

## 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, 18 December 2013.

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs B E Boddington – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, M G Baker,  
K M Baker, Mrs M Banerjee, G J Bull,  
E R Butler, R C Carter, S Cawley,  
B S Chapman, K J Churchill, S J Criswell,  
I J Curtis, J W Davies, D B Dew, R S Farrer,  
R Fuller, D A Giles, J A Gray, S Greenall,  
N J Guyatt, A Hansard, G J Harlock,  
R Harrison, Mrs P A Jordan, Ms L Kadic,  
S M Van De Kerkhove, Mrs P J Longford,  
A J Mackender-Lawrence, P G Mitchell,  
J P Morris, J W G Pethard, P D Reeve,  
T D Sanderson, M F Shellens, R G Tuplin,  
D M Tysoe and R J West.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors S Akthar, I C Bates, P L E Bucknell, Mrs L A Duffy, R B Howe, C R Hyams, P Kadewere, M C Oliver, T V Rogers, P K Ursell and A H Williams.

### 53. PRAYER

The Reverend A Milton, Team Rector of Huntingdon opened the meeting with prayer.

### 54. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### (a) Christmas Events

Having informed the Council of all the Christmas events that she had attended in her capacity as Chairman, Councillor Mrs Boddington thanked all those who had contributed to the success of the Civic Carol Service held at All Saints Church in Huntingdon on 3rd December and for the contributions that had been made to her charities that evening.

#### (b) Presentations

In describing a number of presentations, the Chairman drew particular attention to two St John's Award ceremonies when Colonel D Bristow, the Lord Lieutenant's representative had presented a new award created under the Order of St John in recognition of individuals who had donated organs to those in poor health. The Chairman also was pleased to report that she had presented National Lottery Funding of £145,000 from the Sports England Community Sport Activation Fund to the Sport and Active Lifestyles Team to enable the Team to encourage wider participation in sport.

**55. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 9th December 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**56. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillors R Fuller, N J Guyatt and M F Shellens declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No. 60(a) by virtue of their appointment as District Council representatives on Luminus Homes.

Councillor Mrs M Banerjee declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No. 60(a) by virtue of her appointment as a Board Member at Luminus Homes.

**57. BUDGET UPDATE**

By reference to a report by the Assistant Director (Finance and Resources) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) and the Report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 12th December 2013, Councillor J A Gray, Executive Councillor for Resources updated the Council on preparation of the draft budget 2014/15 and Medium Term Plan 2015/19.

The Executive Councillor prefaced his statement by stating that he would normally be in a position to discuss, with more certainty, the Council's draft budget for the new financial year. That he was not able to do so was due to the impact of the Government's Autumn Statement, presented on 5th December, which had varied significantly the level of savings required to be made by the Council by 2018/19. Although better news for local authorities, the Executive Councillor advised that the Council now would be required to achieve savings of £3.6m by 2018/19 which still was a considerable challenge.

Notwithstanding, the Executive Councillor urged the Council to treat the Chancellors' announcements with caution given the likelihood of further reductions in local government funding and the uncertainty around business rate relief and rules relating to Council Tax increases.

In this climate, the Executive Councillor was of the view that the Council had no alternative but to continue with the 'Facing the Future' exercise which he hoped, on its conclusion, would identify ways of achieving further savings to meet current and future spending pressures. The outcome of the Pay Review, expected in January 2014 would also clarify other costs.

Referring to a question raised by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well Being) in respect of contingency provision made within the MTP for redevelopment of RAF Wyton, the Executive Councillor confirmed that this Scheme was required to commence in 2014/15.

In conclusion, the Executive Councillor thanked the Chairmen and Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Panels for their contribution to

this exercise and the Democratic Services Team for their support.

A period of questions to the Executive Councillor followed. In response to a question from Councillor S M Van De Kerkhove regarding the pay review, Councillor Gray remarked that he was unable to advise how individual staff would be placed contractually if the outcome of the review was unfavourable and that it was inappropriate, in any event to predict the results which would emerge during January. In terms of the targeted revenue savings referred to in the Annex to the Report of the Cabinet, Councillor Gray suggested that these may/may not exceed expectations but were a starting point in identifying the overall savings required in the period.

On behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor M F Shellens indicated his support for the approach and recommendations of the Cabinet as the basis for developing the final budget although he drew attention to unknown items such as the pay review that might significantly impact on the final outcome. Although concurring with Councillor Shellens that nationally the government deficit was improving, Councillor Gray was not confident that this improvement would extend to local government and was anxious that the Council should not find itself in a position where it relied on the New Homes Bonus. He hoped to achieve a balance whereby reliance by the Council on the NHB would reduce at the same time as the financial health of the organisation improved. Higher levels of reserves would also mitigate any reduction in NHB.

In response to questions from Councillor D A Giles, the Executive Councillor reaffirmed that it was not currently the Council's intention to raise car parking charges and that the potential to charge for the green bin collection could ultimately be one of the options considered by the Council on the conclusion of the 'Facing the Future' exercise. On the same theme, Councillor P D Reeve was of the view that whilst the Council had examined the potential for savings, it had not yet addressed the opportunity to generate revenue streams such as advertising on the website and vehicles/assets which have a public face and investing in hotels for those in need of bed and breakfast accommodation. In reply, the Executive Councillor reminded the questioner that the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well Being) had considered the potential for income generation on a number of occasions and that this had subsequently been included in targeted savings (Bid No 1081). Regarding the next steps for the 'Facing the Future' exercise and in response to a question from Councillor M G Baker, the Executive Councillor advised that the suggested priority lists would be considered in the first instance by the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the Overview & Scrutiny Panels and categorised into those items which can be achieved quickly and simply, those that required further research and investigation and others which potentially could be politically sensitive and needed to be considered by the Cabinet informally before recommendations could be made to the Council. Having accepted Councillor Mrs M Banerjees' praise for the exercise, Councillor Gray admitted that it had also served to highlight areas of the Council's business which could be operated commercially to create an income.

Regarding the new multi storey car park in Huntingdon and in response to a question from Councillor R S Farrer, Councillor Gray

reaffirmed the Council's intention, in partnership with local businesses, to deliver a town centre where residents and visitors wished to spend their time. In support, the Executive Leader advised the Council that footfall in the District's towns had increased and that it was important to continue to work with private investors to create the right environment in the towns to encourage further visitors. He further contended that the Council would not have been able to attract private investment if the future success of the town centres was in any doubt.

Referring at this stage in the meeting to Item No 34 of the Report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 12th December 2013 in relation to the Treasury Management Review of Performance, Councillor Gray thanked the Accountancy Manager and his team for their contribution to the performance of the Fund Managers and Councillor M F Shellens indicated his support for the level and direction of the activity undertaken in the first half of the year.

Whereupon, it was

#### RESOLVED

- (a) that the draft Budget and Medium Term Plan, appended to the report of the Assistant Director, Finance and Resources be approved as the basis for the redevelopment of the budget for 2014/15 and the revised Medium Term Plan 2015/2019; and
- (b) that the content of the report of the Assistant Director (Finance & Resources) on the outcome of the six months review of the performance of Treasury Management be noted.

### **58. POLLING DISTRICT AND PLACES REVIEW**

Having regard to a Report by the Elections Working Group (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Chairman, Councillor N J Guyatt described the outcome of a review of polling districts and polling places required to be undertaken by the Working Group every four years in accordance with the Review of Polling Districts and Polling Places (Parliamentary Election) Regulations 2006. The aim of the review is to ensure that all electors have reasonable facilities for voting and that the polling places are accessible to all electors.

Specific attention was drawn to the comments received in response to consultation which had taken place for four weeks from October and to those locations where changes were proposed namely Diddington (due to the closure of the Village Hall), Ramsey (where the polling station was to be relocated from the Great Whyte to the library) and St Neots, Priory Park (where the polling District boundaries had been realigned) to enable residents at Chesterton Court to vote at the same place.

Having indicated that the Working Group would consider, given the extent of proposed development in St Ives, polling places in the town as a whole during the next review cycle and that it was for the Boundary Commission not the District Council to review the number

of Councillors representing each District Council ward, it was

RESOLVED

that the Schedule of Polling Districts and Polling Places 2013 as appended to the report now submitted be approved.

**59. 'GREEN PAPER' ITEM - UPDATE ON THE LOCAL PLAN**

The Executive Councillor for Planning & Housing Strategy, Councillor N J Guyatt updated the Council on progress of preparations for a new Local Plan to 2036. He opened his address by referring to the draft Cambridgeshire Long Term Transport Strategy and Action Plan which would be used as a mechanism to attract investment/make funding bids for major transport schemes in the County and Bedfordshire. This document was integral to the new Local Plan and would form part of the evidence base. He was hopeful that the Strategy would be finalised by March 2014.

