

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COUNCIL held in the Great Hall, Priory Centre, St Neots, PE19 2BH on Wednesday, 24 June 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor J W Davies – Chairman.

Councillors M G Baker, I C Bates,  
Mrs B E Boddington, P L E Bucknell,  
K J Churchill, W T Clough, Mrs K E Cooper,  
S J Criswell, 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,  
C R Hyams, Mrs P A Jordan, L W McGuire,  
P G Mitchell, A Monk, M F Newman,  
D J Priestman, T V Rogers, J M Sadler,  
T D Sanderson, M F Shellens, L M Simpson,  
C J Stephens, P A Swales, Ms M J Thomas,  
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 J D Ablewhite, K M Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, J T Bell, E R Butler, Mrs J A Dew, Ms S Kemp and Mrs D C Reynolds.

### 14. PRAYER

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

### 15. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### (a) Councillor R Powell and former Councillor A Stenner

The Chairman paid tribute to Councillor R Powell who had died on 3rd June 2009, having served as a District Councillor for the Ramsey Ward for the past seven years. Tribute also was paid to former Councillor A Stenner, a District Councillor for the Buckden Ward for two years, who had died recently. Both Members had been extremely active in community life in their local areas. Councillor P J Downes, Leader of the Opposition and Councillors J J Dutton and P L E Bucknell paid tribute to Councillor Powell's tenacious character and to his motivation and desire to serve the interests of the people of Ramsey, mentioning in particular his campaign for safer roads in the Fens. Councillors Bucknell and Downes also commended the support given by former Councillor Stenner to the Huntingdonshire Society for Blind and to his overall contribution to the life of the District and County. After prayer by the Reverend Savage, Members stood and observed a minute's silence in their memory.

(b) **Armed Forces Week**

The Chairman reported that he had been honoured to host a ceremony on 22nd June 2009 to mark the commencement of Armed Forces Week which had been attended by distinguished guests including the Deputy Lord Lieutenant and representatives of the Armed Forces.

(c) **Recognitions and Award**

The Council announced that the Council's Fraud Team had been shortlisted for the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation "Excellence in Anti-Fraud" Team of the Year Award and if successful would go forward to the final at the IRRV Conference in October 2009. Congratulations also were extended to the CCTV Team whom had been awarded "Supporter of the Year" 2008/9 for the third year running by the Huntingdon Businesses Against Crime.

(d) **Members Vs Officers Cricket Match**

The Chairman updated the Council on arrangements for the annual cricket match between Members and Officers which had been re-arranged for Monday, 30th July 2009 at the St Ivo Outdoor Complex.

**16. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 13th May 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**17. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillors Mrs K E Cooper, R W J Eaton, G S E Thorpe and P K Ursell declared a personal interest in Agenda Item No. 7 (d), Item No 1 by virtue of their membership of St Neots Town Council.

**18. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: SECTION 84 - RAMSEY WARD**

The Chief Executive reported that following the recent death of former Councillor R Powell, the resultant vacancy in the Ramsey Ward would be filled at a by-election to be held on 23rd July 2009.

**19. FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2009/10**

By reference to a report by the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), Councillor J M Sadler, Chairman of the Licensing and Protection Panel, reminded the Council that the Food Standards Agency required the Council to prepare a Food Safety Service Plan annually in accordance with an agreed framework. A full copy of the Food Safety Service Plan 2009/10 had been made available in the Members' Room (an executive summary of the Plan is appended to the report now submitted).

Members were reminded of the objectives of the Service Plan in

terms of identifying resources, establishing a work programme and providing a means by which to measure and manage performance.

In terms of performance, the Food Service Team had inspected 98% high risk and 98.5% low risk food premises, a total of 1,118 inspections and visits in 2008/09 as part of programmed activities and in response to complaints and food alerts. Councillor Sadler also drew the Council's attention to the success of the "Huntingdonshire Scores on the Doors" food hygiene rating scheme which had attracted 30,000 searches on the website since its introduction in October 2008 and had contributed to an increase in hygiene standards across the District.

