

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COUNCIL held in the Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 23 June 2010.

PRESENT: Councillor J J Dutton – Chairman.

Councillors 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, S Cawley, B S Chapman,
K J Churchill, Mrs K E Cooper, S J Criswell,
J W Davies, Mrs J A Dew, D B Dew,
P J Downes, R S Farrer, P M D Godfrey,
P Godley, J A Gray, S Greenall, A Hansard,
D Harty, C R Hyams, Mrs P A Jordan,
S M Van De Kerkhove, A Monk,
M F Newman, P D Reeve, T V Rogers,
T D Sanderson, C M Sanderson,
M F Shellens, Mrs P E Shrapnel,
C J Stephens, P A Swales, G S E Thorpe,
R G Tuplin, D M Tysoe, 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, W T Clough, N J Guyatt, P G Mitchell, Mrs D C Reynolds, L M Simpson and Ms M J Thomas.

15. PRAYER

The Venerable H McCurdy, Archdeacon of Huntingdon and Wisbech opened the meeting with prayer.

16. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Royal Visits

The Chairman reported that he had been honoured to join His Royal Highness the Duke of York on a recent visit to Meridian Audio in Huntingdon and would be welcoming His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester to Huntingdonshire in July when he would be visiting Warboys in recognition of that village having been awarded the accolade of Cambridgeshire Village of the Year three times in the past decade.

(b) Armed Forces Day

The Chairman thanked colleagues and officers for their assistance in the ceremony to raise the Union Flag to commemorate Armed Forces Day at which he had been proud to officiate.

(c) **Queen's Birthday Honours**

On behalf of the Council, the Chairman announced that he had extended congratulations to Professor M Shirley of Buckden who had been awarded a CBE in the recent Queen's Birthday Honours for services to science.

(d) **Further Recognition**

The Chairman congratulated the Council's Environment Team for the success of the recent World Environment Day exhibition and "Green Heart" Award events.

(e) **Twenty20 Challenge**

The Chairman announced that the annual cricket match between Members and Officers would take place at St Ivo Outdoor Centre on 8th July 2010 and he invited Members to register their interest as players with his PA, Mrs K Pauley.

17. PETITION

The Chairman invited Councillor D Brown of Godmanchester Town Council and representative of the Godmanchester Community Association to present a petition containing 1,127 signatories requesting the District Council to reconsider its decision to withdraw funding for the operation of the public conveniences in Godmanchester.

Councillor Brown suggested that the Council's decision would have a greater impact upon Godmanchester than elsewhere as the size of the village and the resources available were insufficient for the Town Council to be able to undertake the running and maintenance of such facilities themselves.

Councillor Brown referred to representations made to the Town Council by local businesses, residents and visitors to the village and made particular mention of two community schemes which would be adversely affected by the consequences of the decision.

On the conclusion of Councillor Brown's address, it was

RESOLVED

that the petition be referred for consideration to the Cabinet.

18. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 19th May 2010 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

19. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillors B S Chapman, Mrs K E Cooper, D Harty, S M Van de Kerkhove, G S E Thorpe and P K Ursell declared a personal interest in Minute No. 25 (a), Item No. 10 by virtue of their membership of St

Neots Town Council.

20. COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES

The Chairman reminded Members of the decision 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 No. 21 during which time the common law rules of debate be observed by Members and applied by the Chairman.

21. COUNCIL DEBATE

The Chairman welcomed Ms Claire Holloway, Corporate Programme Director at the Local Government Association (LGA) to the meeting. With the assistance of a powerpoint presentation, Ms Holloway addressed the Council on the Association’s perception of the new coalition government’s plans for local government. A copy of the LGA Briefing Note on the budget also was circulated to Members (copies of both documents are appended in the Minute Book).

The presentation described the origins and current role of the LGA and the LGA Group, the latter including other organisations that lobbied for, reported, supported and improved local government. Members were apprised of the Government’s announcements thus far, their general effect and the likely implications for district council services. Ms Holloway further described her understanding of the measures likely to be covered in the proposed De-centralisation and Localism Bill and other draft legislation which potentially might be introduced in the short-term. In concluding her address, Ms Holloway outlined to Members the offer made to the Government on behalf of the sector to secure a programme of savings, greater efficiencies and ideas for devolution which should secure a more streamlined relationship between local and national government.

