddington to group under a common Parish Council be supported; and
- (d) that the final recommendations for changes to parish boundaries and electoral arrangements as detailed at Annex B (as amended by the paper circulated at the meeting) be approved for submission to the Secretary of State and the Electoral Commission.

**46. LICENSING ACT 2003: STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY**

By way of a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Chairman of the Licensing Committee, Councillor J M Sadler, explained that under the Licensing Act 2003, the Council was required to review its Statement of Licensing Policy after a period of three years' operation and to approve the content of a new statement to take effect from 7th January 2008.

Councillor Sadler drew attention to the alterations which had been made to the existing statement to reflect legislative change and the content of Government guidance since the adoption of the last statement in January 2005. Having given the Council an account of the additional workload generated for the Licensing Committee by the new Act since 2005 and having suggested that the arrangements put in place had dealt well with the various issues raised, Councillor Sadler thanked Members and Officers involved in the licensing function for their commitment and support. Whereupon, it was moved by Councillor Sadler, duly seconded and

RESOLVED

that the Statement of Licensing Policy as appended to the report now submitted be approved.

**47. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, COMMITTEES AND PANELS**

**(a) Cabinet**

Councillor I C Bates, Leader and Chairman of the Cabinet presented the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 4th and 18th October and 22nd November 2007.

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In connection with Item No. 38, the Executive Councillor for

Finance, Councillor T V Rogers referred to the uncertainty which continued to under-pin the preparation of the draft 2008/09 budget. Councillor Rogers added that whilst information regarding the level of Revenue Support Grant to be awarded to the Council had not yet been received, it had been decided that additional funding for concessionary fares would be provided by a specific grant from April 2008 for a period of not less than three years. Although there was not yet any indication of the Government's attitude to capping, Councillor Rogers envisaged a Council Tax increase of less than 5% if the Council were to avoid the likelihood of capping.

The Council's attention also was drawn to the proposed draft budget for 2008/09 and the risks and opportunities which might need to be addressed in the Medium Term Plan in the forthcoming financial year. Councillor Rogers concluded his address by commending the recommendations of the Cabinet on the draft budget and MTP 2008 – 2013 to the Council.

On the same subject and in response to a question from Councillor Mrs M Banerjee, Councillor Rogers confirmed that it was unlikely that Council Tax would be increased above 4.99% should a capping regime be imposed by the Government and that the Council would continue to search for alternative ways of funding to meet their budgetary requirements.

On the same subject and in response to a question from Councillor J A Gray commending the budgetary analysis work undertaken by the Cabinet in the preparation of the budget, the Leader, Councillor Bates, acknowledged the questioner's support and reminded Members that the Council set one of the lowest council tax levels in the country and it received a low grant settlement from central government at a time when the Authority still was expected to deliver new housing without any essential improvements in local infrastructure. Councillor Bates suggested that all Councils in Cambridgeshire should make a case jointly to central government for an increase in revenue support grant. Whereupon, having been moved and seconded and put to the vote the recommendations contained in Item No. 38 (a) – (d) were declared to be CARRIED.

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In connection with Item No. 39, it was noted that the recommendation had been considered previously under Minute No. 46 ante.

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In connection with Item No. 50 and in response to questions from Councillors R W J Eaton and M G Baker, the Leader, Councillor Bates, noted the availability of survey work undertaken in St. Neots which had indicated a preference for restricted parking in Longsands Road and had indicated that

some 80% of respondees would prefer to travel by bus. He added that the former depot at Godmanchester had been opened for car parking and would provide an additional 200 spaces which should be sufficient to respond to the needs of visitors/shoppers to Huntingdon.

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In connection with Item No. 56 and in response to a question from Councillor Mrs P A Jordan regarding the proposed skate park at Stukeley Meadows, the Leader, Councillor Bates, paid tribute to the work undertaken by Councillor J M Sadler in response to concerns originally expressed by Huntingdon Town Council which had enabled the scheme to proceed.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 4th and 18th October and 22nd November 2007 be received and adopted.

**(b) Standards Committee**

Mr D L Hall presented the Report of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 23rd October 2007.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 23rd October 2007 be received and adopted.

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

Councillor S J Criswell presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) held on 2nd October and 13th November 2007.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) held on 2nd October and 13th

November 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 2nd October and 6th November 2007.

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In connection with Item No. 17 (b) and in response to a question from Councillor G S E Thorpe, Councillor Criswell anticipated that the recommendations of the State of the District Consultation Working Group would be considered by the Panel early in the New Year.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) held on 2nd October and 6th November 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 9th October and 13th November 2007.

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In connection with Item No. 20 and in response to a question from Councillor M G Baker raising the possibility of a park and ride terminal at Hartford Roundabout to prevent cars entering Huntingdon from locations such as St. Ives, Ramsey and Warboys, the Leader, Councillor Bates confirmed that this initiative had been under consideration for some time. Councillor Gray added that such a venture would require considerable funding and that this proposal and others highlighted by the Panel had been referred to the Members Car Parking Strategy Working Group for further consideration.

On the same subject and in response to a question from Councillor D A Giles, Councillor Gray confirmed that the Panel had questioned whether it was equitable to impose charges for parking at the Riverside Car Park in Huntingdon but not in St. Neots and had asked the Working Party to reconsider this issue bearing in mind the fact that both car parks were used by visitors to riverside parks themselves..

