

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, 11 October 2017.

PRESENT: Councillor R J West – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, T D Alban,
K M Baker, C E Bober, 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,
M Francis, R Fuller, I D Gardener, L George,
D A Giles, Mrs S A Giles, J A Gray,
S Greenall, T Hayward, R B Howe,
Mrs P A Jordan, P Kadewere,
Mrs R E Mathews, J P Morris, J M Palmer,
P D Reeve, Mrs D C Reynolds,
T D Sanderson, L R Swain, Mrs J Tavener,
Mrs S L Taylor, R G Tuplin, D M Tysoe,
D R Underwood, K D Wainwright, D Watt and
J E White.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs B E Boddington, P L E Bucknell, B S Chapman, Mrs A Donaldson, Mrs L A Duffy, B Hyland, D J Mead and M F Shellens.

27. PRAYER

The Right Reverend Dr D Thomson, Bishop of Huntingdon, opened the meeting with prayer.

28. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Mr O Morley, Corporate Director (Services) to his first meeting of the Council. The Chairman further presented to the Council an account of the activities that he had attended since the last meeting. In so doing, he summarised his attendance various events including Hinchingsbrooke School's Sixth Form celebration evening, St Neots Armed Forces Gala day, the Evergreens in Great Gransden, flag raising event for the Battle of Britain, equality pledge event at Cambridge United Football Club, St Neots Riverside Miniature Railway, judging Anglia in Bloom at the MS Centre, Huntingdon, civic leaders tour at RAF Molesworth and flag raising for the centenary of the Battle of Passchendaele in July 2017.

The Chairman attended a riverside buffet in Kimbolton in August 2017 and Members noted his attendance at the Ramsey Town Council Civic Service, diamond jubilee of the 2nd St Ives Sea Scouts, commemoration of the 77th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, annual reception at USAF Alconbury and attendance by

Godmanchester school children for a mock council debate and the Annual Civic Services at St Neots and St Ives Town Councils in September.

In October to date, the Chairman reported upon his attendance at the Justice Service with the High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire, assisting on the cake stall at Pathfinder House that raised £262 for the Alzheimer's Society, a guest of the Mayor of Whittlesey at their Civic Service and support for the Speakability charity.

The Vice-Chairman, Councillor R C Carter, recounted to Members his attendance as a guest of the Bishop of Huntingdon in Ely, USAF Alconbury Independence Day celebrations, Fenland District Council's Civic Celebrations, Rushden festival, commemoration of the great fire of Needingworth in 1847 and attendance at the Mayor of Godmanchester's Civic Service.

29. MINUTES

Subject to the inclusion of Councillor S Greenall in the list of apologies of the meeting of the Council held on 28th June 2017, the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on the 28th June 2017 and the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council held on 26th July 2017 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

30. MEMBERS INTERESTS'

No declarations were received.

31. HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL PLAN TO 2036

Councillor R Fuller, Deputy Executive Leader and Executive Councillor for Housing and Planning addressed the Council on an update on the Local Plan process and timetable. A copy of Councillor Fuller's PowerPoint presentation is appended in the Minute Book.

By way of background, the Council were provided with an update on the Local Plan progress, in particular Members' attention was drawn to a consultation document produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on proposals to reform the planning system to increase the supply of new homes through the use of a standard method of calculating local authorities' housing need. It was noted that the implications for the Council may mean an uplift in the number of houses the District would be required to deliver, but the existing approach to housing needs calculations may be utilised if the Local Plan is submitted for examination before 31st March 2018.

Members were acquainted with the expected timeline, with the outcome of a full public consultation that ran until 25th August 2017 and resulted in 791 comments being received. Councillor Fuller also reminded Members of the commencement of the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) consultation on 4th October 2017 for four weeks seeking comments on how many further development sites could be available to meet Huntingdonshire's growth needs.

In drawing Members attention to the development strategy, it was noted that 70% of housing growth focused on four Spatial Planning Areas of St Neots, St Ives, Huntingdon and Ramsey and the remaining 30% focussing on seven Key Service Centres and small settlements throughout the District to support sustainable rural growth. Councillor Fuller added that the total homes in the Key Service Centre of Buckden had been updated to reflect the recent planning appeal decision. The Council also noted the two Strategic Expansion Locations at Alconbury Weald and St Neots East comprising 6,680 and 3,820 homes respectively and associated employment land.

