

## 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, 21 December 2016.

PRESENT: Councillor P L E Bucknell – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, T D Alban,  
K M Baker, D Brown, G J Bull, E R Butler,  
S Cawley, B S Chapman, J E Corley,  
S J Criswell, J W Davies, D B Dew,  
Mrs A Dickinson, Mrs A Donaldson,  
Mrs L A Duffy, M Francis, R Fuller, J A Gray,  
S Greenall, R Harrison, T Hayward,  
R B Howe, B Hyland, Mrs P A Jordan,  
P Kadewere, Mrs R E Mathews, J M Palmer,  
P D Reeve, Mrs D C Reynolds,  
T D Sanderson, M F Shellens, L R Swain,  
Mrs S L Taylor, R G Tuplin, D M Tysoe,  
D Watt, R J West and J E White.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs B E Boddington, R C Carter, Mrs S Conboy, I D Gardener, D A Giles, Mrs S A Giles, D Harty, D J Mead, J P Morris, Mrs J Tavener and D R Underwood.

### 47. PRAYERS

Councillor J D Ablewhite opened the meeting with prayer.

### 48. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman presented to Council an account of the activities both he and the Vice-Chairman, Councillor West had attended since the last meeting. In so doing Members' attention was drawn to his attendance at the Hunts Post Business Awards at the Burgess Hall, flag raising events for Remembrance Day and centenary commemorations for the Battle of the Somme and Jutland and wreath laying at St Ives and Ramsey.

Particular mention was made of the Chairman's visits to his three charities, namely Dreamdrops at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, Carers Trust and Cruse Bereavement and reported that cheques would be presented to them at the end of the Municipal Year.

In concluding, the Chairman highlighted attendance at carol services around the District and hosting of the Council Carol Service that welcomed singing from Hartford Infant and Junior School.

### 49. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Council held on the 19th October and 16th November 2016 were approved as correct records and

signed by the Chairman.

Councillor Ms S L Taylor referred to the absence of a record of her question raised at the meeting of the Council held on 19th October 2016 on the cost of the clean-up operation following the removal of the travellers from the Riverside Car Park, St Neots. Whereupon, it was noted that a response would be provided to Councillor Ms Taylor outside of the meeting.

## **50. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Councillor M Francis declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in Item No. 56 by virtue of his position as Chairman of the Corporate Governance Committee.

## **51. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH EAST ANGLIA DEVOLUTION**

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting County Councillor S Count who had been invited to the meeting to address the Council on an update on the Devolution Programme for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is appended in the Minute Book.

Councillor Count introduced himself as Chairman of the Shadow Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority and explained that he would remain in post until the election of the Mayor in May 2017. Members were reminded of details of the Devolution journey that had taken place since June 2016 but had been ongoing for some 2-3 years previously. Attention was drawn to the main features of the Devolution agreement with an annual fund of £20m for 30 years for infrastructure, £100m fund for affordable housing and explained that although the budgets and powers had been devolved from Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council for transport the remaining services would continue to be delivered locally.

In highlighting other features of the Devolution agreement, Councillor Count advised Members of work currently being undertaken on Devolution deal 2 that would focus on deprived areas, health and social care, new homes, infrastructure and community safety and was anticipated for submission to government prior to the Spring budget.

Attention was drawn to the financial implications, in particular the ability to levy a supplementary business rate that was subject to approval from the business community and the total overheads that had been broken down for 2017/18, none of which would need to be met locally from the local authorities.

In discussing the governance arrangements for the Combined Authority, Councillor Count explained how the voting structures would work with responsibilities allocated to other members of the Combined Authority and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee arrangements that would be considered at Item No. 60 ante. Members were also provided with an update on progress of the various work streams, with each Council Leader having been allocated a specific work stream with Officer support.

In concluding his presentation, Councillor Count reminded Members of the timetable for implementation with the establishment of the Combined Authority in February 2017 and election of Mayor in May 2017.

In response to a question from Councillor B S Chapman on the specific areas of deprivation in Cambridgeshire, highlighting St Neots as a particular problem area, Councillor Count referred to pilot deprived areas identified for improvement in the Devolution area in accordance with the Indices of Deprivation for Cambridgeshire 2015 that would be used as example cases to roll-out further to other deprived areas in the future. He also referred to the St Neots Masterplan that had formed the basis of the initial Devolution deal proposals.

Councillor P D Reeve raised questions in relation to how the business community would take the decision on levying of the supplementary business rate and support for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, whereby Councillor Count explained that although unable to specifically answer the question he anticipated that this would be undertaken through the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would have a dedicated Officer support from the Combined Authority that had been allocated in the budget.