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In connection with Item No. 24 and in response to a question

from Councillor M G Baker, Councillor Gray concurred with the questioner's view that it was vital for the Call Centre and Customer Services Centre to be advised, in advance, of major changes to Council services or service initiatives to enable Officers in those offices to respond appropriately to enquiries from the public.

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In connection with Item No. 26 and in response to a question from Councillor A N Gilbert regarding the accuracy of the data upon which the exercise to update the housing needs assessment would be based, Councillor Gray indicated that he looked forward to the submission of the final housing needs assessment to the Panel when it became available.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) held on 9th October and 13th November 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 15th October, 19th and 26th November 2007.

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In connection with Item No. 11, it was noted that the recommendations had been considered previously under Minute No. 44 ante.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meetings of the Development Control Panel held on 15th October, 19th and 26th November 2007 be received and adopted.

**(g) Employment Panel**

Councillor K Reynolds presented the Report of the meetings of the Employment Panel held on 2nd October and 20th November 2007.

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In connection with Item No. 6, Councillor Reynolds announced that the interviews of candidates for the post of Head of Technical Services would take place on 6th December 2007. On the same subject and upon being put to the vote, the recommendation contained in the Item was declared to be CARRIED.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Employment Panel held on 2nd October and 20th November 2007 be received and adopted.

**(h) Licensing and Protection Panel**

Councillor J M Sadler presented the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 23rd October 2007.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 23rd October 2007 be received and noted.

**(i) Licensing Committee**

Councillor J M Sadler presented the Report of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 23rd October 2007.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 23rd October 2007 be received and adopted.

**(j) Corporate Governance Panel**

Councillor C J Stephens presented the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 25th September 2007.

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In connection with Item No. 7, the Executive Councillor for Finance, Councillor T V Rogers announced that a handbook

on risk management would be distributed shortly to Members. It was confirmed by Councillor Stephens that Members of the Panel also would be undertaking training on risk management awareness.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 25th September 2007 be received and adopted.

**(k) Elections Panel**

Councillor D Harty presented the Report of the meeting of the Elections Panel held on 20th November 2007.

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In connection with Item No.1 it was noted that the recommendations contained in the Item had been considered previously under Minute No. 45 ante.

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In connection with Item No. 2 and in response to a question from Councillor D A Giles, Councillor Harty confirmed that the Panel had considered, in detail, the requirements of St. Neots (Eaton Socon) as part of the Polling Districts and Polling Places Review but he reiterated that the subject would be reconsidered in the light of any change in local circumstances.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meeting of the Elections Panel held on 20th November 2007 be received and adopted.

**48. 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 M G Baker to the Executive Councillor for Operations, Parks and Countryside, Councillor C R Hyams**

In response to a question requesting that further consideration be given to the methodology for identifying properties occupied by the

frail, elderly and vulnerable when collecting their refuse, to prevent as far as possible incidents of distraction burglary, Councillor Hyams acknowledged the comments made and undertook to discuss the issue with the Head of Operations and to respond to the questioner accordingly.

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**Question from Councillor T D Sanderson to the Executive Councillor for Operations, Parks and Countryside, Councillor C R Hyams**

In response to a question regarding the possibility of updating children's play equipment at Garner Court and Sapley Road, Huntingdon and at Hinchingsbrooke Country Park using funds received via the Section 106 Agreement for the Saxongate Development, Councillor Hyams replied that he would shortly be attending a meeting on Section 106 Agreements at which the distribution of funds would be discussed and how this could be progressed in the future. He indicated he would respond to the questioner in writing on the specific issues raised.

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**Question from Councillor G S E Thorpe to the Leader, Councillor I C Bates**

In response to a question regarding the use of the Burgess Hall, St. Ives for the Council meeting, the Leader, Councillor Bates, indicated that he would be pleased to consider holding a Council meeting in St. Neots provided he was confident that any facilities available were sufficiently adequate to host such a meeting.

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**Question from Councillor Mrs M Banerjee to the Leader, Councillor I C Bates**

In response to a question regarding the procedure used by the District Council for transferring housing/council tax benefit data to other agencies, the Leader, Councillor Bates, assured the Council that arrangements were in place to prevent the occurrence of the circumstances that had affected the Department of Wages and Pensions nationally.

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**Question from Councillor R J West to the Executive Councillor for Operations, Parks and Countryside, Councillor C R Hyams**

In response to a question regarding recycling targets, Councillor Hyams indicated that he was pleased to be able to report that the Council currently was recycling 51.7% of household waste collected and that whilst this was an outstanding achievement he hoped to see a further improvement in the future.

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**Question from Councillor D A Giles to the Leader, Councillor I C Bates**

In response to a question regarding a consultation event being held by St. Neots Town Council on 8th September 2007 seeking ideas and suggestions for the future development of the Priory Quarter in St. Neots, Councillor Bates acknowledged that whilst County and District Councillors had been invited, their attendance was entirely a matter for each individual Councillor. Councillor Bates added that he felt confident that those involved in the project would work with St. Neots Town Council in compliance with the District Council's Code of Conduct.

**49. 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.

**50. MEMBERSHIP OF CABINET, COMMITTEES AND PANELS**

RESOLVED

- (a) that Councillor R W D Bailey be appointed to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) in place of Councillor D Harty and to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) in place of Councillor D B Dew;
- (b) that Councillor D Harty be appointed to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) in place of Councillor R W D Bailey; and
- (c) that Councillor D B Dew be no longer a Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework).

The meeting concluded at 4.45 pm.

Chairman