

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 March 2016.

PRESENT: Councillor P L E Bucknell – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, T D Alban, K M Baker, Mrs B E Boddington, D Brown, G J Bull, R C Carter, S Cawley, 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, R Harrison, D Harty, T Hayward, R B Howe, B Hyland, Mrs P A Jordan, P Kadewere, Mrs R E Mathews, D J Mead, J P Morris, J M Palmer, P D Reeve, 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 I C Bates, E R Butler, B S Chapman, K J Churchill, Mrs S Conboy, Mrs A D Curtis, Ms L Kadic, M C Oliver, Mrs D C Reynolds and K D Wainwright.

64. PRAYER

Councillor J D Ablewhite, Executive Leader of the Council, opened the meeting with a prayer.

65. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman presented to the Council an account of the activities both he and the Vice-Chairman Councillor R J West had attended since the last meeting. The Chairman made particular reference to the recent atrocities in Brussels and reported that the Council had been flying the flag at half-mast. He also informed Members that he would be writing to the Belgium Embassy to relay condolences on behalf of the Council.

The Chairman thanked all Members who had been in attendance at the recent Commonwealth Day and highlighted the success of the recent Sport Relief Mile held at Hinchingsbrooke Park. Furthermore, the Chairman reported that the Council, in conjunction with Huntingdon Town Council, would be raising a flag to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday on 21st April 2016.

Further to Minute No. 60 of the meeting of the Council on 24th February 2016, the Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite, presented an update to Members on the devolution proposals and reported upon the Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire deal that been

signed in principal by 24 local authorities. He also referred to the concerns that had previously been expressed with regard to a directly elected Mayor for the region and the difference in geography with Norfolk and Suffolk compared with Cambridgeshire. Members were advised that in order to reach a Council decision there would be a Special Meeting of the Council in June 2016 to debate the issue further in advance of the deadline of 4th July 2016. Councillor Ablewhite reminded Members that it should be an individual decision rather than political party and encouraged the Council to support the process going forward to enable a full and open debate in June 2016.

The Managing Director, Mrs J Lancaster, reported that a Special Meeting of the Council had been scheduled for 29th June 2016 and work was currently being undertaken to understand the underlying principles including the question of governance arrangements and the role of an elected Mayor. Member noted that further details would be available in advance of the meeting in June 2016.

66. MINUTES

Subject to the replacement of the word “High” with “Hugh” in Minute No. 53 and the inclusion of Councillor R S Farrer in the list of Councillors that had voted in favour of the Motion under Minute No. 57, the Minutes of the meeting held on 24th February 2016 was approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

67. MEMBERS INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

68. GREATER CAMBRIDGE GREATER PETERBOROUGH ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr M Reeve, Chairman of the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Enterprise Partnership who had been invited to the meeting to address the Council on an update of the work of the Partnership in the context of Huntingdonshire and refer to the Local Enterprise Partnership’s (LEP) position on the devolution deal. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is appended in the Minute Book.

Mr Reeve opened the presentation by providing details of his working background and his involvement in the establishment of the LEP in 2010. Members were acquainted with details of the geography and membership of the LEP that had been built on two sub-regions; Greater Cambridgeshire and Greater Peterborough. Mr Reeve outlined to Members details of the funding arrangements that the LEP had received from Central Government that had been matched by local authority contributions, together with further funding received for specific activities. Members were also acquainted with the accountability arrangements, specifically the details of the LEP Board Members and how the Leaders Committee comprising 15 local authority leaders appointed to the LEP Board.

Mr Reeve outlined to Members the main core objectives of the LEP that included improving the area’s infrastructure, supporting the business community in the creation of jobs, improving the skills levels

and ensuring the availability of good quality, affordable housing. Members were then informed of the LEP's achievements in relation to the core objectives. Particular reference was made to the securing of over £14.3m funding, some of which had already been invested in the Huntingdonshire area with various projects and the success of the Enterprise Zone at Alconbury Weald that had been secured by the LEP through a bidding process that would be delivering 8000 new jobs and 4000 new homes. Members were also acquainted with direct investments that had been made from businesses and charities to support these projects.

Members attention was drawn to a table of comparison with LEPs nationally in 2016/17 and it was noted that the Greater Cambridge and Greater Peterborough LEP had been ranked third but Mr Reeve reported upon his desire to improve upon this ranking in the future.

Mr Reeve referred to the recent discussions on devolution in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and reported that the LEP had not signed the agreement in principle as they had concerns regarding the level of funding and involvement of the business community but had been actively involved in ongoing discussions, with a further meeting of the LEP Board in April 2016.

