

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COUNCIL held in the Burgess Hall, St Ivo Leisure Centre, Westwood Road, St Ives, PE27 6WU on Wednesday, 28 October 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor J W Davies – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, M G Baker,
K M Baker, I C Bates, J T Bell,
P L E Bucknell, E R Butler, K J Churchill,
W T Clough, P H Dakers, Mrs J A Dew,
D B Dew, P J Downes, J J Dutton,
R W J Eaton, R S Farrer, 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,
M F Newman, D J Priestman, P D Reeve,
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, Ms M J Thomas,
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 Mrs M Banerjee, Mrs B E Boddington, Mrs K E Cooper, S J Criswell, J E Garner and A Monk.

IN ATTENDANCE: Cllr N Dibben - St Ives Town Council
Cllr Ms K Dunn - Hilton Parish Council
Cllr T Hayward - Buckden Parish Council
Cllr B Henderson - Fenstanton Parish Council
Cllr N Maggs - Brampton Parish Council
Cllr Mrs P Muspratt - Hemingford Abbots Parish Council
Cllr P Seabrook - Kimbolton Parish Council.

41. PRAYER

Reverend M Jones, an employee of the District Council, opened the meeting with Prayer.

42. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Former Councillor Mrs F Wagstaffe

The Chairman paid tribute to former Councillor Mrs F Wagstaffe, who had died recently, having served as a Councillor for the Ramsey Ward for 26 years. He mentioned that former Councillor Mrs Wagstaffe had been extremely

active in community life in Ramsey and as the Council's representative on Age Concern. Councillor I C Bates, Leader of the Council and Councillors P A Swales, P L E Bucknell, E R Butler, M F Newman and P D Reeve also paid tribute to former Councillor Mrs Wagstaffe's strong-minded character and commended her motivation and desire to serve the interests of the people of Ramsey. After prayer by the Reverend Jones, Members stood and observed a minute's silence in her memory.

(b) Charity Ball

The Chairman reminded the Council that his charity ball would take place at the Burgess Hall, St Ives on Friday, 30th October 2009. Having encouraged all Members to attend, the Chairman reported that all proceeds from the event would be donated to MacMillan Cancer Relief, St John's Ambulance Brigade and Magpas.

(c) Recognitions and Awards

The Council was informed that the Creative Exchange had won the British Construction Industry award for the best public building category. Additionally, it was announced that the Customer Service Centres in Ramsey and Yaxley had achieved the Customer Service Excellence Award. Congratulations were also extended to the Council's Fraud Team who had been short-listed to the final three in the country for the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation's award for "Excellence in Anti-Fraud".

(d) Member Development Charter

The Council was reminded of its commitment to the Member Development Charter and Members were encouraged to attend an explanatory event scheduled on 2nd November 2009 at Buckden Millennium Centre.

(e) Remembrance Day

Members were encouraged to represent the Council at forthcoming Remembrance Services on Sunday, 8th November 2009 in their respective Wards.

43. MINUTES

Subject to the amendment of the initials for Councillor Reeve from "D P" to "P D" in line 4, paragraph 10 of Minute No. 34 and the first line of Question 1 under Minute No. 39, together with the substitution in the first sentence of the fifth paragraph of Minute No. 36 of the words "Councillor P D Reeve welcomed the proposed adoption of the Core Strategy and, in particular, those initiatives which promoted employment" by the words "Councillor P D Reeve expressed his concern over the proposed adoption of the Core Strategy", the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 23rd September 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

44. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor W T Clough declared a personal interest in Minute No. 46 by virtue of his membership of Buckden Parish Council.

Councillors J J Dutton and C R Hyams declared personal interests in Minute No. 46 by virtue of their membership of Godmanchester Town Council.

Councillor M F Shellens declared a personal interest in Minute No. 46 by virtue of his membership of Brampton Parish Council.

45. COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

The Chairman reminded Members of the decision made by the Council to suspend Council Procedure Rule 11 (Rules of Debate) to enable headline debates and "white paper" proposals to be discussed by Members in an open manner. The Council therefore

RESOLVED

that Council Procedure Rule 11 (Rules of Debate) be suspended for the duration of the discussion on Minute Nos. 46 and 47, during such time, the common law rules of debate be observed by Members and applied by the Chairman.

