

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, 3 November 2010.

PRESENT: Councillor J J Dutton – 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, 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, R S Farrer, P Godley, J A Gray, S Greenall, N J Guyatt, A Hansard, D Harty, C R Hyams, Mrs P A Jordan, S M Van De Kerkhove, P G Mitchell, A Monk, M F Newman, P D Reeve, Mrs D C Reynolds, T V Rogers, T D Sanderson, C M Sanderson, M F Shellens, Mrs P E Shrapnel, L M Simpson, C J Stephens, P A Swales, G S E Thorpe, R G Tuplin, D M Tysoe, P R Ward, J S Watt and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors P J Downes and P M D Godfrey.

44. PRAYER

The Right Reverend Dr D Thomson, Bishop of Huntingdon opened the meeting with Prayer.

45. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Local Democracy Day

The Chairman referred to the success of the Council's first local democracy day and expressed a hope that, given the response by the public and local schools, it would become a regular annual event. On behalf of the Council, the Chairman commended Mrs A Jerrom, Member Development Officer for her part in co-ordinating the day.

(b) Green House Project

The Chairman was pleased to report that he had officially opened the two houses in St. Neots and St. Ives which the Council had equipped with the latest energy conservation measures as part of the green house project. On behalf of the Council, the Chairman thanked the Building Research Establishment and sponsors who had lent their support and assistance to the project.

(c) **Saxongate Artists**

The Chairman reported that he had been pleased to accept on behalf of the Council, a donation of five paintings of Huntingdon scenes by clients of the disability charity, the Papworth Trust in recognition of the Council's interest and support to the Saxongate premises in High Street, Huntingdon and their campaign to install a pedestrian crossing outside the centre.

(d) **Chairman's Christmas Card**

Following a successful response to his Christmas card design competition, the Chairman announced that the winners were Ryan Samupita, Ryan White, Mustafa Ali and Samaria Lynn all of whom were aged 5 or 6 years old.

(e) **Civic Carol Service**

The Chairman encouraged all Members to join him at a civic carol service to be held at St. Mary's Church in Huntingdon on Monday 6th December 2010 about which details would be available shortly.

46. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 29th September 2010 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

47. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor T V Rogers declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute No. 50 (a), Item No. 49 by reason of a family connection with the developers of the proposed scheme and he left the civic suite during the Council's discussion on the item.

48. DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE REVIEW - 12 MONTHS ON

Councillor K J Churchill, Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy presented a report by the Democratic Structure Review Working Party (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the outcome of a review of the impact of the changes to the Council's democratic structure which had been introduced in September 2009.

The Executive Councillor drew attention to the responses received to an on-line questionnaire which had been completed by 67% of the Council's membership on the success or otherwise of the changes and was pleased to highlight that in all cases, Members had indicated their support for their continuation.

Notwithstanding the Working Party's review, the Council was reminded that the move to an Executive Leader would mean that with effect from May 2011, all responsibility for the discharge of executive matters would fall to the discretion of that person including the size, membership and timing of meetings of the Cabinet.

Having thanked those Members and Officers who had participated in and supported the review process and suggested to the Council that the Working Party should continue to meet on an ad-hoc basis to respond to proposals affecting democratic arrangements which might emerge from the coalition government, the Council

RESOLVED

- (a) that no change be made to the current democratic structure of the Council as the result of the review of the measures approved by the Council at its meetings held in April and June 2009; and
- (b) that the decision of the Cabinet to retain the Working Party in its current format to consider and report on an ad-hoc basis on legislative and other changes that may impact on the Council's Democratic Structure be noted.

49. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, PANELS AND COMMITTEE

(a) **Cabinet**

Prior to the arrival at the meeting of the Leader, Councillor I C Bates, L M Simpson, Deputy Leader and Vice-Chairman of the Cabinet presented the Report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 21st October 2010.

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In connection with Item Nos. 34 and 35 it was noted that the recommendations had been considered previously under Minute Nos. 43 and 49 ante, respectively.

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In connection with Item No. 36 and in response to a question from Councillor G S E Thorpe, the Deputy Leader assured the questioner that the Cabinet would address the need to review the Council's performance management targets in the light of changes by the Government to the nationally set performance indicators.

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In connection with Item No. 37 and in response to a question from Councillor S Greenall, Councillor T V Rogers, Executive Councillor for Finance and Customer Services gave examples of the capital budget variations amounting to £4,475,000 which had already been identified in the current year which had included housing private sector grants, a scheme for energy generation at One Leisure and ICT replacements. Councillor Rogers explained that in several cases, the variations in expenditure could be attributed to delays to the timing of schemes.