In concluding his presentation, Mr Reeve highlighted the future direction of the LEP that would continue to deliver existing projects and to support business growth for the benefit of local communities.

In response to a question from Councillor J E White on the LEP's vision for the future in developing economic growth for the area, Mr Reeve reported upon their economic plan and transport strategy that had been designed for the whole geography of the area.

Councillor D A Giles referred to the level of housing growth in St Neots and the lack of economic development opportunities, whereby Mr Reeve welcomed a further discussion on this issue outside of the meeting .

In response to a question from Councillor T Hayward on the long term strategic plan for other major trunk roads in the District including the A428 and A1, Mr Reeve invited Councillor Hayward to appraise him further outside of the meeting.

The Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite, referred to the support of the Council for the LEP and Mr Reeve concurred that the support had been invaluable and many changes had been led by Huntingdonshire.

69. EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR PRESENTATIONS

(a) Councillor R Harrison, Executive Councillor for Strategic Economic Development and Legal

Councillor R Harrison, Executive Councillor for Strategic Economic Development and Legal addressed the Council on an update of economic development. A copy of Councillor Harrison's PowerPoint presentation is appended in the Minute Book.

Members were acquainted with details of the Economic

Development Service and the activities that were currently being undertaken by the Team. Particular reference was made to the publication of the Council's Marketing Strategy that had been approved by the Cabinet in July 2015 and the work with strategic partners; LEP, Enterprise Zone, businesses, education sector and the residents in the District. Councillor Harrison highlighted the importance of economic development in the future with changes to business rates replacing Council grants and the requirement to attract growing businesses, skilled sectors and those sectors with wage growth.

Members were acquainted with details of the Marketing Huntingdonshire website that was scheduled to go-live in May 2016, designed with the aim of attracting inward investment into the District. Attention was also drawn to the EDGE project that had been assisting with matching skills to business needs, through working with local businesses and the education sector.

In concluding, Councillor Harrison referred to the importance of the Enterprise Zone at Alconbury Weald that had been a key strategic site for enterprise and the development of the I-Met Centre.

Councillor T Hayward and Councillor P D Reeve referred to the importance of apprenticeships and Councillor Harrison reported upon ongoing work with local businesses to support the development of these roles.

In response to a question from Councillor T D Sanderson on the re-ballot of the Business Improvement District (BID) in Huntingdon, Councillor Harrison reported upon its success and hoped to continue the support in Huntingdon as well as looking to develop BIDs in St Ives and St Neots.

(b) Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Strategic Housing and Planning

Councillor D B Dew, Executive Councillor for Strategic Housing and Planning addressed the Council on an update of the Local Plan. A copy of Councillor Dew's PowerPoint presentation is appended in the Minute Book.

Members were acquainted with the revised timeline of submission of the draft Local Plan for the end of 2016/early 2017, but this was dependent upon the submission of key supporting evidence of the Strategic Transport Study commissioned with Cambridgeshire County Council and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment with the Environment Agency.

Councillor Dew drew Members attention to the challenges in delivering a new Local Plan that included demonstrating deliverability in its housing allocations, maintaining a five year housing supply and providing infrastructure with its associated funding. He further advised Members on national consultations underway for changes to the planning system,

including proposals supporting Starter Homes and higher density development around commuter hubs. Members were also advised of forthcoming changes, including responsibility for the Council to hold a Custom and Self Build Register, pilot for the Brownfield Land Register and further planning changes through the Budget.

Councillor Dew updated Members on the progress of Neighbourhood Plans in the District, that had included the completion of the first Neighbourhood Plan in Cambridgeshire in St Neots in February 2016 and other areas designated for Neighbourhood Plans. He reported upon the success of a seminar held on 15th March 2016 to introduce the Neighbourhood and Community Planning Guidance to assist Town and Parish Councils that had been approved by the Cabinet in November 2015.

In response to a question from Councillor P D Reeve on the Community Infrastructure Levy funding and devolution, Councillor Dew undertook to report back in due course as the devolution debate was still under negotiation.

(c) Questions to other Members of the Cabinet

Councillor R Fuller raised a question in relation to the non-attendance of Councillor K J Churchill at meetings of the Council with his last attendance on 30th September 2015, whereby Councillor J D Ablewhite confirmed that six months would conclude on 30th March 2016.