Councillor Sadler advised Members that in 2009/10, the Team would continue to direct their resources towards high risk food premises, explore the use of alternative enforcement strategies and develop healthy eating initiatives for businesses and the community as identified in "Growing Success" and the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Whereupon, after noting the support for the Plan on the part of the Licensing and Protection Panel, the Council

RESOLVED

that the Food Safety Service Plan 2009/10 be adopted.

## **20. CABINET PROCEDURE RULES - DELEGATION BY THE LEADER**

In accordance with the Procedure Rules contained in the Council's Constitution, the Council noted the allocation of executive functions for the ensuing Municipal Year contained in a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book).

In response to questions, the Leader assured the Council that he had confidence in his Executive Councillors to advise him should any concerns arise over the extent of their particular portfolios.

## **21. REVIEW OF THE DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE/CONSTITUTION**

Further to Minute No. 66 of the meeting of the Council held on 22nd April 2009, the Chairman of the Democratic Structure Working Group, Councillor K J Churchill, presented a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which summarised those issues which had emerged from recent reviews requiring variations to the District Council's Constitution.

The Council was reminded that any Motion to add to, vary or revoke the Council's Rules of Procedure, when proposed and seconded, needed to stand adjourned without discussion to the next ordinary meeting of the Council. Therefore, having acknowledged the opportunities presented by the changes to reinvigorate participation in the democratic process and thanked Members and Officers for their contribution to the Working Party's review, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the following variations to the Council Procedure Rules (Standing Orders) be adopted –
- (i) that major policy decisions that are reserved to Council be the subject of debate at Council meetings before public consultation, that innovative ways be used to brief Members on the subjects to stimulate debate, that arrangements be made for single issue debates (in addition to normal business) and the opposition political parties be invited to choose a subject for debate at one meeting per annum;
  - (ii) that a public question time be introduced at Council meetings as set out in the procedure appended at Annex B to the report now submitted;
  - (iii) that meetings of the Council commence at 7.00 pm in the interests of consistency with the starting times of the Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny and Development Management Panels which the public might be expected to attend;
  - (iv) that in Part 4 – Council Procedure Rules (Standing Orders) the following amendments be made:-
    - ◆ the following words be added at the end of Rule 9.1 – “The submission of a written notice of motion via e-mail will be acceptable.”;
    - ◆ the following words be inserted after the word “Group” in the tenth line of Rule 10A.3 – “and where the matter relates to a development or licensing application.”;
    - ◆ that the paragraph entitled “Who is permitted to speak to the Panel?” in Annex (iii), which relates to Rule 27(a) – Public Speaking at Development Control Panel, be amended so that the sixth bullet point is annotated with an asterisk and the following words be inserted at the end of that section – “Supporters of an application may speak on any application but will only be permitted to do so if an applicant or his representative decides not to speak or to use less than the time permitted. In any case, the time limit of three minutes for speaking in support of an application should not be exceeded.”; and
  - (v) that in the second and penultimate lines of paragraph 24, the words "Overview and Scrutiny Panel" be deleted, and a second paragraph added to paragraph 24 to read "Any Member wishing to have an item placed on an agenda for

a meeting of an Overview and Scrutiny Panel will comply with the Councillor Call for Action procedure, a guide to which is attached at Annex (iv)."

(b) that the following changes to the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution be approved -

(i) the first and second paragraphs of Item 7 be deleted and replaced by the following -

"A Member may raise an item on an Overview and Scrutiny Panel agenda in accordance with the Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) procedure. A member of a Panel may raise an item on an agenda for a meeting of that Panel which relates to the functions of that Panel. Any Member may raise an item on an agenda of a meeting of a relevant Panel if it relates to the discharge of any of the Council's functions or it affects that member's ward or any person who lives or works there. In certain circumstances CCfA may be omitted from an agenda if it is an excluded matter. A guide to CCfA is attached to the Council Procedure Rules as annex (iv)";

(ii) the third paragraph of Item 9 be deleted and replaced with the following -

"An Overview and Scrutiny Panel may choose to publish a report and recommendations

"An Overview and Scrutiny Panel must, by notice in writing, require the Council or Cabinet to consider the report and recommendations and respond indicating what action (if any) they propose to take. If the Overview and Scrutiny Panel has published its report and recommendations, the Council or Cabinet must publish their response within two months of receiving the Panel's report or the notice (if later)."