Having been reminded of the main components of the Local Plan, the Council was advised of the stages that now had been completed and those key dates for the next parts of the process which ultimately should lead to adoption of a new Plan by Spring/Summer 2015.

In terms of approach, the Executive Councillor re emphasised how vital it was for the Council to identify site allocations for future development given recent experience in four Lincolnshire Districts where the Planning Inspector had deemed their plans to be unsound on the basis of their failure to identify adequate housing numbers.

The Executive Councillor closed by stating that the Council required a robust and up to date Local Plan and that he and the Planning Division would continue to work towards this end.

**60. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, PANELS AND COMMITTEE**

**(a) Cabinet**

Councillor J D Ablewhite, Executive Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Cabinet presented the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 21st November and 12th December 2013.

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In connection with Item Nos 28 and 32 and in response to a question from Councillor K J Churchill, the Executive Leader assured Members that the Motion on Notice considered at the last meeting of the Council (Minute No 46 refers) had been dealt with correctly having regard to the knowledge of local ward Councillors in terms of availability of land in St Ives for any potential extra care facility and the Council's overall concern to address, without undue delay, the needs of the elderly and vulnerable in the town. The Executive Councillor also confirmed that those residents who might not qualify to return to the replacement facility at Langley Court would be allocated alternative accommodation in St Ives.

Accordingly, upon being put to the vote, the recommendation contained in Item No 28 was declared to be CARRIED.

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The Council received and noted the Annual Report of the Executive Leader containing details of each executive decision taken where the making of the decision was agreed as urgent and adequate notice had not been given as requested. The outcome of the Cabinet's deliberations on these items had been previously reported to Council.

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In connection with Item No. 33, it was noted that the recommendation had been considered previously under Minute No. 57.

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In connection with Item No. 34, it was noted that the recommendation had been considered previously under Minute No. 57.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Reports of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 21st November and 12th December 2013 be received and adopted.

**(b) Overview and Scrutiny Panels - Social, Environmental and Economic Well-Being**

On behalf of Panel Chairmen, Councillor S J Criswell presented the Report of the meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Panels held on 5th, 7th, 12th, 14th, 19th, 20th & 28th November and 3rd & 4th December 2013.

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Councillor Criswell was of the view that the 'Facing the Future' exercise had been a valuable opportunity to consider ideas for potential savings and income generation. He thanked all Councillors who had attended the Panel meetings and indicated that he would be content to progress any further suggestions that Members might wish to contribute to the process. Councillor Criswell reminded the Council that copies of all templates had been made available to Members.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 5th, 7th, 12th, 14th, 19th, 20th & 28th November and 3rd & 4th December 2013 be received and adopted.

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

Councillor R Harrison presented the Report of the meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) held on 5th December 2013.

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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 5th December 2013 be received and adopted.

**(d) Development Management Panel**

Councillor D B Dew presented the Report of the meetings of the Development Management Panel held on 18th November and 9th December 2013.

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In connection with Item No 10 and in response to a question from Councillor P D Reeve as to the success of meetings Councillor Dew had held with the County Council, Councillor Dew advised that he had had a series of meetings with Officers involved in the CIL Regime but shortly would be meeting the Executive Councillor for Planning to seek to gain an understanding of the way in which the County Council responded to requests for observations on planning issues.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Development Management Panel held on 18th November and 9th December 2013 be received and adopted.

**(e) Employment Panel**

Councillor S Cawley presented the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 20th November 2013.

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In connection with Item No 13 and in response to a question from Councillor S Greenall, Councillor Cawley undertook to verify with the questioner the figures in relation to sickness absence referred to in the item.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 20th November 2013 be received and adopted.

**(f) Standards Committee**

Councillor A Hansard presented the Report of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 5th December 2013.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 5th December 2013 be received and adopted.

**(g) Corporate Governance Panel**

Councillor E R Butler presented the Report of the meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel held on 27th November 2013.

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Upon being put to the vote, the recommendation contained in Item No 20 was 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 Corporate Governance Panel held on 27th November 2013 be received and adopted.

**61. ORAL QUESTIONS**

Given the extent of discussion under Minute No 57 ante, there were no further questions from Members.

**62. VARIATION TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS, ETC**

There were no changes to report.

The meeting ended at 8.55pm.

Chairman