In response to a question from Councillor T Hayward on the workload and capacity of the Planning Team in the context of completing the Local Plan, Councillor D B Dew confirmed that he was confident that the appropriate staff had been allocated to assist with the workload.

Arising from a question by Councillor P D Reeve on the inappropriate use of Council resources to tidy a flower bed outside Councillor J M Palmer's property, Councillor Ablewhite undertook to provide a written answer following the meeting.

70. CONSTITUTION REVIEW

In conjunction with the recommendations of the Corporate Governance Panel, Minute No. 76 refers and a joint report by the Corporate Director (Services) and Managing Director, to which was attached a revised Constitution, and PowerPoint presentation (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book), Members were acquainted with details of a review of the Council's Constitution.

Councillor J D Ablewhite expressed his gratitude for the support and extensive work of the cross party Working Group that had been convened to undertake the review. Councillor G J Bull proceeded to outline to Members the principles of the review, that included ensuring that the new Constitution was more streamlined, making it easier for the Council to do its business, simplify the Scheme of Delegation to Officers, providing clarity on the roles of Officer and Members and

making it accessible to the public.

Members' attention was drawn to the principle changes in the new Constitution that included the deletion of material and changes to responsibility for functions. In addition, changes had been made to include new rules of procedure for Committees, removal of appendices to be published on the Council's website or used as training materials in the Members handbook.

Councillor M Francis, Chairman of the Corporate Governance Panel with responsibility for changes to the Constitution, continued with advising Members of the proposed incorporate of the Standards Committee into the new Corporate Governance Committee, with sub-committees to be convened to address matters relating to the Code of Conduct and increase in membership to 12 Members.

In concluding, Councillor Francis referred to the successful working of the cross party Constitution Review Advisory Group that had been supported by Senior Officers, Democratic Services and an external Legal Consultant.

In conjunction with the Corporate Governance Panel, Councillor Bull moved the recommendations and was duly seconded by Councillor Francis.

Councillor P D Reeve commended the large amount of work that had been undertaken on the review of the Constitution and highlighted an area for future discussion to enable the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels to be elected from opposition political parties. In response, Councillor Ablewhite undertook to consider this when opportunity allowed.

Arising from a question by Councillor D A Giles on the recorded vote system and the requirement for one third of those present to enable a decision to be carried in comparison to other local authorities, the Chairman undertook to provide a written response following the meeting.

It having been previously moved and seconded, it was further

RESOLVED

- (a) that the changes to the Council's Constitution be approved as follows -
 - (i) all Committees/Panels with delegated decision making to be renamed as Committees in line with Local Government Act 2000 requirements;
 - (ii) the revised Scheme of Delegations as set out in Part 3 – Responsibility for Functions;
 - (iii) the introduction of Committee Procedure Rules; and
 - (iv) the incorporation of the Standards Committee into the Corporate Governance Panel and for Standards Committee to be a Sub- Committee of the Corporate Governance Panel.
- (b) that the Code of Financial Management be approved, with immediate effect (as contained within the Council's

Constitution at Appendix 1);

- (c) that the Code of Procurement be approved, with immediate effect (as contained within the Council's Constitution at Appendix 1);
- (d) that the Constitution be approved and adopted with effect from the Annual Council Meeting on 18th May 2016; and
- (e) that the Head of Paid Services, in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader, be authorised to make minor editorial changes which by definition make no changes to the powers of delegations.

71. CORPORATE PLAN 2016/18

In conjunction with a recommendation of the Cabinet, Minute No. 75 refers, the Deputy Leader, Councillor R B Howe introduced a report by the Corporate Team Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was attached the proposed Corporate Plan for the period 2016-18.

Members understood that the Corporate Plan contained the Council's vision, strategic priorities and objectives for the next two years. The Plan also set out what the Council aimed to achieve in addition to the core statutory services.

Councillor Howe reported that the condensed version of the Plan had been welcomed by the Cabinet and drew Members attention to the reduction in the number of Strategic Priorities from four to three.

Councillor T Hayward reported that he was pleased to see the comments raised at the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Customers) on 1st March 2016 taken into consideration on the A428, but highlighted the concern raised previously in relation to Public Rights of Way, whereby Councillor Howe undertook to take this forward.

The Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite, moved and was duly seconded by Councillor Howe, whereupon the Council

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Corporate Plan 2016-18 (as attached at Appendix 1 to the report now submitted) be adopted; and
- (b) that the Corporate Team Manager, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, be authorised to make any further minor amendments to the Plan as may be considered necessary.