(iii) the last sentence of the first paragraph of Item 10 be deleted and replaced by the following -

"The Council or the Cabinet shall respond to a report and recommendations of an Overview and Scrutiny Panel within 2 months of receiving the report or a written notice from the Panel requiring them to consider the report (if later)."

(iv) in the penultimate sentence of the third paragraph of Item 10, the following words be added before the end of the sentence "or the written notice (if later)".

- (c) that the job or role descriptions approved by the Council under Minute No. 66 resolution (nn) in respect of the Chairman of the Council and Speaker of the Council be rescinded and the revised role description for the Chairman of the Council as set out in Annex D to the report now submitted be approved.

**22. 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 23rd and 30th April, 14th May and 18th June 2009.

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In connection with Item No. 3 and in response to a question from Councillor M F Shellens, the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services, Councillor C R Hyams undertook to advise the questioner in writing, of the timescale for the review of the maintenance programme for the Riverside Park, Huntingdon.

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In connection with Item No. 4 and in response to questions from Councillors W T Clough, P J Downes and T D Sanderson, the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor D B Dew assured Members that a comprehensive programme of public consultation and meetings for local town and parish councils would take place on proposals for the development and regeneration of land west of Huntingdon town centre, that he was confident that the current proposals for improvement works to the A14 would be pursued and that he concurred with the view that the Council should engage at the earliest opportunity in discussions with Cambridgeshire County Council on the effect on the local road network and particularly Brampton Road of the detrunking of the A14.

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In connection with Item No. 5 and in response to a question from Councillor P L E Bucknell, the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor D B Dew assured the questioner that the District Council would robustly resist any proposal which suggested that the District Council should meet the deficit in housing growth rejected by other Cambridgeshire authorities.

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In connection with Item No. 7 and in response to a question from Councillor M F Shellens regarding the consultation exercise for development of land to the east of Sapley

Square, Huntingdon, the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor D B Dew indicated that the District Council would consider all comments received during the public consultation exercise.

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In connection with Item No. 10 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, the Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy, Councillor A Hansard advised the questioner that the District Council would respond to enquiries from local businesses under the Federation of Small Businesses Accord and that the Economic, Prosperity and Skills Group of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership would act as the vehicle for engagement with local businesses.

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In connection with Item No. 19 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, the Executive Councillor for Environment and Information Technology, Councillor J A Gray advised the questioner that the estimated net financial saving of £1.1m arising from a reduction in the District Council's carbon dioxide emissions over a five-year period was a cumulative figure.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 23rd and 30th April, 14th May and 18th June 2009 be received and adopted.

**(b) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being)**

Councillor G S E Thorpe presented the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 11th June 2009.

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In connection with Item No. 3 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, the Vice-Chairman of the Panel, Councillor G S E Thorpe, assured the questioner that the Panel would be advised when further details came to light on the Government's proposals for promoting the sustainability of local communities arising from the Sustainable Communities Act.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 11th June 2009 be received and adopted.

**(c) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)**

Councillor P M D Godfrey presented the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 9th June 2009.

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In connection with Item No. 3 and in response to a question from Councillor G S E Thorpe, Councillor Godfrey assured the questioner that he would continue to monitor performance under the Corporate Plan "Growing Success" for the financial year 2008/09 to ensure that where measures had been met and exceeded new stretching targets would be set.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 9th June 2009 be received and adopted.

**(d) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being)**

Councillor S J Criswell presented the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) held on 2nd June 2009.

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In connection with Item No. 1 and in response to a question from Councillor G S E Thorpe regarding progress of discussions on the Sydney Banks Playing Field, and on the possibility of consultation with St Neots Town Council and future partnership arrangements, Councillor Criswell replied that whilst he was content with the progress of the project thus far, he would seek further information on progress of work from the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Councillor Mrs D C Reynolds.