Councillor P J Downes opened the debate by thanking Ms Holloway for her presentation and by asking for her view on the Government’s intentions in respect of the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and parish council precepts. Although these issues had yet to be clarified, Ms Holloway understood that RSG would be cut and it was the Government’s preference that council tax levels should be frozen. However, she added that this might not apply to parish council precepts and that she would have to seek clarification after the meeting. On the same subject, Councillor T V Rogers suggested that the LGA might consider, in negotiations with the Government, alternative means for calculating RSG.

In response to a question from Councillor P L E Bucknell regarding fortnightly refuse collections, Ms Holloway replied that it appeared that the Government were not moving away from the idea of fortnightly collections but wished to ask local councils to introduce incentives which would encourage residents to further increase the

proportion of household waste which could be recycled.

Regarding the future of the regional spatial strategies, and in answer to a question from Councillor Mrs M Banerjee, Ms Holloway undertook to respond after the meeting on what, if anything, was proposed for RSS.

Mention was made by Councillor G S E Thorpe of performance-related pay and incentive schemes and Ms Holloway confirmed that salary scales negotiated nationally did not include performance-related pay.

Councillor Downes referred to the planning implications of the proposed "free schools" proposals, questioned the source of their funding, their governance arrangements and the role of the District Council in the event for example of a proposal to use a vacant shop unit in a town centre for this purpose. In the absence of further details in this respect, the Chief Executive anticipated that specific planning regulations might need to be formulated to respond to 'free school' applications.

The Leader, Councillor I C Bates commented on several issues which had been raised at the meeting mentioning, in particular, the low level of the District Council's council tax currently, the welcomed decision to abolish quangos and the RSS and the move towards more local democracy. Ms Holloway confirmed that it appeared that powers on housing and planning would be returned to local councils based on the principle that a local area knew best how to deliver local services.

Following questions from Councillor P D Reeve, Ms Holloway confirmed that 70% of legislation formulated by the European Council affected local authorities and that it was her expectation that there would be no increase in nationally negotiated salary scales for 2010/11. She added that, in her view some local councils were sufficiently capable to take responsibility for additional services and confirmed that the LGA was funded by subscription.

On behalf of the Council, Councillor Bates thanked Ms Holloway for attending the Council meeting and for the interesting insight to the Government's further direction that she was able to provide.

22. PARISH MEETING FUNCTIONS

By way of a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Executive Councillor for Resources & Policy, Councillor K J Churchill, advised Members of an approach received from Covington Parish Meeting requesting the District Council to grant additional powers to them.

Having been advised that Covington Parish Meeting had requested additional powers to be able to contribute to the maintenance of the village hall, to pay their clerk and offer grants to local organisations under Sections 112, 133 and 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 and having acknowledged the excellent contribution made by the Parish Meeting to village life, the Council

RESOLVED

that an Order be made under Section 109 of the Local Government Act 1972 to confer upon Covington Parish Meeting the functions contained in Sections 112, 133 and 137 of the Local Government Act 1972.

23. PARISH ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

Having regard to a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Executive Councillor for Resources & Policy, Councillor K J Churchill drew the Council's attention to a situation which had arisen in Little Paxton whereby the election of parish councillors would not coincide with the district elections in the ward in 2011. This had occurred following the review of parish boundaries and electoral arrangements in Huntingdonshire and the subsequent issue of a Statutory Instrument that had brought forward the date for the election of a district councillor for the Little Paxton Ward from 2012 to 2011.

Having been consulted on whether they wished to change the date of their election to coincide with the district ward and thereby save cost, the Parish Council had asked if their election would also be brought forward.

Members were advised that a similar situation had arisen at the St Ives South Ward of St Ives Town Council but that the Town Council had asked to retain the election in 2012 to coincide with elections for the remainder of the town in that year.

RESOLVED

that an Order be made under the relevant legislation to make provision for the election of all parish councillors for the Parish of Little Paxton to be held in 2011 rather than 2012 to coincide with the elections in the Little Paxton Ward of the District Council and for councillors elected at that election to serve for five years until 2016 when the normal cycle of elections will resume.

24. PETITIONS SCHEME

The Executive Councillor for Resources & Policy, 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) seeking the Council's approval to the establishment of a petition scheme as required under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

Regulations under the Act required the handling of written and electronic petitions to be dealt with in a more consistent and coherent way by local authorities. As the Council already had in place procedures to deal with petitions, the Executive Councillor proposed that these procedures should be subsumed within a new petitions scheme in order to meet the legislative requirements.