72. FIRST PHASE CONSULTATION RESPONSE TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND'S HUNTINGDONSHIRE ELECTORAL REVIEW

Further to Minute No. 30 of the meeting of the Council on 30th September 2015, the Council considered a report by the Managing Director to which was attached warding proposals and amendments tabled at the meeting (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book) on the first phase consultation response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) electoral

review of the District. Members were reminded of the Council's decision to retain a membership of 52 councillors, thereby moving to whole Council elections from 2018.

Councillor G J Bull, Chairman of the Electoral Boundary Review Working Group, commenced his presentation by thanking Dr T Roberts, Democratic Services Officer and Mrs L Jablonska, Elections and Democratic Services Manager for the enormous task in assisting the Working Group that had met on a number of occasions to devise a new warding pattern for the District. Councillor Bull acquainted Members with the difficulties involved utilising the projected electorate figures for 2021 and ensuring an equality of representation across the new wards, with some variances, whilst taking into account communities of interest.

Concerns were expressed in relation to specific wards by Members and given the tight timescale for submission by 4th April 2016 to the LGBCE, the Managing Director undertook to amend the recommendation to allow for minor amendments to be made prior to submission.

The Executive Leader, Councillor J D Ablewhite, commended the Officers and Working Group on the work undertaken, whilst recognising the restraints imposed upon us by the LGBCE. He reminded Members that this was the start of the process and the LGBCE may come back and present an alternative proposal.

Councillor M F Shellens reported upon his concerns with some of the proposals and supported the commendations of the Officers involved in the work, together with the proposals tabled at the meeting.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the submission of the warding proposal for the first phase consultation response, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report now submitted and the amendments tabled, be approved for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, and the Managing Director be authorised to make any minor amendments prior to submission in consultation with the Electoral Boundary Review Working Group and the Cabinet.

Councillors Mrs B E Boddington, L George and P Kadewere abstained from voting on the recommendation outlined above.

73. LEAD AND DEPUTY INDEPENDENT PERSONS

In conjunction with Item No. 78 of the Standards Committee, the Council has considered a report by the Corporate Director (Resources) and Monitoring Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking the re-appointment of the Lead and Deputy Lead Independent Persons for a further two year period.

Councillor A Hansard reminded Members that in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, it was necessary for the Council to appoint one or more Independent Persons and acquainted the Council with the backgrounds of the proposed appointments.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the re-appointment of Mrs Gillian Holmes and Mr Peter Baker to the posts of Lead and Deputy Independent Persons respectively be reaffirmed for a further two year period to 30th April 2018 without the need for further ratification in each year by the Council at its Annual Meeting.

74. 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 meeting of the Cabinet held on 17th March 2016.

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In connection with Item No. 60, it was noted that the recommendation had been considered previously under Minute No. 71.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to the foregoing paragraph, the Report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 17th March 2016 be received and adopted.

(b) Corporate Governance Panel

Councillor M Francis, Chairman of the Corporate Governance Panel presented the Report of the meeting of the Panel held on 9th March 2016.

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In connection with Item No's. 29 and 30 it was noted that the recommendations had been considered previously under Minute No. 70.

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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 9th March 2016 be received and adopted.

(c) Development Management Panel

Councillor Mrs B E Boddington, Chairman of the Development Management Panel presented the Reports of the meetings of the Panel held on 15th February and 14th March 2016.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Reports of the meetings held on 15th February and 14th March 2016 be received and adopted.

(d) Standards Committee

Councillor A Hansard, Chairman of the Standards Committee presented the Report of the meeting of the Committee held on 3rd March 2016.

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In connection with Item No. 10, it was noted that the recommendation had been considered previously under Minute No. 73.

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Councillor Hansard reported that this had been the first year that all Disclosable Pecuniary Interest forms had been received by Town and Parish Councils.

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Councillor Mrs B E Boddington and Ms L A Duffy requested that it be placed on record the excellent contribution that had been made by Councillor Hansard as Chairman of the Standards Committee and his work on the Council.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 3rd March 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 meeting of the Panel held on 1st March 2016.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Customers) held on 1st March 2016 be received and adopted.

(f) Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Finance and Performance)

Councillor G J Bull, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Finance and Performance) presented the Report of the meeting of the Panel held on 3rd March 2016.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Finance and Performance) held on 3rd March 2016 be received and adopted.

(g) 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 meeting of the Panel held on 8th March 2016.

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Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Report of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth) held on 8th March 2016 be received and adopted.

75. VARIATIONS TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

There were no changes to report.

The meeting ended at 9.20pm.

Chairman