

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, 3 December 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor J W Davies – 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, E R Butler, K J Churchill, W T Clough, Mrs K E Cooper, S J Criswell, P H Dakers, Mrs J A Dew, D B Dew, P J Downes, J J Dutton, R W J Eaton, R S Farrer, J E Garner, A N Gilbert, P M D Godfrey, P Godley, J A Gray, A Hansard, D Harty, L W McGuire, P G Mitchell, D J Priestman, Mrs D C Reynolds, T V Rogers, J M Sadler, T D Sanderson, M F Shellens, L M Simpson, C J Stephens, P A Swales, G S E Thorpe, R G Tuplin, P K Ursell, P R Ward and J S Watt.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors C R Hyams, Mrs P A Jordan, Ms S Kemp, I R Muir, M F Newman, R Powell and R J West.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D L Hall

44. PRAYER

The Parish Priest of the Church of the Sacred Heart, St. Ives, Father P Maddison opened the meeting with Prayer.

45. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) **Councillor I R Muir**

Having announced that Councillor I R Muir was seriously ill in Leicester Infirmary, the Chairman undertook to convey the Council's best wishes to him.

(b) **Civic Reception**

The Chairman thanked those Members who had attended and contributed to the success of his civic reception held on 31st October 2008.

(c) **Director of Central Services**

The Council congratulated Mr I Leatherbarrow, who had

been appointed recently as Director of Central Services and wished him every success in his new role.

(d) **Civic Support**

Following Mr Leatherbarrow's appointment, the Chairman advised the Council that support for civic arrangements would now be undertaken by Mrs K Pauley in the Administration Division. On behalf of previous Chairmen and the Council, the Chairman extended his appreciation and thanks to Mrs E Buckridge for her support in that role over recent years.

(e) **Awards**

On behalf of the Council, the Chairman congratulated Ms C Garbett, the Council's Sustainable Economic Development Manager on being awarded Employee of Year 2008 at a recent Huntingdonshire Business of the Year event. The Chairman also announced that he was pleased to congratulate Ms G Bonnet, the Impressions Fitness Brand Manager and her team for the achievement of second place in the Fitness Industry Association awards as "Fitness Club of the Year".

(f) **Official Openings**

The Chairman drew attention to two events at which he had presided recently which both had demonstrated the Council's commitment to investing in services for Huntingdonshire residents. These involved the opening of a new play facility as part of the internal conversion at Huntingdon Leisure Centre and the Creative Exchange in St. Neots.

(g) **Pathfinder House – Last Council Meeting**

The Chairman reminded Members that they were attending their last Council meeting in Pathfinder House, prior to the move to new accommodation. A schedule of meeting venues had been circulated to all Members for meetings of the Council until Spring 2010 when the new civic suite would be available.

(h) **Carol Service**

The Chairman encouraged Members to attend the District Council's Carol Service to be held over lunch time on 12th December 2008.

46. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 24th September 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

47. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor T D Sanderson declared a personal interest in Minute No.

48 by virtue of his membership of Huntingdon Town Council.

Councillor P J Downes declared a personal interest in Minute No. 48 by virtue of his membership of Cambridgeshire County Council.

Councillors J W Davies and P J Downes declared a personal interest in Minute No. 49 (a) (Item No. 57) by virtue of their potential eligibility for free swimming at the District Council's five leisure centres.

Councillor I C Bates declared a personal interest in Minute No. 48 by virtue of his appointment as the District Council's representative on the Cambridgeshire Horizons Board.

Councillors I C Bates, Mrs B E Boddington, K J Churchill, S J Criswell, P J Downes, J J Dutton, R S Farrer, D Harty and L W McGuire declared a personal interest in Minute No. 49 (e) (Item No. 18) by virtue of their membership of Cambridgeshire County Council.

48. DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION - ERECTION OF 20 HOUSES AND 9 FLATS WITH ASSOCIATED WORKS AND LANDSCAPING, INFORMAL OPEN SPACE, NORTH WEST OF 5 MAYFIELD ROAD, HUNTINGDON

In conjunction with the report of the Development Control Panel (Minute No. 49 (f) refers), the Head of Planning Services introduced a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding a planning application for the erection of 20 houses and 9 flats with associated works and landscaping on an existing area of open space fronting onto Mayfield Road, Huntingdon.

In the course of his presentation, the Head of Planning Services explained that the development represented a departure from the Development Plan and would therefore require submission to Go-East on the basis that the open space proposed for development originally had been designated for protection under the Huntingdonshire Local Plan, 1995. He further advised that current Government guidance recommended the development of affordable housing in urban and sustainable locations.

The Council was made aware that the proposal would bring forward an exemplar form of sustainable residential development, deliver 29 affordable housing units and accord with the design brief adopted for the site in July 2008, with 30% of the site being retained as open space. The Head of Housing Services advised the Council of the current housing need in the District and in Huntingdon East Ward in particular, while the Team Leader, Environment described the principles of Level 5 of the Code for Sustainable Homes and referred to the example that the Council would set if it were to recommend a development which complied with this standard.

The Council received personal representations from Ms Hilton and Mr Brewer, objectors and from Mr Blake and Mr Budden, the agents for the applicants. The Chairman of the Development Control Panel, Councillor P G Mitchell, also drew attention to those issues which had led the Panel to indicate its support for the application and to recommend its approval and, following representations made by Councillors Sanderson and Thorpe, suggested that the applicant be

requested to provide an appropriately designed children's play area as part of the development.

The following issues were raised during detailed discussion of the application:-

- ◆ that Planning Policy Statement No. 1 (2007) committed planning authorities to provide homes, jobs and infrastructure with lower carbon emissions resilient to climate change;
- ◆ that the developer be requested to take established landscaping and habitats into account when developing the site;
- ◆ that it was the intention of the applicant to approach Huntingdon Town Council with a view to that Council accepting responsibility for maintenance of the open space;
- ◆ that the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Needs Assessment had identified a surplus of amenity space in the Huntingdon East Ward but that, in any event, the development would secure the retention of 30% of the site as open space; and
- ◆ that there was no Section 106 contribution proposed for education because there was no land value attached to the site and the requirement for affordable housing and a desire to provide an exemplar sustainable development outweighed any financial benefit which would normally be negotiated on behalf of consultees.

Following a number of contributions to the debate by Members both in support and against the application it was moved, seconded and

RESOLVED

- (a) that subject to conditions to be determined by the Head of Planning Services and the provision of an appropriately designed children's play area, the application for the erection of 20 houses and 9 flats with associated works and landscaping on informal open space, north-west of 5 Mayfield Road, Huntingdon be supported;
- (b) that the Government Office for the Eastern Region be requested to consider whether they wish to call in the proposal; and
- (c) that, in the event that the proposal is not called in by the Government Office, the application be approved, subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 8 of the report now submitted.

49. ADJOURNMENT

At 3.47pm it was

RESOLVED

that the meeting stand adjourned.

Upon resumption at 4.12pm.

50. 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 25th September, 16th October, 6th, 7th and 20th November 2008.

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In connection with Item No. 42, the Executive Councillor for Finance and Environment, Councillor T V Rogers reported that the Minister of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government had announced that there were no adjustments proposed to the grant settlements for Huntingdonshire previously indicated for 2009/10 and 2010/11. As a result approximately £600,000 in grant had been withheld to financially support other authorities. In addition, the Executive Councillor highlighted several areas critical to the preparation of the budget and MTP for the period 2009/14, making specific reference to capital and revenue reserves and the difficulties which potentially might arise from exceeding the budgets for disabled facilities grants and concessionary fares. Mention also was made of the significant level of spending adjustments identified by Heads of Service and Chief Officers following a review of budgets, MTP schemes and plans for the next five years and the continued uncertainty surrounding the Government's approach to capping.