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In connection with Item No. 38 and in response to a question from Councillor C M Saunderson requesting examples of the revenue budget variations which had been identified in the current year, Councillor T V Rogers, Executive Councillor for Finance and Customer Services replied that the forecast reduction of £966,000 had resulted from changes in government grant, the transfer of expenditure relating to work at Pathfinder House and Paxton Pits from revenue to capital and an increase in income and savings achieved from the retention of vacant posts. The Executive Councillor further confirmed that £12m remained in the Council's reserves and that in the absence of information from the Government, there continued to be uncertainty on the extent of the savings to be realised on concessionary fares being transferred to the County Council. The Council was reminded that detailed information on budgetary performance was published in the agenda papers for Cabinet meetings which could be viewed on the Council's intranet.

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In connection with Item No. 39 and upon being put to the vote, it was

RESOLVED

that the public be not excluded from the meeting to permit a question to be asked arising from Item No. 39 in relation to the sale of land at Kingsbrooke, St. Ives.

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(See Minute No. 48 for Members interests).

In connection with Item No. 40 and given that the subject matter was considered confidential, Councillor K J Churchill, Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy undertook to respond to questions to be raised by Councillor T D Sanderson outside the meeting.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 21st October 2010 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 14th October 2010. Councillor Ablewhite extended an invitation to all Members to attend a forthcoming meeting of the Panel at which the draft budget

for 2011/2012 and MTP for 2012/2016 would be discussed.

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In connection with Item No. 21 and in response to questions from Councillors J W Davies, S Van De Kerkhove and R J West, Councillor Ablewhite confirmed that the report which had reviewed lessons learned during the new Headquarters and Other Accommodation Project was available on the Council's intranet and that both the Deputy Leader, Councillor L M Simpson and Mr R Preston, New Accommodation Project Co-ordinator, should be commended for their contribution to the successful conclusion of the project, the outcome of which had justified the Council's decision to re-build Pathfinder House.

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In connection with Item No. 22 and in response to a question from Councillor T D Sanderson, Councillor Ablewhite confirmed that recent investment in One Leisure hopefully would contribute to improvements in the performance of all five centres.

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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 14th October 2010 be received and adopted.

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

Councillor D Harty presented the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) held on 12th October 2010.

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Referring to Item No. 21, Councillor Harty drew attention to the Panel's decision to establish a local drainage liaison group led by Councillor P M D Godfrey which would offer local Members the opportunity to meet with Anglian Water and other agencies to seek to resolve local issues relating to flooding and the foul sewage system. Members were encouraged to raise their concerns directly with Councillor Godfrey in the first instance.

On the same subject and in response to a question from Councillor M G Baker, Councillor Harty suggested that the questioner should draw Councillor Godfrey's attention to the problems that he suggested were being experienced by the residents of West Street, St. Ives.

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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 12th October 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 5th October 2010.

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In connection with Item No. 23 and in response to questions from Councillors P D Reeve and G S E Thorpe, Councillor Criswell concurred with the view expressed by the questioners that the Neighbourhood Forums could be used more effectively to promote future consultations but he added that Members also should encourage residents within their wards to engage in the consultation exercises to help improve the responses received.

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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 5th October 2010 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 18th October 2010.

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In connection with Item No. 10 and in response to questions from Councillors R S Farrer and L M Simpson, Councillor Mitchell concurred with the views expressed by the questioners that it was essential that the scheme for the dualling of the A428 Caxton to the A1 Black Cat roundabout should be part of the local infrastructure improvements required to support the proposed St. Neots eastern expansion and also ease traffic congestion on the A14. Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport added that he took every opportunity to lobby, on behalf of the District Council, for the commencement of the A428 scheme of improvement, that he was aware that completion of 60% of the proposed new

development would trigger a response from the Highways Agency and that only 10% of any funding generated by a Section 106 Agreement could be used towards any improvements scheme.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Development Management Panel held on 18th October 2010 be received and adopted.

(f) **Employment Panel**

Councillor P A Swales presented the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 27th September 2010.

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Upon being put to the vote the recommendations contained in Item No. 8 were declared to be CARRIED.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 27th September 2010 be received and adopted.

(g) **Licensing and Protection Panel**

Councillor J T Bell presented the Report of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 26th October 2010.

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On being put to the vote, the recommendations contained in Item No. 6 were declared to be CARRIED.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraph, the Report of the meeting of the Licensing and Protection Panel held on 26th October 2010 be received and adopted.

(h) **Licensing Committee**

Councillor J T Bell presented the Report of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 26th October 2010.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Licensing Committee held on 26th October 2010 be received and adopted.

(i) **Corporate Governance Panel**

Councillor T D Sanderson presented the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 28th September 2010.

