

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, 16 November 2016.

PRESENT: Councillor P L E Bucknell – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, K M Baker, Mrs B E Boddington, D Brown, G J Bull, E R Butler, R C Carter, S Cawley, Mrs S Conboy, J E Corley, S J Criswell, J W Davies, D B Dew, Mrs A Dickinson, Mrs A Donaldson, M Francis, R Fuller, I D Gardener, L George, J A Gray, S Greenall, T Hayward, R B Howe, B Hyland, P Kadewere, Mrs R E Mathews, D J Mead, J M Palmer, P D Reeve, T D Sanderson, M F Shellens, L R Swain, Mrs J Tavener, R G Tuplin, D M Tysoe, D R Underwood, D Watt, R J West and J E White.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors T D Alban, B S Chapman, Mrs L A Duffy, D A Giles, Mrs S A Giles, R Harrison, D Harty, Mrs P A Jordan, J P Morris, Mrs D C Reynolds and Mrs S L Taylor.

42. PRAYER

The Reverend A Milton, Vicar of All Saints and St. Mary's, Huntingdon, opened the meeting with prayer.

43. MEMBERS INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

44. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH DEVOLUTION

Further to Minute No. 17 of the meeting of the Council on 29th June 2016, the Council considered a report by the Managing Director (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on proposals to establish a Combined Authority across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to which was attached Appendices relating to the draft Orders, outcome of the formal consultation exercise and outline costs and funding.

In commencing the debate, Councillor P D Reeve questioned the legality of holding the meeting as the draft Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Order 2016 had been supplied to Members less than 24 hours prior to the meeting and asked that the meeting be postponed. In response, the Managing Director explained that, after seeking legal advice, it was determined that as the substance of the Agenda papers had been published within the legal

timeframe and therefore the meeting could proceed.

Members were acquainted with a presentation by the Executive Leader, Councillor R B Howe on the Devolution programme. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is appended in the Minute Book.

Councillor Howe reminded Members of the background to the Devolution deal that included an annual £20m fund over 30 years totalling £600m to support infrastructure, housing, skills and transport in the Combined Authority area. Attention was drawn to the priority infrastructure projects identified for the District, including the St Neots Masterplan to develop housing, jobs, infrastructure and education to support St Neots in developing a self-sustaining economy. Other infrastructure developments included upgrading Harrison Way, St Ives, A141 upgrade Spittals Interchange to Hartford and new river crossing to alleviate pressure on the local roads.

In highlighting the ambitions for Devolution, Councillor Howe explained that it had the capacity to grow and double the size of the economy in the area, accelerate house building, deliver improvements to connectivity both in terms of transport and digitally, provide a technically skilled workforce whilst improving the quality of life to alleviate areas of deprivation.

Attention was drawn to the consultation results and the specific results for Huntingdonshire, whereby Councillor Howe reported that the IPSOS MORI telephone survey reflected more reliable results than the online poll.

Members were appraised with the financial details that there was £1.2bn of new money to invest in the area and the potential to levy further funding to supplement the initial deal. The Shadow Combined Authority had agreed that the costs of running the office and Mayoral election costs would be funded through the deal and not levied onto each local authority.

Councillor Howe drew Members' attention to the governance arrangements, whereby the Combined Authority would have representatives from the seven local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) plus the Mayor as the Chair. A Cabinet would be created with defined responsibilities allocated to the members and an Overview and Scrutiny Committee appointed consisting of non-executive councillors nominated from the respective Councils.

In referring to the draft Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Order 2016, Councillor Howe highlighted the recent changes that had included transport powers to be funded entirely by the Combined Authority, funding of the Combined Authority office as referred to previously and equal status of all members on the Combined Authority.

In closing the presentation, Members noted the timetable for implementation with proposed establishment of the Shadow Combined Authority in November 2016, passing of the Parliamentary Bill in December 2016/January 2017, establishment of the Combined Authority in February 2016, concluding with the election of the Mayor in May 2017.

Councillor Howe concluded by reminding Members of the benefits of the Devolution deal, whereby decisions would be made by local representatives on behalf of local people and deliver thousands of jobs, housing, infrastructure and digital improvements. In so doing he moved the recommendations and it was duly seconded by Councillor J A Gray.

Councillor Mrs S J Conboy opened the debate by confirming her acceptance of the need to maintain the timetable for taking this decision, although the draft Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Order 2016 had been supplied to all Members later than expected. Furthermore, she advised Members of her inability to support proposals for a Mayor but had been advised that it was not possible to make any amendments to recommendations (i) to (iv) as they were intrinsically linked in the establishment of a Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and had commended the work that has been undertaken to date.

Councillor D B Dew thanked the Executive Leader for the presentation and had referred to Councillor Howe's honest presentation at the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth) meeting on 3rd November 2016. In using an analogy, Councillor Dew outlined his similar concerns with an elected Mayor but had applauded all authorities in supporting the Devolution deal thus far to enable access to funding to bring forward to support growth in the area and development of a technically skilled workforce. In addressing the question of an elected Mayor and the image associated with the title, Councillor Howe explained that the role would be developed as an economic advocate for the area to build the credibility and image for the region, rather than a ceremonial post.

In supporting the sentiments of the Liberal Democrat Party and Councillor Dew, Councillor Reeve outlined his opposition to the Devolution deal. In particular, attention was drawn to concerns surrounding the devolving of power to a few individuals across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and the Chairman of the LEP that he deemed not as representative of businesses across the area. Further concerns surrounded the priorities made by each authority and associated budgets to be allocated as well as the commitment from Central Government of the 30 year funding stream and questioned the powers that the Combined Authority would have to levy taxes although the Executive Leader had suggested that these powers would not be needed.