To clarify the position, the Executive Councillor reported that the District Council's contribution to the County Council's accident safety scheme on the A141/Kings Ripton road junction, Huntingdon would be financed from the MTP bid for the local transport plan (£30,000), Huntingdonshire Transport Strategy (£5,000) and Safe Cycle Routes (£20,000) with a balance of (£20,000) coming from LPSA reward funding.

In concluding his address, Councillor Rogers envisaged that Council Tax was unlikely to rise above 4.99% leading to an increase of between 0.48p and £5.76 per month for a band D property. Therefore, he commended the recommendation of the Cabinet on the draft budget and MTP 2009 – 2014 to the Council.

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor P J Downes, welcomed the contribution made by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels to the budgetary process and the clarification received on the position in respect of the A141 safety scheme.

Referring to the income raised by the Council from fees and

charges, Councillor I C Bates, Leader of the Council, drew attention to the difficulties which might result from the effect of the economic downturn on income from planning fees, recycling credits and admissions to the leisure centre complexes, with a possibility that spending might require further adjustment to allow for any resulting loss of income over the next few months.

Whereupon, having been moved and seconded and put to the vote the recommendation contained in Item No.42 was declared to be CARRIED

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In connection with Item No. 49 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes regarding the setting of more ambitious targets for recycling and composting, the Leader, Councillor I C Bates, referred the questioner to a response to a similar question given by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change to a meeting of the County Council held on 21st October 2008 when Councillor Downes had been present.

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In connection with Item No. 50 and in response to a question from Councillor G S E Thorpe, regarding the extent of consultation thus far with town councils in the District over a proposal to introduce additional cleansing services in town centres on Sunday mornings, the Leader, Councillor I C Bates replied that the Head of Operations had been requested to investigate the feasibility of the proposal which had arisen following a study by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery). Consultation with the town councils would follow and in the circumstances Councillor Bates suggested that it would be premature to draw any conclusions regarding a necessity to increase the town councils' precepts to cover additional cleansing rotas.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 25th September, 16th October, 6th, 7th and 20th November 2008 be received and adopted.

(b) Standards Committee

Mr D L Hall presented the Report of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 20th November 2008.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 20th November 2008 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 and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) held on 11th November 2008.

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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 11th November 2008 be received and adopted.

(d) 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 14th October and 11th November 2008.

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In connection with Item No. 25 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, Councillor Gray concurred with the views expressed by the questioner in terms of the opportunities presented by home working but he acknowledged that the process might not be appropriate for all post holders.

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In connection with Item No. 28 and in response to a question from Councillor W T Clough, Councillor Gray explained that at each meeting Members systematically reviewed via the Decision Digest, Forward Plan and progress reports the work of the Council to consider how the Panel could influence the decisions that were upcoming or being made in various forums.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) held on 14th October and 11th November 2008 be received and adopted.

(e) 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 7th October and 4th November 2008.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) held on 7th October and 4th November 2008 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 13th October and 17th November 2008.

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In connection with Item No. 15, it was noted that the recommendations had been considered previously under Minute No. 48 ante.

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Councillor Mitchell drew attention to Item No. 17 and concerns expressed with regard to the traffic and transport issues presented by proposals to develop the area around Butts Grove Way, The Whaddons and Suffolk House, Huntingdon and informed the Council that he had requested a traffic and travel assessment to examine how traffic generated by the proposed new development might be managed.

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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 3rd October and 17th November 2008 be received and adopted.

(g) Employment Panel

Councillor Mrs B E Boddington presented the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 18th November 2008.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 18th November 2008 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 6th November 2008.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 5th November 2008 be received and adopted.

(i) Licensing Committee

Councillor J M Sadler presented the Report of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 5th November 2008.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 5th November 2008 be received and adopted.

(j) Appointments Panel

Councillor L M Simpson presented the Report of the meeting of the Appointments Panel held on 7th November 2008.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Appointments Panel held on 7th November 2008 be received and adopted.

(k) Corporate Governance Panel

Councillor C J Stephens presented the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 23rd September 2008.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 23rd September 2008 be received and adopted.

