

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, 29 March 2017.

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,
B S Chapman, Mrs S Conboy, J E Corley,
S J Criswell, J W Davies, Mrs A Dickinson,
Mrs L A Duffy, M Francis, R Fuller, L George,
D A Giles, Mrs S A Giles, J A Gray,
S Greenall, R Harrison, T Hayward,
R B Howe, Mrs P A Jordan, P Kadewere,
Mrs R E Mathews, D J Mead, J P Morris,
J M Palmer, P D Reeve, Mrs D C Reynolds,
T D Sanderson, M F Shellens, L R Swain,
Mrs J Tavener, Mrs S L Taylor, 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 K M Baker, D B Dew, Mrs A Donaldson, I D Gardener and K D Wainwright.

74. PRAYER

The Reverend Jon Randell of St Peter's Church, Yaxley opened the meeting with a prayer.

75. 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. In so doing, the Chairman drew Members attention his attendance at a number of events including the annual Pancake Flipathon in the Market Square, Huntingdon, charity quiz night in St Ives Corn Exchange that raised funds for the MacMillan Woodlands Appeal and last night of the proms at Peterborough Cathedral. Members also noted the delegation visit from Wertheim and the Federal State of Baden-Wuerttemberg, Germany the previous day and flag raising for Commonwealth Day.

In referring to forthcoming events in the Chairman's calendar, the Chairman drew Members attention to forthcoming retirement and Civic Reception to be held for Sir Hugh Duberly, Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire and Easter Charity Ball hosted by the Mayor of Huntingdon. In concluding his remarked, the Chairman paid tribute to Mrs B Morrison, Member Support Assistant that had left the Council that day after 20 years' service and wished her all the best in her new role.

Final mention was made of the recent resignation of former Councillor D Harty and the Executive Leader, Councillor R B Howe expressed his gratitude to the former Councillor for his services as a District Councillor to the St Neots Eaton Ford ward that he had served since 2004. He had been a well-respected Chairman and Vice-Chairman and had conducted himself with dignity and pleasant manner with everyone serving all three tiers of local government.

Councillor B S Chapman paid tribute to former Councillor Harty who referred to his support that he had been provided in encouraging him to join the District Council and his kindness and support that had remained for many years that would be a loss to the Council.

Councillor Mrs S A Giles concluded the tributes by referring to the time that she had served alongside former Councillor Harty who was a true gentleman and his input would be missed by the Council and conveyed her best wishes to the former Councillor.

76. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 22nd February 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to replacement of the word "Hemingford" with the word "Houghton" in the fourth paragraph of Minute No. 66.

77. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

78. EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR PRESENTATIONS AND QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(a) Councillor J M Palmer, Executive Councillor for Health and Leisure

Councillor J M Palmer, Executive Councillor for Health and Leisure addressed the Council on the activities of One Leisure and the Active Lifestyles Team. A copy of Councillor Palmer's PowerPoint presentation is appended in the Minute Book.

Attention was drawn to details of the context of the service and its non-statutory function but corporate objective of the Council to improve the health and wellbeing of its residents. Members were reminded of the existing Leisure Centre facilities located throughout the District, the partnership arrangement with Urban and Civic to provide a facility at Alconbury Weald and responsibilities of the Active Lifestyles Team.

In noting the strategic overview of the focus of the Active Lifestyles Team, specifically health, education, economic and social values, Members were advised that this work was undertaken by a Team of seven staff managing around 50k attendances in 2015/16 through physical activity and sports

sessions and focussing on the various different groups of people in the community.

Councillor Palmer reminded Members how well the District was currently served by provision of the Leisure Centres with 2.35m visits per year and updated the Council on the joint venture with Urban and Civic at Alconbury Weald that would be managed by the District Council.

Attention was drawn to the benchmarking of One Leisure's performance across the country, with only 35% of facilities provided in-house by the Council and the best Council operated at £201K surplus whilst the worst Council subsidised the operation of £360k, comparable to One Leisure that delivered a £431k surplus in 2015/16. Members noted One Leisure's 2016/17 performance of income against expenditure that had showed a steady increase in income but this year would be impacted by an increase in minimum wage costs. Councillor Palmer drew attention to the level of membership sales and recent increase as a result of a membership publicity drive but intimated that improvements continued to be required to maintain the levels and remain competitive with the private sector market.

In his concluding remarks, Councillor Palmer outlined the developments for 2017/18, including delivery of the capital programme of improvements at the One Leisure facilities, new programmes by the Active Lifestyles Team and made reference to the five year strategic plan of One Leisure reaching its objective of £8.5m income with a surplus of 10% by 2021/22 thereby creating a financial contribution towards the overall cost of the Council.