Councillor M F Shellens requested a copy of the Indices of Deprivation 2015 and highlighted his concern for skilled house building labour, whereby Councillor Count indicated his shared concern and explained that they would be addressing this issue through the provision of college courses and investigation of alternative house building methods to accelerate the provision of required housing in the area. Councillor Count also undertook to arrange for the circulation of details of the Indices of Deprivation to all Members following the meeting.

In concluding, the Executive Leader, Councillor R B Howe, drew Members attention to the second stage of the Devolution deal where the decision had been taken to focus on investment in our market towns through an integrated approach to economic development. Councillor Howe explained that it was anticipated that following the initial allocation of funding, alternative investment would be explored to generate further capital. In referring to shortage of housing, Councillor Howe questioned whether a suitable pilot provider for alternative house building could be identified within 12 months. In response Councillor Count explained that some of the larger housing allocations could be piloted with modular homes with a view to upscaling dependent upon the success of the constructions.

## **52. EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR PRESENTATIONS**

### **(a) Councillor J A Gray, Executive Councillor for Strategic Resources**

Councillor J A Gray, Executive Councillor for Strategic Resources, addressed the Council on the budget principles and framework, together with focus on the future challenges

faced by the Council. Attention was drawn to the timetable for the forthcoming budget setting process and Members noted that the Council was awaiting the draft settlement from the Department for Communities and Local Government. Councillor Gray reminded Members of the achievements to date with the ZBB process that had resulted in an excess of £5m savings, service transformation, LEAN reviews and development of shared services. It was reported previously that the Council had submitted a four year strategic efficiency plan to the Secretary of State which was designed to allow for further savings and benefits for the local community. Councillor Gray reported that the Council had been successful and received confirmation of the Multi Year Settlement Offer in November 2016.

Members' attention was drawn to the updated 'Plan on a Page' and suggested areas for income generation, including an increase in Council Tax, the ongoing commercial investment and adoption of a differential charging policy. Alongside income generation, Councillor Gray focussed on the efficiencies that had already been identified through ZBB, continuation of shared services, commercialisation through partnership with external organisations and transformation of services.

Turning attention to the latest budgetary information, Members noted that there would be a freeze on pension contributions for the next three years, anticipated income from the Commercial Investment Strategy of £1.1m and savings resulting from two ongoing service restructures.

In concluding his presentation, Councillor Gray focussed upon the future and identified risks with the transformation programme of increasing the retention of business rates from 50% to 100% by 2020/21, a requirement to financially review proposals and policies going forward in light of Devolution and budget pressures in the last two years of the Medium Term Financial Strategy arising from potential removal of the New Homes Bonus and policy to freeze Council Tax.

In referring to the figures presented on the 'Plan on a Page', Councillor M F Shellens questioned the accuracy, whereby Councillor Gray explained that they would be updated post February 2017 following approval of the budget and additional years added. He referred to the uncertainty over the New Homes Bonus allocation but indicated his confidence in achieving the income through the commercial investments that could be further invested.

In response to a question from Councillor D B Dew on the potential for growth in business rates, Councillor Gray acquainted Members with the current formula and proposals for 2020/21, although it was still uncertain as to what responsibilities would transfer and the extent of the growth in the District.

Arising from a question from Councillor P D Reeve on the availability of the budgetary information for all Members, Councillor Gray explained that information would be available after publication of the Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny (Performance and Customers) on 3rd January 2017.

**(b) Councillor S Cawley, Executive Councillor for Organisation and Customer Services**

Councillor S Cawley, Executive Councillor for Organisation and Customer Services addressed the Council on an update of the Transformation Programme currently being undertaken by the Council. A copy of Councillor Cawley's PowerPoint presentation is appended in the Minute Book.

Members' attention was drawn to the background to organisational transformation and were acquainted with the media presentation that was presented to all staff at the launch event on 28th November 2016. Councillor Cawley explained that transformation would be delivered through development of the Corporate Plan, creating a leaner and more flexible workforce to deliver the Council's Strategic Resource Plan and increase productivity to accelerate momentum and pace to identify new ways of working.

Councillor Cawley explained the principles of placing customers at the heart of the transformation strategy that would involve customer led services and centralising more services into customer services, thereby removing the need for 'back office' and experts and bringing them to the forefront of service delivery.

Transformation would be delivered through the LEAN thinking process, explained as a cyclical, ongoing approach that would be developed through business process mapping to eliminate waste and striving for perfection. Councillor Cawley highlighted the six transformation elements in the Council as people, assets, processes, technology, operating model and commercialisation and identified the factors that would be critical to the success of the project, including political commitment from all Members.

In response to a question from Councillor T Hayward on his concern with the increased reliance on technology and impact on the older generation, Councillor Cawley explained that the Council would continue to maintain a facility for customers to contact either face to face or over the telephone. Following on this subject, Councillor M F Shellens also expressed his concern in the reliance on technology as a deterrent for some residents, whereby it was explained that the Customer Service Centre would be developed further in their level of expertise to enable resolution at the point of contact, but specialists would continue to be available.