46. COUNCIL DEBATE

(Councillor C R Hyams addressed the Council as both Godmanchester Town Council representative and also as Ward Member for Godmanchester).

The Chairman invited Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport to open the debate on -

"The A14 Ellington to Fen Ditton Improvement Scheme - Public Consultation".

In his opening remarks, Councillor Dew acquainted Members with background to the A14 improvement scheme and drew attention to the wide ranging implications of the road in local, regional, national and European economy terms. Members were reminded that a Special Meeting of the Council would be held on 22nd December 2009, when the Council's response to the proposed improvement scheme would be finalised. Councillor Dew highlighted the importance of the delivery of the improvements, and in particular, the need to segregate local and strategic traffic, with a view to avoiding the problems of traffic congestion and accident levels that were currently being experienced by local residents and communities.

In advance of the debate and receiving the views of affected Town and Parish Councils, the Transportation Team Leader presented a computer simulation of the new route and the proposed arrangements for Huntingdonshire.

Members were informed that an open invitation had been extended to

all Town and Parish Councils in the District to express their views on the proposals so that the Council could take them into account before reaching its own decision. The Chairman therefore invited representatives of Brampton, Buckden, Fenstanton, Godmanchester, Hemingford Abbots, Hilton, Kimbolton and St Ives Councils to address Members, expressing their Council's initial comments on the proposals. Support was generally expressed for the scheme but a number of issues were raised in terms of interchange and access arrangements, air pollution, noise, construction traffic and the impact on local roads. *(Details of the comments by individual councils are available from the Council's Democratic Services Section).*

Councillor J D Ablewhite opened up the debate by expressing his support for the preferred "Orange Route" being proposed by the Highways Agency.

Although having welcomed the proposal as the representative of Godmanchester Town Council, Councillor C R Hyams, in his capacity as Ward Councillor, expressed a wish to see a pelican crossing being included within the proposals for Godmanchester. He also commented upon the restrictions that might be placed on residents travelling into and out of the village due to the potential impact of increased traffic on local roads, in particular, the A1198. Comment was also made upon the funding for future maintenance of local roads, which he believed would deteriorate as a consequence of anticipated increases in traffic.

Having endorsed the views of Buckden Parish Council, Councillor R J West reminded Members of the need to address issues that required attention, namely air quality, noise pollution, visual impact and the risks associated with flooding, which all would have a subsequent impact upon local communities. Although welcoming the proposal for the removal of the existing Huntingdon viaduct, Councillor West reiterated the concerns raised by local Parish Councils on the potential impact on traffic congestion.

Having welcomed the proposal, Councillor K M Baker reported the views of Alconbury Parish Council on the potential impact of the removal of the Huntingdon viaduct on vehicles travelling to Alconbury.

In acknowledging the concerns raised by Members and the Town and Parish Councils with regard to the removal of the existing viaduct, Councillor P L E Bucknell sought clarification on the process for its removal, particularly the impact that works would have upon Buckden and Brampton. Councillor Bucknell questioned what the implications would be for Huntingdonshire, should a decision be made to retain the viaduct in its present position.

In concurring with the concerns raised in respect of the removal of the viaduct, Councillor W T Clough expressed his view that while the A14 improvements would be beneficial in the long term for Buckden, further information should be made available on the de-trunking of the existing route of the road. Councillor Clough went on to emphasise the importance of getting the balance right in terms of satisfying the needs of local communities and in ensuring that adequate transportation links were established within the District. In terms of the proposals relating to the west of Brampton, Councillor P J Downes,

reiterated the concerns made by Brampton Parish Council with regard to the proposed layout of the road where it was proposed to change from a three-lane to a two-lane carriageway. Additionally, Councillor Downes questioned the lack of detail provided in the plans for junctions, particularly on link roads. He suggested that there might be a risk of severe traffic congestion on Brampton Road which could potentially obstruct access to and from Huntingdon Railway Station. In commenting upon the removal of the viaduct, he agreed that Cambridgeshire County Council would not be able to continue to meet the maintenance costs of the current structure in its present form when the road was de-trunked. Councillor Downes concluded by accepting that, it would be difficult to satisfy the needs of all of the residents of Huntingdonshire but that efforts should continue to be made to ensure that the final proposal would benefit the wider local community.