Following praise expressed for the One Leisure facilities by Councillor Ms L A Duffy, a question was raised in relation to the retention of individuals completing exercise referrals following the end of their programme and ability to offer membership at a reduced rate to encourage their continued attendance. Whereby Councillor Palmer explained that provision currently did not exist for such a reduction in the cost of membership but undertook to investigate the feasibility of this option.

Councillor T D Alban commended the competitive pricing structure of facilities at One Leisure but questioned whether the age bracket of young people using or hiring the facilities could be extended from above 16 to include all children in full time education. Councillor Palmer intimated his support for such a proposal as one of its core objectives was to encourage activity in young people and endeavoured to investigate further this proposal.

In response to a question by Councillor D A Giles on the possibility of charging car park fees at the Leisure Centres to encourage more users to walk to the Centres, Councillor Palmer suggested that this option would not be explored.

Arising from a question by Councillor Ms S L Taylor on the timescale for completion of the One Leisure St Neots Synthetic Turf Pitch and usage by Ernulf Academy, Councillor Palmer explained that the Council had been working closely towards finalisation of extension of the lease with the Academy to ensure that there was at least a 25 year term to enable the funds to be released from Sport England.

Councillor M F Shellens commented upon the improvement of the gap between income and expenditure at One Leisure, but questioned as to how this had been eroded by capital expenditure and it was explained that capital expenditure had not been taken into account in the performance figures presented.

In response to a question from Councillor Mrs S A Conboy on engagement with young people and the ability for parishes to engage more to encourage their participation, Councillor Palmer referred to the importance of engagement with all social groups through the use of social media and ability to target specific age groups and work undertaken with schools.

By reference to comments raised previously by Councillor Giles on car parking, Councillor B S Chapman commented upon the public subsidy and Councillor Palmer made reference to a review of the membership pricing structure in the light of the fact that new members appeared to be picking up additional charges. Councillor J A Gray also explained that there appeared to be a misunderstanding with the public subsidy as the One Leisure service had clearly been making a profit and clarified the situation with the capital costs that had been built into the figures presented at this meeting.

(b) Councillor R Harrison, Executive Councillor for Growth

Councillor R Harrison, Executive Councillor for Growth addressed the Council on growth agenda currently being undertaken by the Council. A copy of Councillor Harrison's PowerPoint presentation is appended in the Minute Book.

Members' attention was drawn to the vision for growth in the District and it was explained that this would be achieved through the development of a flexible and resilient workforce, becoming the right environment for investment and encouraging a culture of enterprise. Councillor Harrison reminded Members of the launch of the Invest Huntingdonshire website and drew attention to the website usage since its launch last year. Members also noted the development of business information themed workshops that had been held in 2016/17 where attendance had been increasing and had offered advice to local businesses, together with providing an opportunity for networking.

Councillor Harrison reported upon the highlights of the Alconbury Enterprise Zone in 2016/17 and drew attention to

the commercial enterprises that had begun to occupy the site and the recent tour of the site that had taken place for Members of the Council. Members also noted the EDGE shop that was available in Huntingdon that was designed to provide an information exchange for promoting local businesses and act as a jobs hub as the development of businesses expand on site. Attention was also drawn to a careers fair that had taken place in December 2016 involving all secondary schools in the District that had been run by EDGE.

Members noted that the Innovation Manufacturing Engineering Technology (IMET) facility had been developed at Alconbury Weald costing £10.5m achieved through growth funding by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and scheduled for completion by the end of 2017.

In looking to the forthcoming year, Councillor Harrison identified the challenges that existed through development of the skills strategy and embracing the opportunities that existed such as the St Neots Masterplan and drew attention to the discussion paper that had been launched by the National Infrastructure Commission on the Oxford to Cambridge corridor and discovering the potential for additional enterprise zones. It was further noted that work was necessary to build relationships with key stakeholders such as the LEP and the Combined Authority.

In indicating her support for an enterprise zone in St Neots Councillor Ms S L Taylor highlighted her concern of the potential impact on the residents in the town and potential for employees to move with existing employers.

In response to a question from Councillor T D Sanderson on the potential for extending the template for St Neots Masterplan to other market towns, Councillor Harrison explained that following examination of the success of this model it would be rolled out to other towns in the area.

Councillor Mrs S A Conboy commented upon the challenge of planning mixed development and how the process would be monitored to ensure that an industry element was being fulfilled, whereby Councillor Harrison concurred with the comments raised and suggested that the work of the Combined Authority could assist in this area.

Arising from a question from Councillor B S Chapman on the potential for development of an EDGE shop in St Neots and potential location for the enterprise zone in St Neots in relation to the A428, Members noted that potential was being explored for a 'pop-up' shop that could be moved throughout the District and Councillor Harrison explained that a discussion document would be available the following week with recommendations for the proposed route of the A428.