Councillor P D Reeve referred to a similar exercise being

undertaken at Cambridgeshire County Council making use of graduates to look at identifying LEAN processes that could be replicated at the Council. In response, Councillor Cawley explained that a Transformation Team had been established, but welcomed the idea of utilising graduates. He further explained that staff and Members would be receiving regular communications updates on the project and reported that a communications specialist had been appointed to assist with the delivery of the programme.

Councillor Mrs R E Mathews expressed her concern as Chairman of the Employment Committee regarding the effect of the changes on staff and their morale, whereby Councillor Cawley explained that following the launch to all staff in November 2016, further events would be programmed to ensure all staff involvement in the development of the programme.

Arising from a question by Councillor T D Alban on how the Council responded to queries by residents that related to other Council services, the Managing Director explained that Council staff would continue to take ownership of the issue and contact the relevant authority concerned until resolution for the customer. Councillor Cawley explained that he anticipated that the Council would continue this approach going forward with the transformation programme.

**(c) Questions to other Members of the Cabinet**

Arising from a question by Councillor T D Sanderson on the reasoning behind the Cabinet's decision not to implement the increase in car parking charges despite rejecting the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's (Economy and Growth) decision and Cabinet's subsequent analysis and decision to increase the charges, the Executive Leader, Councillor R B Howe explained that the decision was taken not to proceed when put into the context of developing the economic viability of the market towns in the District that was felt to be counter-productive and it was noted that a parking study would be undertaken across the District. Councillor Howe explained that alternative models of charging were investigated and undertook to share these with Councillor Sanderson following the meeting.

Councillor P Kadewere asked for an update on parking issues raised previously at land near to the Oak Tree Centre, Huntingdon, whereby Councillor Howe outlined the difficulty in identifying the ownership of the land and the appropriate solution to mitigate the parking problems identified that was still being addressed.

In response to a question regarding the availability to Members of the operational status of cameras with non-operational CCTV cameras in Ramsey and potential for reimbursement to the Town Council during the period of non-operation, Councillor D Brown explained that he had been made aware of two cameras that had not been operational

as a result of the power supply and steps would be undertaken to arrange for reimbursement. Councillor Howe also explained that monthly performance information continued to be published and was available to all Members.

Arising from a query presented by Councillor S Greenall regarding parking issues raised by electors in his ward and the correct Officer to contact, it was suggested that a dedicated email address be established for car parking enquiries.

In response to a question from Councillor B S Chapman on the reported level of violent crimes in St Neots being twice the level as Huntingdon despite having fewer CCTV cameras and method for review of coverage, Councillor Brown explained that discussions would be undertaken in the New Year between the District and Town/Parish Councils with a view to offering options for locating further cameras.

### **53. OUTCOMES FROM COMMITTEES AND PANELS**

A copy of the list of meetings held since the last meeting of the Council held on 19th October 2016 is appended in the Minute Book and Members were advised that any issues or questions could be raised in relation to these meetings.

Councillor T D Sanderson asked a question in relation to the status of the Asset Exchange between Huntingdonshire District Council and Huntingdon Town Council considered by the Cabinet at their meeting held on 17th November 2016, whereby Councillor J M Palmer reported that work was currently being undertaken on the lease and undertook to provide a written response to update Councillor Sanderson further. Furthermore Councillor P D Reeve questioned the level of outstanding loan that was held by the Council, whereby the Executive Leader, Councillor R B Howe, undertook to provide a written response outside of the meeting.

### **54. EXTERNAL AUDIT - PUBLIC SECTOR AUDIT APPOINTMENTS (PSAA) LTD**

In conjunction with the Corporate Governance Committee at their meeting held on 7th December 2016, the Council considered a report by the Head of Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) and Councillor M Francis presented details of a preferred option for appointing an External Auditor from 2018/19 following the novation of external audit contracts from the Audit Commission to the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) on 1st April 2015. In so doing Members were advised that these transitional provisions would be amended to allow for an extension of the contracts for one year to allow a decision to be taken on appointment of an external auditor. Whereupon, it was

**RESOLVED**

that the Council opts in to the appointing person arrangements made by Public Sector Audit Appointments for the

appointment of external auditors.

**55. TREASURY MANAGEMENT 6-MONTH PERFORMANCE REVIEW**

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on a six-month update in respect of treasury management activity, including investment and borrowing activity and treasury performance. In so doing, Councillor J A Gray drew Members' attention to the purpose of the Treasury Management to ensure that the Council had sufficient funding to meet its daily obligations, borrow when necessary to fund capital expenditure and ensuring that any investment of surplus funds was balanced against risk.

