

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COUNCIL held in Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 24 February 2016.

PRESENT: Councillor P L E Bucknell – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, T D Alban, Mrs B E Boddington, D Brown, G J Bull, E R Butler, R C Carter, S Cawley, Mrs S Conboy, S J Criswell, J W Davies, D B Dew, Mrs A Dickinson, Mrs L A Duffy, R S Farrer, M Francis, R Fuller, I D Gardener, L George, D A Giles, J A Gray, S Greenall, A Hansard, R Harrison, D Harty, T Hayward, R B Howe, B Hyland, P Kadewere, Mrs R E Mathews, J P Morris, M C Oliver, J M Palmer, T D Sanderson, M F Shellens, R G Tuplin, D M Tysoe, R J West and J E White.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors K M Baker, I C Bates, B S Chapman, K J Churchill, Mrs A D Curtis, Mrs P A Jordan, Ms L Kadic, D J Mead, P D Reeve, Mrs D C Reynolds and K D Wainwright.

53. PRAYER

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

54. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

55. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 16th December 2016 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

56. MEMBERS INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

(a) NO! to 50-60 houses at St Ives Town Football Club

The Chairman invited Councillor J W Davies to present a petition on behalf of 543 signatories regarding support for the District Council's decision to refuse the application for 50-60 homes on the site of the St Ives football club. In so doing it was noted that this matter was related to a planning issue and it was proposed that no further action be taken in respect of the petition.

(b) Huntingdonshire Shopmobility

The Chairman invited Mrs D Drew, Manager of Huntingdonshire Shopmobility, to present a petition on behalf of 502 signatories concerning the decision by the District Council's Cabinet to cease funding of the Huntingdon Shopmobility with no further grant award for 2016/17.

On behalf of the petitioners, Mrs Drew outlined her support for the petition and suggested that the timescale from notification of the cessation of funding did not allow the service enough time to find alternative accommodation for the service. Whilst acknowledging that the target of external funding sources had not been achieved, Mrs Drew explained that the decision had been a surprise to them and requested that consideration be given to extending the period of funding for a further year in order to retain the current level of service.

In response to a question from Councillor J D Ablewhite on the level of reserves, Mrs Drew informed Members that they had £44k in reserves. Mrs Drew confirmed that Huntingdon Town Council had offered to fund the costs of the portacabin for a further year and outlined to Members the usage statistics of the service over a year.

In response to a question regarding the feasibility of offering the service at the other market towns, Mrs Drew explained that a service had been initiated in St Ives but bids for funding had been unsuccessful. The success of Huntingdon Shopmobility could be attributed to the pedestrianised High Street with better access for disabled users.

Councillor Ablewhite explained that although he supported funding for the voluntary groups this was dependent upon certain expectations of levels being achieved through sourcing external funding to support these activities. He further explained the Cabinet had tasked the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Customers) to undertake a review of the funding of the voluntary sector groups and report back their findings to their meeting in July 2016. Whilst acknowledging that Huntingdon Shopmobility provided a benefit for the community and businesses in the town, it was moved to offer an extension of funding for three months from April 2016 to allow for the support to be established from Huntingdon Town Council and the Business Improvement District and duly seconded by Councillor R B Howe.

Councillor S Greenall outlined his support for the proposal and referred to the misleading nature of the press release quoting 'a new deal for the voluntary sector' which had not been achieved for Huntingdon Shopmobility. In response Councillor Greenall moved that the Council match the funding put forward from Huntingdon Town Council to support the service for a further year. This was duly seconded by Councillor M F Shellens. Having been put to the vote, the motion was declared to be lost.

In respect of the substantive motion and upon being put to the vote, the Council

RESOLVED

to extend the funding of Huntingdon Shopmobility for a further three months from April 2016.

57. 2016/17 BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2017/18 TO 2020/21)

In conjunction with a report by the Head of Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) and Item Nos. 49 and 50 of the Report of the Cabinet, the Executive Councillor for Resources presented to Members the 2016/17 Revenue Budget, the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2016/17 to 2020/21, the Treasury Management Strategy and other associated matters for the Council's consideration and approval.

In accordance with Section (30)2 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Council also considered proposals for levels of Council Tax in 2016/17 for various parts of the Huntingdonshire district.