In response, Councillor Howe explained that Devolution would allow for policies to be developed locally rather than through Central Government and refuted the concerns expressed regarding the Chairman of the LEP. He further explained that as a non-political individual, the Chairman of the LEP had succeeded in raising £10m of funding for the area and had added tremendous value.

In continuing the debate, Councillor T Hayward referred to his concerns at the start of the process but explained that these issues had been addressed, particularly in relation to Overview and Scrutiny and the potential for improvements to the infrastructure through the development of the Devolution deal further. He further drew Members' attention to his concerns for finding the most appropriate person to

act as Mayor for such a disparate area. In response, Councillor Howe outlined the credentials of a Mayor that he felt was sufficiently challenging enough to attract the right candidate.

Councillor J D Ablewhite referred to his support for the deal and drew Members' attention to the benefits that would evolve through the creation of a Combined Authority, in particular the revenue funding that would be utilised in this area rather than allocated elsewhere in the country.

In concurring with Councillor Ablewhite, Councillor D M Tysoe discussed the lack of affordable housing and the opportunities that would develop through the Devolution deal to develop the housing stock and attract residents to move to the District to enable the economy to continue to grow. Councillor Howe presented an optimistic view that this would also contribute to help mitigate the homeless problems in the area.

Whilst supporting the principle of Devolution, Councillor M F Shellens reported upon his objections to an elected Mayor and drew Members' attention his concerns. Firstly, he suggested that an elected Mayor would lead to the erosion of democracy with local issues being funnelled through a single person. Secondly, he reported upon concern with the value of the Devolution deal after taking into account the split across the seven local authorities, discount and interest rates, together with the cost of the Mayor's office. Finally, his concern surrounding housing, with major building firms already with land banked space for properties not being built and emerging skills shortages in the construction industry.

In supporting comments made by Councillor Mrs Conboy in respect of the principle of an elected Mayor, Councillor R Fuller reported that it was ultimately part of the deal and welcomed the priority infrastructure projects that would make a fundamental difference to the area.

In response to a question from Councillor P Kadewere on the power that this authority would have in relation to decision making on the Combined Authority, Councillor Howe explained that Huntingdonshire would have a representative on the Cabinet and have direct input into the decision making process, whilst being independent it would be regulated by laws of transparency and benefit the area through a high degree of autonomy.

Councillor S Greenall referred to the analysis and discrepancy of statistics in the telephone survey as opposed to the online survey for an elected Mayor, whereby Councillor Howe explained that those questioned in the telephone survey were a statistically representative balance of the local community, whereas the online poll was entirely random and not as statistically accurate.

Attention was drawn to the benefits that would evolve as part of the Devolution deal by Councillor G J Bull and although there had been mixed support for an elected Mayor, the area would reap the benefits from the opportunities and paid tribute to the Executive Leader and Managing Director for the work that had already been undertaken in support of achieving the deal.

Councillor J A Gray welcomed the comments made by Councillor Bull supporting the concept of an elected Mayor and suggested that it was essential to have a figurehead of the Combined Authority who could attract inward investment into the area through third party capital investments and would be a disappointment if the deal could not proceed.

Councillor Reeve moved and it was duly seconded by Councillor Shellens that Councillor Mrs S J Conboy be inserted in recommendation (vi) in place of the Executive Leader. Whereupon and being put to the vote the amendment was declared to be LOST.

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

RESOLVED

that the Council endorsed the recommendations to the Cabinet as follows –

- (i) consent to the Secretary of State making an Order to establish the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (Appendix A);
- (ii) consent to the Council being a constituent member of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority with effect from the commencement date determined by the final Order;
- (iii) authorise the Managing Director, in consultation with the Executive Leader of Council, to consent to the final draft Order and associated documents, specifically:
 - to agree minor drafting amendments to the Combined Authority Order to be laid before Parliament;
 - to consent to the Council being included within the draft Parliamentary Order thereby reflecting this Council's decision;
- (iv) authorise the Combined Authority to have a power to issue a levy to the constituent Councils in respect of any financial year. (This will be subject to the inclusion of a unanimity clause in the Combined Authority constitution on this specific matter);
- (v) recommend to the Combined Authority that the costs of establishing the Combined Authority, holding the elections in May 2017 and running the Combined Authority (including Mayoral Office) for 2016/17 and 2017/18 are funded from the gain share grant provided by Government (as outlined in para 10.11);
- (vi) appoint the Executive Leader of Council to act as the Council's appointee to the Shadow Combined Authority and once established, to the Combined Authority,

thereafter;

- (vii) appoint Councillor D Brown to act as the substitute to the above (ref (vi));
- (viii) note the outcome of the public consultation on the establishment of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority as outlined in paragraph 5.1 and 5.2 and Appendices 2A - 2D;
- (ix) note the timetable for the implementation of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough devolution agreement as summarised in paragraph 7.1; and
- (x) note the Government's response to the outline business case for Housing capital investment funds secured as part of the devolution deal as set out in Appendix 3;
- (xi) agree in principle, for a protocol requiring the Council Executive Leader and the representative on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to report to each meeting of Council setting out the activities and decisions related to their respective roles within the Combined Authority;
- (xii) request that the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Corporate Governance Committee engage their fellow committee members with a view to devising and agreeing the wording of a protocol for inclusion in the Council's constitution.

The meeting ended at 8.30pm.

Chairman