The Council was informed that as the Order required changes to be made to existing provisions with effect from 15th June 2010 there had

been no opportunity for the Corporate Governance Panel to consider the content of the scheme, nor for the change to stand adjourned to the next meeting as required by Council Procedure Rules. Having been advised that a relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel could review the action taken by the Council in respect of any petition subsequently received, the Council

RESOLVED

that Council Procedure Rule 20.2 be suspended and the proposed changes to the Council Procedure Rules as set out in the appendix to the report now submitted be approved for implementation with effect from 15th June 2010.

25. FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2010/11

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 T Bell, 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 2010/11 had been made available in the Members' Lounge (an executive summary of which is appended to the Minutes).

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 Safety Team had inspected 99.6% of high risk and 88.3% of low risk premises, a total of 1,526 inspections and visits in 2009/10 as part of programmed activities and in response to complaints and food alerts. Attention also was drawn to the continued success of the "Huntingdonshire Scores on the Doors" food hygiene rating scheme which had attracted 82,000 searches on the website since its introduction in October 2008.

Members noted that the Pennington Report published in April 2009 had had a significant impact on resources and that all butchers premises in the District had had to be visited and audited. A comprehensive training package now was in preparation and would be introduced in early 2011.

Councillor Bell reminded the Council that, in addition to their enforcement role, the Team also provided specialised training and guidance on food safety and infectious disease control, engaged in partnership working and contributed to joint projects and initiatives.

In 2010/11, Councillor Bell advised Members that 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 2010/11 be adopted.

26. 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 22nd April, 19th May and 17th June 2010.

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In connection with Item No. 2 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes regarding the cost implications of the Cabinet's decision which suggested that the provision and management of play facilities should be undertaken at a local level by town and parish councils and community associations, Councillor Bates undertook to respond in writing to the questioner and to confirm whether relevant parish councils had been informed of this decision in view of the effect that this might have on the level of their precept in the following financial year.

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In connection with Item No. 6 and in response to a question from Councillor S J Criswell regarding the action to be taken by the Cabinet to respond to the challenges posed by the requirement for budget cuts, Councillor Bates referred to a statement which Councillor T V Rogers, Executive Councillor for Finance & Customer Services was shortly to make to the Council. However, he prefaced this presentation by remarking that, of the £6.2 billion of cuts announced by the Government, some £2.6 billion was required to be funded by local government which would inevitably have an impact on the services provided by the District Council. Although welcoming the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies and Regional Development Agencies, Councillor Bates suggested that their functions could become the District Council's responsibility presenting an even greater challenge if they were to be resourced and managed properly.

Councillor T V Rogers, Executive Councillor for Finance & Customer Services made a statement to the Council on the Council's financial position. He commenced by referring to the efficiency measures and savings totalling £1.6m which had already been secured and drew attention to the £5m in savings yet to be identified over the next three years. Against this background, Councillor Rogers proposed the following objectives and measures -

- ◆ restructuring of senior management;
- ◆ rationalisation of employees;

- ◆ comprehensive review of the Council's pay scheme;
- ◆ further use of shared services;
- ◆ improved income generated by Leisure Centres;
- ◆ further savings and efficiencies;
- ◆ re-shaping services;
- ◆ reduction in the use of consultants;
- ◆ greater partnership working;
- ◆ curtailment of the Capital Programme; and
- ◆ possible increases in Council Tax in future years.

Councillor Rogers anticipated that these measures could generate potential savings in the region of £7m adding that these proposals would form the basis of extensive consultation with partners, other local authorities and organisations, employees, trade unions and the public via a questionnaire which was currently under construction. In concluding, Councillor Rogers urged the Council to rise to the challenge while continuing to provide good quality services.

Councillor Downes thanked Councillor Rogers for the information that he had conveyed.

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In connection with Item No. 10 and in response to a question from Councillor G S E Thorpe, Councillor Bates acknowledged the questioner's appreciation of the transfer of land at Cemetery Road, St Neots to St Neots Town Council for the purpose of a burial ground.

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In connection with Item No. 11 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes regarding the impact of the delay in the scheme for improvements to the A14 on the Huntingdon western link road, Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy & Transport confirmed that the link road project would continue as planned.

On the same subject and in respond to a question from Councillor M F Shellens, Councillor Bates confirmed that as funding for the link road scheme would still be forthcoming from Cambridgeshire Horizons and Section 106 Agreements it should continue to proceed as planned.

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In connection with Item No. 13 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes regarding the potential performance of funds in 2010/11, Councillor Rogers replied that he was unable to recall the current position but could confirm that income had exceeded borrowing and that the Council would continue to seek to achieve the best return available from its investments.