In his opening remarks, the Executive Councillor reflected back on previous budgets that he had presented since 2012 and was pleased to present a surplus budget to Members once again. By way of reflection, Councillor J A Gray reminded Members that Council Tax had risen by 7.25% over the past six years and over the same period pensions had risen by 18.76% and average weekly wages had risen by 10.9%. Thereby illustrating that the Council had succeeded in keeping increases in line with working residents and pensioners.

Councillor Gray outlined the budget setting process that had been undertaken this year, including a robust Zero Based Budgeting (ZBB) exercise for all services, with £1.9m previously identified for removal from the 2015/16 budget and a further £4m of identified savings by the end of the MTFS. In referring to the monthly budget 'dashboard' that had been received by Members, Councillor Gray reported that all services has been achieving their targets, whilst being prudent in the delivery of their services and expressed his appreciation to his fellow Cabinet Members and Officers for the end result.

Member's attention was drawn to the inclusive budget review process that commenced with the Star Chamber review in July 2015 with the outcome reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Panels and the Cabinet. This was concluded with the presentation of the draft budget to Overview and Scrutiny and the Cabinet in January 2016. Alongside this there was consultation with residents and businesses in the District.

Councillor Gray updated the Council on the MTFS Capital Programme and Commercial Investment Strategy (CIS), including the borrowing strategy to facilitate the capital programme and CIS. In summarising the funding statement, Members were advised of the key assumptions including the commitment to freeze Council Tax for 2016/17 and removal of the Revenue Support Grant as core funding by 2020/21.

Members were reminded of a previous consideration to place the Leisure Centres in Trust status to alleviate the deficit, but the Council would have continued to be required to make ongoing financial contributions to the Trust. As previously reported to Members, Councillor Gray confirmed that the Council had no longer been subsidising the five Leisure Centres and had

now been making a small contribution to the Council's budget.

In acquainting Members with the Treasury Management Policy and Strategy and Annual Minimum Revenue Provision for 2016/17, Councillor Gray explained that the Council remained committed to short term investments with lower risk. With these assurances, Councillor Gray moved the recommendations of the Cabinet which were duly seconded by the Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite.

Councillors D A Giles, R S Farrer and T Hayward also contributed to the debate that followed, with particular mention of increases in parish precepts, concerns with control of the CIS and credibility of the consultation exercise with residents and businesses. In response, Councillor Gray explained that the Council had been successful in balancing the budget without the need to increase Council Tax, whilst maintaining the level of services for the residents of Huntingdonshire.

Councillor J D Ablewhite, Executive Leader, addressed the Council on the challenges that the Council had faced over recent years and highlighted the uncertainty with the removal of core funding from Government. He explained that resilience had been created in the budget to enable service delivery through innovation and collaboration and commended Officers for their support.

In response and on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor Mrs S J Conboy thanked the Executive Councillor for his presentation and outlined her support for the ZBB process. She highlighted concerns with the high number of staff vacancies in key service delivery roles and fees for temporary staff to fill these roles. In addition to this, concern was expressed regarding the over reliance on the voluntary sector to deliver services. In referring to forecasted negative general fund anticipated by 2020/21, Councillor Mrs Conboy suggested that incremental changes to Council Tax were necessary now to secure the MTFs and would be supported by the Group.

In continuing the debate, Councillor M F Shellens acquainted Members with the ongoing cuts to services at Cambridgeshire County Council and the subsequent knock-on effect to the frail and vulnerable residents of the District. In referring to the support provided by the voluntary sector to assist with the gaps in service provision, Councillor Shellens moved and it was duly seconded by Councillor Mrs Conboy –

That the following amendment be made to the recommendations set out in the report of the Head of Resources –

To save services and produce a more secure future for this Council with more adequate reserves, the Council accepts a 2% increase in Council Tax allowed by the Government for 2016/17. It will also adjust car allowances for Councillors to recognise the reduced cost of fuel. The resultant income to be split; half to the voluntary sector to seek to reduce the reduction in services threatened for the frail and vulnerable; and half used to augment Council reserves.