Following a question from Councillor D A Giles on the timescale of St Neots Masterplan and its links to the St

Neots Neighbourhood Plan, Councillor Harrison reported that it was currently under development with the selection of potential consulting companies for delivery and assured Members that it would complement the Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan.

In concluding and in response to a question by Councillor S Cawley, Councillor Harrison highlighted the importance of Town Councils and other partners getting involved in the development of the Market Town Masterplans.

(c) Questions to other Members of the Cabinet

By reference to the third paragraph of Minute No. 66 of the Minutes of the last Meeting, Councillor T Hayward asked for an update on whether action had been taken, whereby Councillor R Harrison explained that Mr S Bell, Team Leader Transportation had a meeting scheduled in mid-April that would enable further detail be made available to provide a clearer response to be put to the Minister.

Arising from a question from Councillor T D Sanderson on two specific cases in relation to overgrowth in Devoke Close, Huntingdon and issues with a resident's permit for a resident at Great Northern Street Car Park, Huntingdon, Councillor J White explained that an issue existed with a number of parcels of land located throughout the District that had been orphaned and no ownership established for maintenance. It was noted that a review would be undertaken for such pieces of land with a view to potentially adopting and maintaining. In relation to the resident's permit, it was suggested that a decision taken in July 2016 would be reviewed in light of the receipt of mitigating circumstances that had been provided specific to this case.

In response to a question by Councillor Mrs S J Conboy on the timescale for the Parking Strategy, Councillor White explained that work was progressing with a Task and Finish Group established to address the overall vision and parking charges. This would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth) in September 2017 prior to the Cabinet and endeavoured to keep Members informed of progress.

Councillor B S Chapman referred to ongoing issues with the surface of the road in West Street, St Neots and the Executive Leader, Councillor R B Howe highlighted the difficulties that they had faced in resolving this issue as the road was un-adopted and he was keen to reach a resolution on this problem by working with the County Council and investigate the potential for sponsorship by the Town Council.

In response to a question by Councillor P Kadewere on the closure of shops in Huntingdon Town Centre, Councillor Harrison explained that provision did not exist for the Council to review the rates as they were under the ownership of a

private landlord.

Councillor Ms L A Duffy made specific reference to a resident's difficulty in obtaining an additional refuse bin and the timescale involved, the matter of which had now been resolved, whereby Councillor White undertook to investigate further whether issues existed with the delivery of new bins with the Operations Division and would provide an update to Councillor Ms Duffy.

With reference to the penultimate paragraph of Minute No. 66 of the Minutes of the last meeting, Councillor D A Giles queried the lack of response and Councillor White had explained that he had contacted Councillor Giles following the last meeting asking for further detail to be provided on specific details of the road sign in Eaton Socon.

In response to a question from Councillor Hayward, Councillor Harrison confirmed his confidence in the plan for a 5 year delivery of housing in the area.

79. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY

The Executive Leader, Councillor R B Howe, with the assistance of a presentation (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) provided an update to Members on progress to date with the work of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. Whereupon Members' attention was drawn to the new branding and logo of the Combined Authority that represented the eternity of all the Council's in the Combined Authority area.

In noting that the Order establishing the Combined Authority had been made on the 2nd March 2017, Councillor Howe reported that their first meeting had been held on 20th March 2017 and confirmed the initial allocation of £20m of funding, with a further £20m later this month. It was noted that the Combined Authority confirmed the resolutions of the Shadow Board and some decisions had been taken in advance of the election of a Mayor including the budget and indicative resources for 2016-18 and the Medium Term Financial Forecast for 2018-21. It was anticipated the costs of running the Mayor's office was £1m per annum, similar costs for the election of the Mayor and an additional £400k had been allocated in reserves, the costs of which it was suggested could be recovered in 2-3 years.

Attention was drawn to the four strategic priorities of the Combined Authority, specifically the growth plan that was under development that had included the Housing Strategy that had been signed off and submitted to the Department of Communities and Local Government. An allocation of 4k affordable homes in the Combined Authority area was expected over the next 5 years and delivery would be earlier than would normally be the case. It was further noted that the Local Transport Plan and Infrastructure Programme was under development.

Councillor Howe updated Members in relation to the Finance and Investment and Governance strategic priorities and with regard to the

Public Service Reform Plan and Deal 2 it was anticipated that there would be no incremental costs to the Mayor's Office but expected the Combined Authority to have a self-sufficient economy within a number of years.

With reference to the development of the Market Town Masterplan, Councillor Howe explained that there were nine market towns in the Combined Authority area and would be developed to regenerate the town centres through an integrated approach to housing, infrastructure deficit and development of a skills base using St Neots as an initial template. It was noted that three consulting companies were currently under consideration to develop the Plan to cover commercial and social development and would be integrated with the current St Neots Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan. He further explained that the development of the Oxford to Cambridge corridor would help to ensure prosperity in the future. Currently no geographical location had been identified for the Enterprize Zone in St Neots but would be developed to help create and stimulate jobs for the local economy.