Councillor M G Baker expressed his opinion that the scheme would attract additional traffic to the area, resulting in increases in the level of traffic movement currently being experienced in Huntingdonshire and inherently greater dangers for road users. In representing the smaller village communities in the west of the District, Councillor Baker raised concern at the risks associated with the anticipated traffic increase given the fact that the majority of the slip roads joining the A14 west of the A1 were very short in length. He requested that the issue be addressed in advance of construction works on the new road.

Councillor J A Gray endorsed the views expressed by Councillor Baker and underlined the importance of ensuring that the problems raised by Members be addressed, particularly with regard to the lack of detail provided on the impact of the removal of the viaduct. He also drew Members' need to look ahead and anticipate possible future upgrades to both the A14 and A1 if traffic flows continued to rise.

Councillor Mrs J A Dew placed on record her support for the proposals and commented that works to improve the A14 should not be delayed. This view was echoed by Councillor P H Dakers, who also concurred with the views expressed by Councillor Downes that a balance would have to be struck in favour of the majority when considering the impact of the scheme.

Referring to the economic benefits that the new A14 would bring to the District, Councillor A Hansard highlighted the importance of the route in transport and strategic terms. He also drew attention to the population and growth projections for the District over the forthcoming years and reiterated the view that the commencement of works to the new A14 should begin without any unnecessary delay.

Whilst expressing his support for the scheme, Councillor T V Rogers commented upon the impact that the proposal would have on communities to the north of the A14, bearing in mind that the main aggregate extraction site for the County was located in the Needingworth area. Specific comment was made on the impact that aggregate vehicles would have upon local roads, while construction works were taking place. Councillor Rogers emphasised the need to raise the issue of the routing of vehicles with Cambridgeshire County Council given the implications that this would have upon communities

in terms of increased traffic movement and noise and air pollution.

Councillor M F Shellens reiterated the concerns which had been raised in respect of the proposals for Brampton Road and the lack of detail provided in the plans for the associated junctions. He echoed concerns for the potential for traffic to build up along Brampton Road arising from the removal of the viaduct. Additionally, he commented upon the HGV ban in place within Brampton and the need to ensure that this was effectively enforced. He also urged the Highways Agency to give sufficient consideration to the proposals in the Hinchingsbrooke/Brampton Road area, given the fact that there would be increased pedestrian movement in the event of the relocation of Huntingdonshire Regional College.

Councillor J J Dutton expressed his support for the preferred "Orange Route" but commented that consideration needed to be given to the impact of the junctions and link roads located in Brampton, Huntingdon and Godmanchester.

In noting the issues raised by Members and also commenting on the environmental impact of the proposal, Councillor I C Bates, Leader of the Council, urged that any further views be directed to Officers of the District Council in advance of the Special Meeting.

Councillor Dew thanked all Members and the Town and Parish Council representatives for their contributions to the debate, particularly those who had raised issues requiring further investigation. In his concluding remarks, Councillor Dew reported that he would be asking Officers to investigate the issues raised in time for the Council's Special Meeting on 22nd December and that the challenge now faced by the Council would be to encourage early delivery of a new and enhanced A14 for the benefit of all Huntingdonshire communities.

47. EXECUTIVE POLICY ISSUES: PROGRESS ON THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, outlined how the Council was moving forward on the Local Development Framework following the adoption of the Core Strategy by the Council in September 2009. Members were reminded that the Strategy set out the strategic planning framework for the District for the period up to 2026 and was regarded as the principal document within the Local Development Framework.

The Council noted the range of work being undertaken by the Planning Division to direct and manage sustainable growth, including issues relating to housing, employment, retail and other development. A brief outline of the planning policy documents currently being compiled was given, which included the Development Management DPD, the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan, the Gypsy and Traveller DPD and the Planning Proposals DPD. Councillor Dew also reported that consideration currently was being given to the need for an Area Action Plan for St Neots, in light of the anticipated growth projections for the Town in ensuing years. The Council was also advised that the Strategic and Housing Land Availability Assessment, Employment Land Review and Retail Study were currently being updated, and that

design briefs and urban design frameworks were being compiled to support and encourage the development of key sites and locations across the District.