51. 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 P G Mitchell to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor P L E Bucknell

In response to a question regarding progress towards the allocation of pitches in the District for Gypsy and Traveller Families, Councillor Bucknell replied that the Development Plan Document (DPD) on Gypsy and Traveller sites would be issued for consultation early in the new year with a view to achieving an objective of 20 pitches for gypsy/traveller families in the District by 2011 as required by the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England.

Question from Councillor Mrs B E Boddington to the Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy, Councillor A Hansard

In response to a question regarding the ineffective mobile 'phone coverage in some villages in the District, Councillor Hansard replied that he had become aware of the difficulties experienced by some communities via the recent great digital debate in St. Ives and that he would continue to lobby and monitor the situation as exclusion from the network was not conducive either for residents or for a healthy and vibrant business network in the District.

Question from Councillor J E Garner to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor P L E Bucknell

In response to a question regarding the performance of the Development Control Section of the Planning Services Division, Councillor Bucknell replied as follows –

- ◆ in 2007/08, the Council had processed 2,057 planning applications;
- ◆ 72% of major applications were determined within 13 weeks, exceeding the national target of 60%;
- ◆ 69% of minor applications were determined within eight weeks exceeding the national target of 65%; and
- ◆ 89% of all other applications were determined within 8 weeks exceeding the national target of 80%.

In that year, the Council also had processed 1,614 formal requests for pre-application advice and permitted development determinations. He explained that this currently was a discretionary service which was not charged. Officers endeavoured to respond to inquiries within four weeks but did make it clear to customers that this might not always be possible. Councillor Bucknell advised that with regard to formal condition monitoring, the applicable legislation and the ability of the Council to charge for this service had only come into force earlier this year and therefore it was too early to define performance in respect of this specific area.

Question from Councillor D J Priestman to the Executive Councillor for Finance and Environment, Councillor T V Rogers

In response to a question regarding the liability of small businesses in the District to pay council or business tax, Councillor Rogers reported that a scheme which would permit relief for small businesses from Council Tax would commence on 1st April 2009 and that the Council would continue via the Local Government Association, to lobby the Government for improved benefits in this area.

Question from Councillor M F Shellens to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates

In response to a question regarding proposals for car parking on the Riverside Park, Huntingdon, Councillor Bates replied that he considered it inappropriate and premature to comment on the question in advance of the conclusion of the consultation process on various uses for the Riverside Park but he confirmed that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) would have the opportunity to consider the outcome of the exercise.

Question from Councillor G S E Thorpe to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor P L E Bucknell

In response to a question regarding the old fire station site in St. Neots, Councillor Bucknell replied that the current planning application to allow for the demolition of the old fire station building had been prompted by the need for the Council, as a responsible land owner, to have regard to issues of public safety. A recent structural report (in May 2008) had confirmed that the building was structurally unsafe and potentially liable to an uncontrolled collapse. Such an event could potentially endanger pedestrians and cause damage to the footpath and the busy roadway to the front of the property. The existing building also contained asbestos and this would need to be moved in a controlled manner. Currently the Council had no plans for

the re-use or redevelopment of the site. Whilst he was aware that there had been various informal discussions about the future of the site, Councillor Bucknell confirmed that it had not been marketed and no application for its development had been received. Planning Officers remained willing to talk to any interested parties about the Council's land holdings and/or the planning process.

Question from Councillor P J Downes to the Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Information Technology, Councillor L M Simpson

In response to a question regarding the question of increased fly-tipping in Brampton Ward following the closure of the waste recycling centre in Buckden, Councillor Simpson assured the questioner that he would, on behalf of the responsible Executive Councillor, continue to monitor the number of such incidents and any additional cost involved in clearing the rubbish.

Question from Councillor M G Baker to the Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Councillor for Customer Services and Information and Technology, Councillor L M Simpson

In response to a question regarding the total cost of the recruitment process for the post of Director of Central Services, Councillor Simpson undertook to respond to the questioner in writing.

52. 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 5.07pm.

Chairman