In debating the response of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor R B Howe suggested that an increase in Council Tax would be misguided and was confident that Officers would be able to budget to balance the budget for 2020/21. In support, Councillor D M Tysoe referred to many residents who had not had a significant wage increase and would be negatively affected by

any subsequent increase to Council Tax. However, Councillor T Hayward outlined his support for an increase in Council Tax and Councillor D A Giles referred to his concerns with the ongoing cuts to services and funding to voluntary groups and urged Members to re-consider the funding awarded to such groups.

Councillor J A Gray concluded by reminding Members that the Council had been placed in a better position this year than previous years as a clear plan had been identified to achieve a balanced budget and an increase to Council Tax was unlikely to solve the wider issue of reduction of core funding in 2020/21.

After discussion and upon being put to the vote the Motion by Councillor Shellens was declared to be LOST.

In response and on behalf of UKIP, Councillor Ms L A Duffy commended the Officers and Members over the work with ZBB but highlighted her concerns with direction for 2021. She welcomed the Council Tax freeze and referred to the need to identify additional revenue streams, as well as investigating alternative ways of working.

It having been previously moved and seconded, upon being put to the vote it was further

- (a) that the proposed overall budget 2016/17 and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2017/18 to 2020/21 (Appendix 1) to include the Revenue Budgets at Section 2, the Capital Programme at Section 3 and the 2016/17 Fees and Charges (at Section 7, Annex A) be approved;
- (b) that there be no increase in Council Tax for 2016/17, i.e the Band D Charge will remain at £133.18;
- (c) that the Council note the Council Tax Base for the whole Council area and individual Towns and Parishes (para 6.2) as approved by Cabinet on the 21st January 2016 (and subsequent publication as a key decision).

**The tax base T which is the amount anticipated £59,358
from a District Council Tax of £1 is**

- (d) that the following amounts calculated by the Council for 2016/17 be approved in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by the Localism Act 2011 (the Act), the Local Government Finance Act 2012 and associated regulations:-
 - (i) the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) (a) to (f) of the Act **£82,326,188**
Gross revenue expenditure including benefits, Town and Parish Precepts
 - (ii) the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) (a) to (d) of the Act **£68,949,819**
Revenue income including reimbursement of benefits, specific and general grants, use of reserves

and any transfers from the collection fund.

- (iii) the amount by which the aggregate at (i) **£13,376,369**
above exceeds the aggregate at (ii)
above in accordance with Section
31A(4) of the Act
***This is the “Council Tax
Requirement” including Parish/Town
Precepts (item i minus item ii). It is
the cash sum to be funded from
District, Town and Parish Council
Taxes.***
- (iv) the Council Tax requirement for 2016/17 **£225.35**
divided by the tax base (T) in
accordance with Section 31B(1) of the
Act
***District plus average Town/Parish
Council Tax (item iii divided by
District taxbase)***
- (v) the aggregate of all “Special Items” referred **£5,471,086**
to in Section 34(1) of the Act
***The total value of Parish/Town
precepts included in i and iii above.***
- (vi) the Basic Amount of Council Tax for **£133.18**
2016/17 being item iv less item v
divided by the tax base (T) in
accordance with Section 34(2) of the
Act.
***The District Council’s Band D Tax for
2016/17***
- (vii) the basic amounts of Council Tax for 2016/17 for those
parts of the District to which one or more special items
(Parish/Town precepts) relate in accordance with
Section 34(3) of the Act are shown by adding the
Huntingdonshire District Council amount to the
appropriate Parish Council amount in column “band D”
set out in Table 1 attached to the Agenda of the
meeting of the Council held on 24th February 2016.
- (viii) the amounts to be taken into account for 2016/17 in
respect of dwellings listed in particular valuation bands
in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act are shown
by adding the Huntingdonshire District Council amount
to the appropriate Parish Council amount for each of
the valuation bands in the columns “bands A to H” set
out in Table 1 attached to the Agenda of the meeting
of the Council held on 24th February 2016.
- (e) that the amounts of precept issued to the Council by Cambridgeshire
County Council, Cambridgeshire Police Authority, Cambridgeshire &
Peterborough Fire Authority and for each Parish Council for each of
the categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands in

accordance with Section 40 of the Act shown in para 6.3 be noted.