In response to questions raised by Councillor Reeve concerning what he perceived was a lack of democratic accountability on planning matters, particularly those concerning the provision of gypsy and traveller sites within the District, Councillor Dew challenged this assertion by advising Members that all regional policy documents had been endorsed by the East of England Regional Assembly Board, which comprised democratically elected Members. Having particular regard to gypsies and travellers, he reported that national policy had driven the need to identify adequate provision across the District and elsewhere and that a consultation document on the preferred sites in Huntingdonshire would be released early in the New Year.

Various comments were raised on planning policy matters by Councillors Thorpe, Gray, Mitchell, Downes, West and Bucknell to which Councillor Dew responded.

48. REPRESENTATION OF POLITICAL GROUPS ON DISTRICT COUNCIL PANELS, ETC

Following a resignation of a Member from a political group since the previous meeting, the Chairman proposed no change be made to current membership arrangements, in the light of further membership changes being required to the Council's Committees and Panels following a by-election for the Huntingdon North Ward on 29th October 2009.

RESOLVED

that no change be made to the current representation on Committees and Panels.

49. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, PANELS AND COMMITTEE

(a) Cabinet

Councillor I C Bates, Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Cabinet presented the Report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 22nd October 2009.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 22nd October 2009 be received and adopted.

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

Councillor J D Ablewhite presented the Report of the

meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 15th October 2009.

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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 15th October 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 13th October 2009.

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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 13th October 2009 be received and adopted.

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

Councillor R J West presented the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) held on 6th October 2009.

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In connection with Item No. 23 and in response to a question from Councillor G S E Thorpe regarding the preliminary options which had been identified by the Provision of Play Facilities Working Group who had been tasked by the Panel to make recommendations on achieving an even distribution of play facilities across the District and on how the ongoing revenue costs associated with such facilities would be met, Councillor West responded by informing the Council that discussions were still ongoing with Officers and the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services in this respect and that Members would be kept informed of progress as necessary.

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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 6th October 2009 be received and adopted.

(e) Development Management Panel

Councillor P G Mitchell presented the Report of the meeting of the Development Management Panel held on 19th October 2009.

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In connection with Item No. 12, Councillor Mitchell reported upon his intention to raise the matter of monitoring Section 106 Agreements at a forthcoming meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being).

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Also in connection with Item 12, Councillor P A Swales commented on highway alterations in Ramsey as part of the Section 106 requirements for the current Tesco's development in the Town and asked the Leader of the Council, the Chairman of the Development Management Panel and Councillor P L E Bucknell to meet representatives of the Town Council and the Community Hall Trust to discuss the impact of the Section 106 proposals on the local infrastructure. Councillor Mitchell accepted the invitation on his part and Councillor P D Reeve also offered his attendance at the meeting in his capacity as County Councillor for the Ramsey Electoral Division.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Development Management Panel held on 19th October 2009 be received and adopted.

(f) Corporate Governance Panel

Councillor C J Stephens presented the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 22nd September 2009.

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In connection with Item No. 14, Councillor Stephens delivered a brief outline of the work undertaken by the Panel to ensure that appropriate governance arrangements were in place within the Council.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 22nd September 2009 be received and adopted.

50. ORAL QUESTIONS

In accordance with 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 J J Dutton to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor D B Dew

In response to a question as to when the Council would begin work on producing a Conservation Statement for Hartford, Councillor Dew replied that although this was regarded as a priority, a shortage in staff resources had meant that work on the statement could not be commenced. An assurance was given by Councillor Dew that work would begin once the staffing issue had been resolved.

Question from Councillor J D Ablewhite to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor D B Dew

In response to a question concerning a proposal to build a large scale housing development in Godmanchester east of the A1198, it was confirmed by Councillor Dew that the Development Management Panel responsible for determining applications for planning permission would be the appropriate body to consider such a plan.