Accordingly, upon being put to the vote, the recommendation contained in Item No. 13 was declared to be CARRIED.

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In connection with Item No. 16 and in response to a question from Councillor D Harty regarding the opportunity for users of Leisure Centres to enjoy free parking whilst those visiting the riverside park in St Neots could not, Councillor Bates explained that the car parks at Leisure Centres were located on land in the ownership of Cambridgeshire County Council and therefore the District Council had no control over the question of charging for their use.

On the same subject and in response to a question from Councillor R S Farrer, Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy & Transport undertook to respond to the questioner in writing to explain how use of the thirty eight spaces, which would remain free of charge for two hours in the riverside car park, St Neots would be monitored and enforced and the estimated cost of this management regime. He added that he would copy his reply to all Members.

On the same subject and in response to questions from Councillors S M Van de Kerkhove and G S E Thorpe, Councillor Bates undertook to respond to both questioners in writing with regard to the potential effect, if any, of car parking charges on trade and foot fall in St Neots, the potential displacement of parking to other sites and how he believed that charging for car parking would not adversely affect the vibrancy and vitality of St Neots town centre.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 22nd April, 19th May and 17th June 2010 be received and adopted.

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

Councillor G S E Thorpe presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 15th April, 3rd and 10th June 2010.

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In connection with Item No. 1 and in response to a question from Councillor P J Downes, Councillor Thorpe undertook to convey to the Chairman of the Panel the suggestion that opportunities should be taken to propose even minor savings in 2010/11 as part of the Medium Term Plan process.

On the same subject and in response to a question from Councillor P D Reeve proposing a further review of the decision to close public conveniences in the District, Councillor Thorpe suggested that the question should be properly addressed to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being). In the event, the Leader, Councillor Bates reiterated that the Council had had to make a difficult decision having regard to the Council's budgetary situation and that he would hope that all Councillors would unite in working towards protection of essential services.

On the same subject, Councillor Thorpe concurred with the sentiments of the Leader's statement, was hopeful that all suggestions for savings would be considered seriously and suggested that ultimately any action taken should be agreed in the best interests of the District.

Councillor J A Gray, Executive Councillor for Environment & Information Technology added that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel had previously scrutinised the provision of public conveniences in the District and had concluded that their operation and maintenance should not be funded by the District Council.

Upon being put to the vote, the recommendation contained in Item No. 1 was declared to be CARRIED.

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In connection with Item No. 3 and in response to a question from Councillor Mrs M Banerjee regarding the future of the Standards Committee, Councillor Thorpe replied that it was the expectation that new legislation published by the coalition government would propose an adjustment to the current standards regime and that all Members would be advised when these changes came forward.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 15th April, 3rd and 10th June 2010 be received and adopted.

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

Councillor P M Godfrey presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 13th April and 8th June 2010.

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In connection with Item No. 5 and in response to disappointment expressed by Councillor P L E Bucknell that Ramsey Market Town Transport Strategy did not encompass the neighbouring villages of Warboys, Bury, Ramsey Mereside and Ramsey St Mary's, the Chairman pointed out that the Strategy had identified key transport issues facing Ramsey and also proposed a programme of schemes to address the transport needs of surrounding villages.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 13th April and 8th June 2010 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 1st June 2010.

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In connection with Item No. 2 and in response to a question from Councillor M F Shellens, Councillor Criswell confirmed that the details of the developers with whom Section 106 Agreements had been negotiated would be reflected in future monitoring reports.

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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 1st June 2010 be received and adopted.

(e) Development Management Panel

Councillor P K Ursell presented the Report of the meetings of the Development Management Panel held on 19th April, 24th May and 14th June 2010.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Development Management Panel held on 19th April, 24th May

and 14th June 2010 be received and adopted.

(f) Employment Panel

Councillor P A Swales presented the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 25th May 2010.

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In connection with Item No. 5, Councillor Swales drew Members' attention to those employees who were retiring from the District Council's service and having extended his best wishes to the individuals concerned encouraged Members to give a round of applause as an indication of their appreciation for the services they had rendered to the District.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 25th May 2010 be received and adopted.

(g) Licensing and Protection Panel

Councillor J T Bell presented the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 16th June 2010.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 16th June 2010 be received and adopted.

(h) Licensing Committee

Councillor J T Bell presented the Report of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 16th June 2010.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 16th June 2010 be received and adopted.