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In connection with Item No. 6 and in response to a question from Councillor G S E Thorpe requesting the Chairman to identify the key areas of activity in the Action Plan for the Value for Money Conclusion 2009/2010 where the District Council could improve its performance, Councillor Sanderson replied that he would respond to the questioner in writing after the meeting. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 28th September 2010 be received and adopted.

50. MOTION ON NOTICE

Before proceeding to the Motion on the Agenda, the Chairman announced his intention to invoke the discretion awarded to him under paragraph 9.5 (iii) of the Council Procedure Rules and to rule that the Motion submitted by Councillor M F Shellens on being moved and seconded would be dealt with at the meeting in the interests of the convenient and conducive despatch of the Council's business.

Accordingly, it was moved by Councillor M F Shellens and duly seconded -

"that, having regard to the unprecedented challenges faced by the Council in setting its budget for the short to medium terms with cuts in funding from central government now expected to exacerbate an already critical situation caused by the Council living beyond its means for many years and plans for possible cuts in revenue expenditure in the range of £6m to £12m per annum by 2014/2015, this Council requests the Executive

Councillor for Finance and Customer Services to present to the next meeting a matrix of potential expenditure cuts for each year covering the period 2011/2012 to 2014/2015 setting out the measures that would be taken to meet cumulative budget reductions of £6m, £8m £10m and £12m per annum".

Following debate, and having been put to the vote, the Motion was declared to be LOST.

51. 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 A Monk to the Leader of the Council, Councillor I C Bates

In response to a question inviting the Leader to sign a petition objecting to the potential closure of the Royal Mail Sorting Office in Ramsey, Councillor Bates replied that he was reluctant to commit to signing a petition without having first considered the detail of the proposals and that once he had had this opportunity he would respond in writing with his views to the questioner.

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

In response to a question regarding the average gross income recorded per car park space in a three months period at Mill Common and Princes Street Car Parks, Councillor Dew replied that for the three months commencing in July, Mill Common Car Park accrued an average income of £58 with Princes Street Car Park achieving £248 per space.

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

In response to a question regarding the outcome of the most recent review of those employees who were permitted to park at Princes Street Car Park free of charge for medical reasons, Councillor Dew replied that 17 employees currently were eligible to park in Princes Street for that reason, which was a reduction of four compared with the situation in June.

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

In response to a question regarding the potential use of volunteers or PCSOs to operate the Council's CCTV service in the event that the delivery of that service was reduced under the proposed budgetary measures, Councillor Bates replied that discussions had taken place with senior representatives of Cambridgeshire Constabulary on the implications of a reduced CCTV service and that he would give further consideration to the suggestion that volunteer operators could be used in future to monitor the cameras.

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

In response to a question regarding the possible use of Mill Common car park instead of Princes Street, as the reserved car park for District Council employees with medical issues, Councillor Dew replied that currently it was Council policy to provide parking for employees with a specific health need adjacent to the Council's offices. The options available for providing such parking were under review in order to balance the District Council's needs as a responsible employer with its operational requirements. It was anticipated that the District Council would be making further use of Mill Common to provide parking concessions where this would not prejudice the District Council's responsibilities as an employer.

Question from Councillor G S E Thorpe to the Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health, Councillor A Hansard

In response to a question regarding the implications for the Council's budget of the Government's decision to cap housing benefits to deter potential housing benefit migrants, Councillor Hansard replied that whilst aware of the possibility of such people approaching the District Council, for assistance it was premature to assess how great a demand there might be. He indicated that he would keep the Council informed of developments.

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

In response to a question regarding the proposed establishment of local enterprise partnerships, Councillor Dew replied that he did not share the questioner's concern that the partnerships could prove to be a form of quango, that he understood that local partnerships, whilst supported by Officers, would comprise elected representatives and local businesses and that he was hopeful that the initiatives would be successful in encouraging economic growth and in the creation of local jobs.

Question from Councillor S Van De Kerkhove to the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, Councillor D B Dew

In response to a question regarding the steps to be taken by the Council to encourage Christmas shoppers to Huntingdonshire Towns, Councillor Dew replied that through collaborative working with town partnerships, the Council would be supporting a range of Christmas related initiatives including targeted funding of £1,250 which would be made available to support local shopping schemes. However, Councillor Dew added that less than 20 vouchers had been used during the 2008 Christmas period when free car parking had been offered to shoppers in Huntingdon via District Wide.

Question from Councillor T D Sanderson to the Executive Councillor for Leisure and Law, Property and Governance, Councillor Mrs D C Reynolds

In response to a question regarding the mis-use of disabled parking bays at Huntingdon One Leisure Centre, Councillor Mrs Reynolds replied that whilst the Leisure Centre staff were vigilant, there were insufficient resources to monitor use of the car park spaces at all times. However, she indicated that she would ask the Centre Manager to keep the situation under review.

The meeting concluded at 8.44pm.

Chairman