Question from Councillor P D Reeve to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates

In response to a question regarding the level of financial and staffing resources expended by the Council over the past 10 years and forecast over the next 5 years on the adoption of the euro currency by the Government, Councillor Bates reported that, to the best of his knowledge, no resources had been spent in this way, nor were there any plans to do so.

Question from Councillor A N Gilbert to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates

In response to a question regarding the timing of the counting of votes for the Huntingdon Parliamentary Constituency when the General Election was held in 2010, Councillor Bates undertook to reply to the questioner in writing.

Question from Councillor A Hansard to the Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health, Councillor K J Churchill

In response to a question regarding the impact on smaller communities of the impending Neighbourhood Forums in Huntingdonshire, Councillor Churchill replied that the Democratic

Structure Working Group would be reviewing the outcome of a pilot that had taken place in St Neots in September and that consideration would be given to concerns which had been raised at the meeting for discussions to be inclusive and not focused exclusively on the Towns.

Question from Councillor D Harty to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates

In response to a question concerning the increasing number of partnership arrangements entered into by the Council, and the requirement for Members to scrutinise such arrangements, Councillor Bates concurred that such arrangements were increasing. He drew attention to a number of successes already achieved through Cambridgeshire Together, particularly in terms of engaging with a wide variety of partners, including those from the voluntary sector. Additionally, Councillor Bates reported upon the current "Making Cambridgeshire Count" initiative which was seeking to change the way public services were being delivered across the County. Comment was also made upon the positive approach towards engaging with the community through the Neighbourhood Forums and the importance for the Council in continuing to grow and develop its partnership arrangements for the benefit of Huntingdonshire.

Question from Councillor R S Farrer to the Executive Councillor for Environment and Information Technology, Councillor J A Gray

In response to a question concerning the level of capital expenditure required and the priority accorded for improvements to Huntingdon Bus Station, Councillor Gray replied that whilst continuing to be open minded about the scheme in light of the Council's current financial situation, he currently was investigating other cost effective means of improving the current facilities.

Question from Councillor Ms M J Thomas to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor D B Dew

In response to a question regarding the potential for a Master Plan for St Neots to be produced, Councillor Dew replied that consideration for producing Master Plans for certain areas across the District was already underway.

Question from Councillor R J West to the Executive Councillor for Operational and Countryside Services, Councillor C R Hyams

In response to a question regarding the potential to extend the CCTV service to other services/businesses in the local area, Councillor Hyams replied that discussions were currently ongoing in this respect.

Question from Councillor P L E Bucknell to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor D B Dew

In response to a question concerning the adoption of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Submission Plan by Cambridgeshire County Council and the subsequent impact

of an industrial compost site being proposed in Warboys, Councillor D B Dew undertook to investigate the situation.

Question from Councillor P A Swales to the Chairman of the Development Management Panel, Councillor P G Mitchell

In response to a question concerning the receipt and expenditure of Section 106 Agreement income, Councillor Mitchell indicated that he would be requesting the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) to investigate the matter further.

Question from Councillor P G Mitchell to the Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health, Councillor K J Churchill

In response to a question regarding the findings of The Place Survey which had identified activities for teenagers as being in need of improvement in Huntingdonshire, Councillor Churchill replied that there currently were a number of initiatives in place which offered activities to teenagers. These included the Fusion holiday scheme, the recently launched Stukeley Skate Park facility, the Yaxley Youth Project and Street Sport activities in anti-social behaviour hotspot areas.

Question from Councillor R J West to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor D B Dew

In response to a question enquiring about the impact of the Local Development Framework in encouraging local businesses to relocate within the District, Councillor Dew replied that efforts were being made to engage with local businesses on a routine basis.

51. 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.

52. SPECIAL MEETING

Members noted that a Special Meeting of the Council would take place at 7.00pm on Tuesday, 22nd December 2009 at the Burgess Hall, St Ives to formulate the Council's response to the A14 Improvement Scheme.

The Chairman also announced that he had arranged a Civic Carol Service earlier that evening at 5.00pm at the Parish Church of All Saints, St Ives and he encouraged all Members to attend.

The meeting ended at 10.10pm.

Chairman