In reminding Members that following the approval of the Commercial Investment Strategy in December 2015 the Council's strategy had been to generate additional income to assist in closing the Council's forecast gap in the revenue budget, Councillor Gray drew attention to the estimated expenditure of £20m in 2016/17 and current forecast of £9.2m that had been on track. Members also noted details of the asset investments and yields and in so doing Councillor Gray advised that guidance had been received to broaden the investments outside of the District and an Interim Commercial Estates Manager had been appointed to assist in the management of the investments.

Councillor Gray responded to questions raised by Councillor M F Shellens and explained that the asset investments and yields had not included loan investments made to Luminus, Huntingdon Gym and Huntingdon Regional College as it was only necessary to report upon Commercial Investment Strategy assets invested by the Council. Councillor Gray further explained that inflation would be updated and adjustment made in light of any increase to interest rates and explained that even though the asset yields had been higher than the interest rate, it was not possible to borrow to invest in cash investments only to borrow to invest in physical assets.

In response to a question from Councillor Mrs R E Mathews on the 'bail-in' powers should a bank become insolvent and how the Council would mitigate against this risk, Councillor Gray explained that all finance that had been invested by the Council had been through instant access and should this problem arise it would be possible to remove the funds. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Treasury Management Performance Review for the period April to September 2016 be noted.

**56. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME - CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

In conjunction with the Corporate Governance Committee at their meeting held on 7th December 2016, the Council considered a report by the Elections and Democratic Services Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on proposals to adjust the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme to reflect an increase in responsibilities of the Corporate Governance Committee following a



review of the Council's Constitution earlier in the year. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that Part 6 of the Council's Constitution be updated to increase the Special Responsibility Allowances for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Governance Committee to reflect the same level as the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Employment Committee and that the appropriate adjustments be backdated to 18th May 2016.

**57. SECTION 85 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - RESOLUTION TO EXTEND 6 MONTH RULE**

The Managing Director presented a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) detailing a request to consider the extension of the six month rule of non-attendance at meetings in relation to Councillor D Harty on the grounds of his ill-health.

Councillor R Harrison provided an update to the Council on the health of Councillor Harty and reported that after a period of ill health he was recovering and had hoped to resume some of his ward duties early in the New Year. Whereupon, the Council

RESOLVED

- (a) that Councillor D Harty's non-attendance at meetings be extended until the end of the Municipal Year in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972; and
- (b) that the Council's best wishes be conveyed to Councillor D Harty for continued improvement to his health.

**58. MEMBERSHIP OF THE CABINET**

The Executive Leader, Councillor R B Howe reported upon variations to the Cabinet that he deemed necessary in the light of changes to his role and additional workload with the onset of Devolution and confirmed his appointment of Councillor G J Bull in replacement of Councillor Gray as his Deputy Leader. Councillor Howe also confirmed the allocation of executive responsibilities as follows –

Community Resilience	Councillor Mrs A Dickinson
Leisure and Health	Councillor J M Palmer
Operations	Councillor J White
Growth	Councillor R Harrison
Commercialisation and Shared Services	Councillor D Brown
Strategic Resources	Councillor J A Gray
Transformation and Customers	Councillor S Cawley
Housing and Regulatory Services	Councillor R Fuller

Councillor Howe expressed his appreciation to Councillors R C Carter, S J Criswell and D M Tysoe for their Executive Councillor roles that they had fulfilled since their appointment in May 2016.

**59. VARIATIONS TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS**

On the recommendation of Councillor G J Bull, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that Councillors D M Tysoe and Mrs A Donaldson be appointed to the membership of the Corporate Governance Committee in place of Councillors R Fuller and J White;
- (b) that Councillors R C Carter and R J West be appointed to the membership of the Development Management Committee in place of Councillors R Fuller and J White;
- (c) that Councillor R Fuller be appointed as ex-officio member of the Licensing and Protection Committee/Licensing Committee in place of Councillor S J Criswell;
- (d) that Councillor Mrs J Taverner be appointed to the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth) in place of Councillor R Fuller;
- (e) that Councillor S J Criswell be appointed to the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Environment) in place of Councillor Mrs A Dickinson;
- (f) that Councillors D M Tysoe and R C Carter be appointed to the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Customers) in place of Councillors Mrs A Dickinson and J White; and
- (g) that Councillor L R Swain be appointed to the membership of the Employment Committee in place of Councillor J White.

**60. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY - SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS**

*(The Chairman announced that he proposed to admit the following urgent item in accordance with Section 100B (4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 given the need to appoint representatives before 31st January 2017).*

Consideration was given to a report by the Elections and Democratic Services Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the appointment of two representatives to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

Members were informed that following the decision taken by the Council to become a constituent member of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority at their meeting on 16th December 2016, there was a requirement to establish an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In accordance with the political balance across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, the Council was required to appoint one member from the Conservative Group and one Independent member. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that Councillors R C Carter and T Hayward be appointed as the Council's representatives to serve on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

The meeting ended at 9.30pm.

Chairman