Councillor D A Giles indicated his pleasure at the encouraging and positive news for St Neots and looked forward to working with the Combined Authority in development of the St Neots Masterplan.

Arising from a question from Councillor Mrs S J Conboy on the pace of the processes and strategy development and communication of progress, Councillor Howe explained that aside from these regular briefings at each Council meeting, a new website was currently under development that would link to each constituent authority websites as well.

As a result of a question from Councillor T Hayward on the role of Overview and Scrutiny in the organisation, Councillor Howe reminded Members that the Overview and Scrutiny Members had been appointed from each constituent authority and the first Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny meeting would be held on 11th April 2017 and would have the ability to scrutinise the decisions already taken by the Combined Authority.

With reference to a question by Councillor M F Shellens, Councillor Howe explained that the 4k affordable housing was not based on existing allocations but new allocations.

Finally arising from concerns raised by Councillor P D Reeve on the lack of availability for pre-scrutiny of decision making of the Combined Authority, Councillor Howe explained that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could not become functional until 8th May 2017 Combined and a decision log of the Combined Authority decisions would be made available at their first meeting.

80. OUTCOMES FROM COMMITTEES AND PANELS

A copy of the list of meetings held since the last meeting of the Council held on 22nd February 2017 is appended in the Minute Book and Members were advised that any issues or questions could be raised in relation to these meetings.

81. CORPORATE PLAN 2016-18 MID-TERM REVIEW

The Council considered a report by the Corporate Team Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) detailing a mid-term review of the Corporate Plan 2016/18. The Executive Leader, Councillor R B Howe reminded Members of the purpose of the Plan that detailed the Vision, Strategic Priorities and Objectives for the Council that linked to Service Plans and individual Performance Development Plans of Officers. In drawing attention to the Strategic Priorities and Objectives of enabling communities, developing sustainable growth and becoming a more efficient and effective Council, Councillor Howe explained that each Overview and Scrutiny Panel was aligned to each of these priorities.

Members were advised of the changes that had been proposed to the Corporate Plan that had included some minor textual amendments to the Objectives, the inclusion of Transformation and Devolution, updates to work programme descriptions and amendments to some actions and Performance Indicators. Councillor Howe drew Members' attention to the new actions proposed that had included open spaces and play provision, air pollution, updating the Homelessness Strategy and delivering a Car Parking Strategy.

With reference to his support for inclusion of open spaces and play provision, Councillor T Hayward suggested that, although not our statutory responsibility, it was essential that these were maintained, whereby Councillor Howe explained that the update had already been reviewed and completed.

Councillor M F Shellens was pleased to see that the comments raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Customers) had been incorporated into the proposed changes to the Corporate Plan, with one exception that the Disabled Facilities Grant measurement should have incorporated up to practical completion. Whereupon, the Council

RESOLVED

- (a) that the revised actions and key performance indicators in the mid-term review of the Corporate Plan 2016/18 be approved; and
- (b) that the revised Performance Management and Data Quality Policy and Framework be approved.

82. REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Councillor M Francis, Chairman of the Corporate Governance Committee, presented a report by the Internal Audit and Risk Manager on a review of the effectiveness of the Corporate Governance Committee (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) following an informal meeting held with Members of the Committee on 25th January 2017.

Councillor Francis explained that the Committee had concluded that it

had sufficient resources to fulfil its terms of reference and performed its role effectively and independently. In drawing attention to the discussion held at the meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee on 22nd March 2017, Councillor T Hayward highlighted the comments raised in relation to ensuring that the Committee remained with the same membership, whereby the Managing Director explained that this was not possible to incorporate in the Terms of Reference due to the potential shift in political composition of the Council and allocation of seats on Committees and Panels may be subject to change. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference of the Corporate Governance Committee as set out in Appendix 1 to the report now submitted be approved.

83. CODE OF PROCUREMENT

In conjunction with a report by the Procurement Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) Councillor M Francis, Chairman of the Corporate Governance Committee, presented details of a review of the Code of Procurement that had been considered by the Corporate Governance Committee at their meeting held on 22nd March 2017.

Members' attention was drawn to the four significant changes to the Code, specifically formalising the rules of disposal, harmonisation of tender thresholds to £100k in line with the partner authorities of South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council, amending the threshold limit for single quotes approved by Heads of Service and implementing changes to collect income tax and national insurance through Pay-As-You-Earn for consultants and contractors in accordance with the Finance Bill 2017. In so doing, the Council

RESOLVED

that the proposed changes to the Code of Procurement as set out in Appendix 2 to the report now submitted be approved.

84. VARIATIONS TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

There were no changes to report.

The meeting ended at 8.58pm.

Chairman