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In connection with Item No. 4 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, Councillor Criswell drew the questioner's attention to the content of the response to the consultation on the NHS Cambridgeshire Strategic Plan 2009 -14 contained in the Panel agenda which had

incorporated the views expressed by Panel Members in relation to customer care.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) held on 2nd June 2009 be received and adopted.

**(e) Development Management Panel**

Councillor P G Mitchell presented the Report of the meetings of the Development Management Panel (formerly the Development Control Panel) held on 20th April, 18th May and 15th June 2009.

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In connection with Item No. 4 and in response to a question from Councillor W T Clough, Councillor Mitchell assured the questioner that the new development management process would continue to robustly monitor and manage planning development in the District.

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In connection with Item No. 7 and in response to a question from Councillor P L E Bucknell, regarding the proposed residential element of the development adjacent to Ramsey Industrial Park, Stocking Fen Road, Ramsey, Councillor Mitchell explained that the appropriate consent had been granted for that part of the scheme which he hoped would be pursued within the time limits specified under the planning permission.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Development Management Panel and formerly Development Control Panel held on 20th April, 18th May and 15th June 2009 be received and adopted.

**(f) Employment Panel**

Councillor Mrs B E Boddington presented the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 16th June 2009.

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Councillor Mrs Boddington drew the Council's attention to the forty five years of local government service by Mr G Crocker, latterly employed in the Planning Division of the Environmental and Community Services Directorate.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 16th June 2009 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 17th June 2009.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 17th June 2009 be received and adopted.

**23. ORAL QUESTIONS**

In accordance with the Council Procedure Rules (paragraph 8.3 of the Rules), the Chairman proceeded to conduct a period of oral questions addressed to Executive Councillors and Panel Chairmen as follows:-

**Question from Councillor R S Farrer to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor D B Dew**

In response to a question regarding the working practices of the Enforcement Team in the Planning Division, Councillor Dew informed Members that four Enforcement Officers were employed to cover the District, that the numbers of enforcement enquiries recently had increased substantially and that the Team was reviewing its workload to ensure that the more serious breaches of planning control were prioritised.

**Question from Councillor P L E Bucknell to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates**

In response to a question regarding the nature of the assistance being offered by the District Council to the unemployed in Huntingdonshire, Councillor Bates, having acknowledged that it was a difficult time for individuals and businesses, assured the Council that the Sustainable Economic Development Team were continuing to encourage the development of employment opportunities and the growth of new businesses in the District and that he would request

the Head of People, Performance and Partnerships to brief Councillor Bucknell in detail on the various activities being pursued by the Team.

**Question from Councillor M G Baker to the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services, Councillor C R Hyams**

In response to a question regarding the Council's policy of identifying those properties occupied by the frail, elderly and vulnerable for refuse collection purposes and the steps being taken to vary a well intentioned practice which continued to place individuals at risk, Councillor Hyams replied that he was reviewing the practices of other local authorities and would welcome the questioner's support and involvement in seeking to improve the current arrangements.

**Question from Councillor R W J Eaton to the Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health, Councillor K J Churchill**

In response to a question in relation to home improvement grants for those in receipt of a war disability pension, Councillor Churchill encouraged those wishing to apply for home improvement grants to contact the Home Improvements Agency for advice or to seek further information from the District Council's website.

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

In response to a question, Councillor Hyams undertook to contact Twigden Homes regarding the adoption by the Council of open space at Hinchingsbrooke Park.

**Question from Councillor R S Farrer to the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services, Councillor C R Hyams**

In response to a question, Councillor Hyams undertook to keep Councillor Farrer informed of the action proposed to be taken to address anti-social behaviour around the trim trail at the Pocket Park, Eynesbury.

**24. 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.

**25. MEMBERSHIP OF PANELS/COMMITTEES**

RESOLVED

that Councillor D J Priestman be appointed to serve on the Licensing and Protection Panel/Licensing Committee.

The meeting concluded at 3.45 pm.

Chairman