27. ORAL QUESTIONS

In accordance with the Council's 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 P D Reeve to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates

In response to a question regarding the District Council's approach to the coalition government's preference for localism in the delivery of services, Councillor Bates confirmed that although supporting the principles involved in "localism", the Council would not consider placing a burden on parish councils. However, Councillor Bates added that parish councils did have the opportunity to raise additional resources by increasing their precepts, that the council tax levels of parish councils were not subject to capping and that in the circumstances he would ask Members to encourage their parish councils to consider taking on additional responsibilities.

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

In response to a question which suggested that parish councils would not have sufficient expertise to undertake additional responsibilities, Councillor Bates replied that parish councils could work in partnership with each other to share expertise and knowledge.

Question from Councillor P R Ward to the Executive Councillor for Operational & Countryside Services, Councillor C R Hyams

In response to a question regarding the implications for the District Council should the Government propose that local authorities return to weekly household waste collections, Councillor Hyams reminded Members that the Council already collected waste on a weekly basis albeit different bins were collected on alternative weeks. He indicated that the Operations Division would consider the implications of any new legislation should this be published.

Question from Councillor C M Saunderson to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being), Councillor S J Criswell

In response to a question regarding car parking charges at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, Councillor Criswell confirmed that despite ongoing discussions between the hospital administrators and the District Council, the decision had already been taken to raise charges for car parking in the hospital car parks.

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

In response to a question suggesting that the District Council should abandon the public consultation on the allocation of land for gypsy and traveller sites given the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategies, Councillor Bates reported that he had written to the Member of Parliament for the North West Cambridgeshire

Constituency, Shailesh Vara, MP to explain the reasons why the District Council were continuing with the consultation process. Councillor Dew added that despite the abolition of the RSS, the District Council still required an evidence-base upon which to formulate a policy against which future applications could be determined.

Question from Councillor R S Farrer to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates

In response to a question seeking justification for proposed expenditure of an estimated £3m for a multi-storey car park in Huntingdon, Councillor Bates replied that the facilities were part of proposals for the development of Huntingdon town centre and featured in the Action Plan for Chequers Court which had been in place for some time. Councillor Bates indicated that once constructed the car park could provide a source of income and that should a similar opportunity arise for St Neots in the future this also would be considered favourably.

Question from Councillor P J Downes to the Executive Councillor for Operational & Countryside Services, Councillor C R Hyams

In response to a question on progress towards the introduction of glass collections in blue bins, the economic impact and future cost projections of the new arrangements, Councillor Hyams undertook to provide a written reply to the questioner.

Question from Councillor G S E Thorpe to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy & Transport, Councillor D B Dew

In response to a question regarding the action being taken by the Council to prevent further deterioration of the Old Falcon Public House, St Neots, Councillor Dew replied that he was aware that the Old Falcon was a fine and imposing listed building that made a significant contribution to the historic character of the Market Square and that in the past Planning Services had provided design and conservation advice to potential interested parties. However, this proactive approach had not yet produced any positive results. He added that the building was on the Buildings at Risk Register and that the Planning Conservation Team was actively in the process of pursuing the owners regarding its condition and future well-being. He indicated that he would ensure that the questioner was kept informed of progress with regard to its condition.

Question from Councillor Mrs K E Cooper to the Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health, Councillor A Hansard

In response to a question which suggested that the Residents' Association at Loves Farm Development, St Neots might be experiencing some difficulty in continuing to operate, Councillor Hansard assured the questioner that the District Council would continue to monitor the situation and take any action necessary should it appear that the Association continued to experience difficulties.

Question from Councillor T D Sanderson to the Executive Councillor for Operational & Countryside Management, Councillor C R Hyams

In response to a question regarding the District Council's proposals to improve the play facilities at Coneygeare, Huntingdon, Councillor Hyams replied that discussions over plans for the site were underway in which local ward councillors had been involved.

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

In response to a question regarding the objections received to the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) on sites for gypsies and travellers, Councillor Bates assured the questioner that all responses received would be treated sensitively.

Question from Councillor M F Shellens to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy & Transport, Councillor D B Dew

In response to a question regarding the Princes Street car park in Huntingdon, Councillor Dew replied that the Council had a responsibility as an employer to have regard to the needs of its employees, that there was a maximum of fifteen places that were made available for staff in the car park who might have mobility problems and that these were allocated to staff on the advice of an occupational health specialist and reviewed on a three monthly basis. He added that this did not apply to staff who were blue badge holders and had exemptions under the Car Parking Order.

28. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: SECTION 85

The Chief Executive reported that there were no absences of Members for consideration in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The meeting concluded at 9.38 pm.

Chairman