- (f) that, having regard to the calculations above, the Council in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Act, hereby sets the figures shown in para 6.4 as the amounts of Council Tax for 2016/17 for each of the categories of dwelling shown. ***This is the total Council Tax to be collected, incorporating the requirements of all of the relevant bodies, for each town or parish area.***
- (g) that the Council notes that, in accordance with Section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the basic amount of its Council Tax for 2016/17 is not excessive. ***The basic amount at b(vi) above is not excessive as defined by the Government.***

Tax Base 2016/17

Abbotsley	249	Holywell-cum-Needingworth	969
Abbots Ripton	133	Houghton & Wyton	785
Alconbury	546	Huntingdon	7,255
Alconbury Weston	284	Kimbolton & Stonely	588
Alwalton	119	Kings Ripton	80
Barham & Woolley	29	Leighton Bromswold	81
Bluntisham	737	Little Paxton	1,523
Brampton	1,725	Morborne	10
Brington & Molesworth	166	Offord Cluny & Offord D'Arcy	501
Broughton	88	Old Hurst	97
Buckden (incorporating Diddington)	1,152	Old Weston	93
Buckworth	52	Perry	260
Bury	617	Pidley-cum-Fenton	157
Bythorn & Keyston	141	Ramsey	2,758
Catworth	154	St Ives	5,789
Chesterton	58	St Neots	10,760
Colne	352	Sawtry	1,788
Conington	66	Sibson-cum-Stibbington	216
Covington	44	Somersham	1,354
Denton & Caldecote	27	Southoe & Midloe	152
Earith	576	Spaldwick	245
Easton	76	Stilton	773
Ellington	233	Stow Longa	67
Elton	285	The Stukeleys	414
Farcet	524	Tilbrook	119
Fenstanton	1,146	Toseland	37
Folksworth & Washingley	348	Upton & Coppingford	81
Glatton	129	Upwood & The Raveleys	416
Godmanchester	2,403	Warboys	1,327
Grafham	235	Waresley-cum-Tetworth	145
Great & Little Gidding	122	Water Newton	41
Great Gransden	451	Winwick	41
Great Paxton	367	Wistow	218
Great Staughton	324	Woodhurst	153
Haddon	25	Woodwalton	78

Hail Weston	243	Wyton-on-the-Hill	412
Hamerton & Steeple Gidding	48	Yaxley	2,859
Hemingford Abbots	339	Yelling	148
Hemingford Grey	1,274		
Hilton	451	TOTAL	59,358
Holme	230		

- (h) that the future savings target of £3.6m (21% of Net Expenditure by 2020/21 be approved;
- (i) that the 2016/17 Treasury Management Policy, Strategy & Indicators and the Annual Minimum Revenue Policy (Appendix 2) be approved; and
- (j) that, in future the “Net Cost of Borrowing v Net Expenditure” indicator be reported as part of the Treasury Management Suite of Indicators.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Order)(England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014m the following Members voted for, against or abstained from the Motion –

For the Motion – Ablewhite, Alban, Boddington, Brown, Bucknell, Bull, Butler, Carter, Cawley, Criswell, Davies, Dew, Dickenson, Duffy, Francis, Fuller, Gardener, George, Gray, Hansard, Harrison, Harty, Howe, Hyland, Kadewere, Mathews, Oliver, Palmer, Sanderson, Tysoe, West and White.

For the Motion – Conboy, Greenall, Morris and Shellens (against resolutions 1 and 2), Giles (against resolutions 2 and 3), Hayward and Tuplin (against resolution 2)

Abstentions - None

58. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2016/17

In compliance with the requirements of Sections 38 - 43 of the Localism Act 2011, Councillor S Cawley, Executive Councillor for Organisational Change and Development presented a report by the Corporate Team Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) in connection with the District Council’s Pay Policy Statement for 2016/17.

The Statement, which is required to be approved by the Council by 31st March 2016 was now produced annually and detailed the Council’s policies relating to Officer remuneration.

Accordingly and having noted that a copy of the Pay Policy Statement would be publicised on the Council’s website along with data on senior salaries under the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency 2011, it was moved by Councillor Cawley, duly seconded and

RESOLVED

that the Policy Statement for 2016/17 be approved.

59. ST NEOTS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Having regard to a report by the Planning Policy Team Leader (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the referendum of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan held on 4th February 2016, Members were acquainted with the results of the referendum with 93% voting in favour of supporting the making of the Neighbourhood Plan. As the result exceeded the 50% threshold, the Council was required to make the Neighbourhood Plan part of the statutory development plan for Huntingdonshire. Whereupon, the Council

RESOLVED

that the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan as attached at Appendix 1 to the report now submitted be adopted with immediate effect to become part of the statutory development plan for Huntingdonshire.

60. COUNCIL DEBATE - DEVOLUTION IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH

The Chairman invited Councillor J D Ablewhite, Executive Leader to open the debate on devolution in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Whereby Members were informed of a devolution discussions being undertaken within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to devolve powers and funding from Central Government to local leaders. Councillor Ablewhite referred to the issues that the deal was seeking to address, including the shortage of affordable housing within reasonable commuting distance, pressures on the transport network, skills and training provision not delivering the right mix of skilled people and the growing and ageing population generating major financial challenges.

In referring to the document 'Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Devolution Proposal for negotiation with Government' that had been circulated separately to all Members, Councillor Ablewhite reported that the negotiations had progressed further than previously published and the deal had been approached by Norfolk and Suffolk for inclusion.

Councillor Ablewhite was assisted by the Managing Director, Mrs J Lancaster who, as part of her address referred to a PowerPoint presentation (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). As background, Mrs Lancaster reiterated the principles of devolution and the underlying opportunities to review local governance, securing additional powers and budgets and add value to local public services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Mention also was made of progress to date with partners, involving the development of a draft document outlining what powers were being sought from Central Government.

Mrs Lancaster drew Members attention to the main themes of the document as previously highlighted by the Executive Leader and outlined the next steps involved in the process to redefine the document following Stakeholder Engagement before negotiations begin formally with Central Government. Discussions were continuing informally with Leaders and Senior Council representatives regarding the geographical area of the devolution deal.

In the questions that followed, Councillor M F Shellens highlighted his concerns with the potential complication of adding a further tier to the current structure locally, whereby Councillor Ablewhite explained that he was keen to explore whether there was a better way of delivering public services.

In referring to the potential for a referendum on regional government arising from a question by Councillor T D Alban, Councillor Ablewhite reported that there had been no plans for such an event. Concern was also expressed by Members with regard to the potential inclusion of Norfolk and Suffolk and Councillor Ablewhite explained that the matter was still under consideration and undertook to provide an update to Members at a future meeting.

61. QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

Councillor J A Gray provided an update on investment as part of the Commercial Investment Strategy arising from a question by Councillor R Fuller.

62. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, PANELS AND COMMITTEES

(a) Cabinet

Councillor J D Ablewhite, Executive Leader and Chairman of the Cabinet presented the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 21st January and 11th February 2016.

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In connection with Item No's. 49 and 50, it was noted that the recommendations had been considered previously under Minute No. 58a.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraphs, the Report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 21st January and 11th February 2016 be received and adopted.

(b) Employment Panel

Councillor J W Davies, Chairman of the Employment Panel presented the Report of the meeting of the Panel held on 3rd February 2016.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Employment Panel held on 3rd February 2016 be received and adopted.

(c) Development Management Panel

Councillor Mrs B E Boddington, Chairman of the Council presented the Report of the meeting of the Development Management Panel held on 18th January 2016.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting held on 18th January 2016 be received and adopted.

(d) Overview and Scrutiny (Finance and Performance)

Councillor G J Bull, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Finance and Performance) presented the Report of the meetings of the Panel held on 7th January and 4th February 2016.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Reports of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Finance and Performance) held on 7th January and 4th February 2016 be received and adopted.

(e) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Customers)

Councillor S J Criswell, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Customers) presented the Report of the meetings of the Panel held on 5th January and 2nd February 2016.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Customers) held on 5th January and 2nd February 2016 be received and adopted.

(f) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth)

Councillor T D Sanderson, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth) presented the Report of the meetings of the Panel held on 12th January and 9th February 2016.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Reports of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth) held on 12th January and 9th February 2016 be received and adopted.

63. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

(a) Electoral Boundary Review Working Group

That the following Members be appointed to serve on the Electoral Boundary Review Working Group –

Councillors J D Ablewhite, G J Bull, S J Criswell, Ms L A Duffy, M Francis, T Hayward, T D Sanderson and M F Shellens.

(b) Variation to the Membership of Committees and Panels etc.

There were no changes to report.

The meeting ended at 10.15pm.

Chairman