Attention was drawn to specific policies of the draft Local Plan, LP10 and LP11 for the quality of design and implementation, LP23 of retaining a target of 40% affordable housing where developments met certain criteria and LP27 with a new policy for community based proposals that had received good support to enable communities to bring forward local sites that could be unlocked for housing development and community infrastructure development. In relation to LP28 the focus of the policy was to ensure the facilitation of land for meeting the needs of local people with an established connection to where the new homes are built and Councillor Fuller indicated that the Council had been working with Town and Parish Councils to assist in the delivery of this provision. In relation to policy LP36 on renewable and low carbon energy, the Council had taken a bold approach to policy of not supporting wind energy development that would require planning permission in light of objections received in the past from residents.

Councillor Fuller provided a summary of plans for future development in Towns and Parishes that had been prepared by the communities and the Council's support for Neighbourhood Planning, including the current activity with Neighbourhood Planning across the District. Attention was drawn to activity surrounding Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan and the extensive successful work that had been undertaken between Officers and Godmanchester Town Council and Councillor Fuller urged Members to consider such an approach if they had parishes wanting to plan for growth.

In concluding his presentation, Councillor Fuller advised Members to take ownership of the Local Plan and the policies contained within and asked that any concerns with content be highlighted as going forward these policies would be used to work with their parishes in the future.

In response to a question from Councillor T D Alban on how the Council had been working with Town and Parish Councils in developing the Local Plan, Councillor Fuller explained that he believed that it should be a two way approach, with consultation and comments being fed both ways to both Councillors and other Planning Officers. Reference was made to the Town and Parish Conference held on 9th October 2017 hosted by Councillor Ms A Dickinson, Executive Councillor for Community Resilience, Well-Being and Regulatory Services, where there was a discussion on rural housing exception sites that had emerged and be developed as a Huntingdonshire issue rather than Council issue, with parishes taking ownership of sites to be identified.

In relation to concerns raised by Councillor T Hayward regarding LP36 and the Council's approach to renewable and low carbon energy in future housing developments such as providing charging points for electric cars, Councillor Fuller undertook to take away his issue to investigate further.

With reference to the DCLG consultation document on the method of calculation of local authorities' housing need, Councillor D A Giles highlighted his concerns with the potential requirement to increase the number of homes and whether the allocation would be expected to be met from the 20,100 houses required to meet forecast population growth or from the Combined Authority plan to build 100,000 homes. In response, Councillor Fuller reiterated his comments that the Council would await the outcome of the consultation but may need to address its calculation and provide an increase in the number of homes. Councillor Fuller referred Councillor Giles to address this question also to Councillor R B Howe at later point in the meeting.

In relation to LP27 and LP28, Councillor J A Gray raised concerns in relation to a conflict with developers providing housing in areas that was not in accordance with the community need and questioned whether it was possible to unlock more land by providing more incentives to deliver increased affordable housing. Whereby Councillor Fuller indicated that he expected communities to be leading and not a developer led approach and it was hoped that the Council's approach to the provision of affordable housing would encourage more sites to come forward for development.

Councillor J P Morris asked whether Members could play a role in bringing forward the rural exception sites and link with Town and Parish Councils, whereby Councillor Fuller intimated that Members could act as ambassadors for rural exception sites and ideally located to identify such sites. In referring to the Town and Parish Conference held on Monday, this message had been conveyed to Town and Parish Councils and would provide a great legacy for communities to identify sites that could provide housing for truly local people.

In referring to the imminent deadline for consultation on the HELAA, Councillor Mrs S J Conboy requested that communication be reiterated to parishes without prejudicing the process and Councillor Fuller undertook to reassure parishes.

Arising from a question by Councillor Ms Dickinson on the mechanism for Towns and Parishes to take part and ensure that the infrastructure was in place, Councillor Fuller explained that developing a Neighbourhood Plan would assist a parish in planning for growth.

Councillor P D Reeve raised a question in relation to protection for local people remaining as owners and predatory developers and Councillor Fuller argued that the draft Local Plan had been developed to prevent such an issue occurring to enable the Council to determine what development should take place.

32. QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

In response to questions raised by Councillor P Kadewere on issued being experienced by a family in a Luminus property and restricted

gated access in Princes Street, Huntingdon, the Managing Director undertook to liaise directly with him to establish how these issues could be moved forward for the parties concerned.

Arising from a question by Councillor T D Sanderson on the Community Infrastructure Levy and provision for education, together with Members involvement, Councillor R Fuller reported that he was attending a meeting with County Council Officers and Head of Development and Planning Services Manager on 18th October 2017 to discuss this issue and undertook to provide a further update after this meeting. Councillor Fuller also reported that the Council had a clear policy on Section 106 provision for education with the County Council and suggested that if the Overview and Scrutiny Panel wished to initiate a study on this he would be willing to participate.

Councillor T Hayward raised a question in relation to the timescale that Town and Parish Councils had been requested to submit their precepts and whether this information could be presented to the Council after the District and County Council figures were known. In response, Councillor J A Gray undertook to liaise with the Head of Resources to establish the feasibility for a reasonable extension of time working back from the meeting of the Council on 21st February 2018 where the budget would be approved.

In response to a question by Councillor D A Giles on the fairness of the car parking charges at the three market towns subsidising the upkeep of all of the other car parks in the District, Councillor J White explained that the Council had been undertaking a considerable review of car parking to determine its future direction and its vision had been presented at the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth) on 5th October 2017. Members were informed that fees and charges would not be considered as part of this strategic review currently and following the conclusion of the outcome determining the future strategic direction of car parking the matter would be considered further.

Councillor T D Alban enquired as to the date of the next Town and Parish conference, the uptake from parishes and how Members could get involved, whereby Councillor Ms A Dickinson indicated that the next conference would be held in early March 2018 and at least 40 parishes had been in attendance. The conference was extended to all District Councillors, some had been in attendance on Monday and encouraged all to attend future conferences.

Arising from a request for assistance by Councillor Mrs S L Taylor in relation to a specific case of anti-social behaviour around a District Council play park where PCSOs had been involved and the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team, but residents had continued to experience problems, Councillor Ms Dickinson undertook to meet with Councillor Mrs Taylor separately to pursue this issue further.

33. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY

In conjunction with the decision summaries of the recent meetings of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, Councillor R B Howe presented an update of their activities by way of

a PowerPoint presentation. Copies of which are appended in the Minute Book.

Councillor Howe reported that the Combined Authority had been in existence for six months and although there had been limited resources at its inception the documentation had been issued on time and governance issues had been resolved.

Members were reminded of the devolution commitments of the Combined Authority, including improvements to the road network and rail systems, commitment to deliver 100K homes over the next 10 years, creation of a low carbon and knowledge based economy beneficial to residents, develop a skills base to match business need and commitment to assist in the development of Public Service delivery.

Attention was drawn to what the Combined Authority had achieved in their 100 day plan, including a House Building for Cambridge Conference that commenced the new plan to build 100K new homes as well as delivering 253 affordable homes across various schemes. Councillor Howe also reported upon the commitment of over £20m investment into transport and infrastructure and a vision to improve better connectivity between the market towns and the cities in the area. He further referred to the £60m investment for an improved opportunity for local people to become educated to degree level at the proposed University of Peterborough that could be retained in the local area, as well as £7.2m new money secured from Central Government to boost the skills of health and care workers.

Councillor Howe drew Members attention to a map highlighting the Gross Value Added (GVA) per worker across the District and the disparities in wealth across the Combined Authority area and reminded the Council of the Devolution Deal commitment to bring the total GVA in the area to over £40bn through the development an integrated programme of jobs, skills housing and infrastructure to encourage people to remain living and working in the area.

Members were advised of progress with development of the St Neots Masterplan that would be published the following week designed to improve communications through provision of jobs and homes and provide further scope for development through the potential strategic corridor between Oxford and Cambridge.

Attention was drawn to a timeline looking forward from 2017/18 and the scheme of events that would be developed by the Combined Authority with eventual outcomes in 2020/21. Councillor Howe also provided Members with aspirations that Members of the Combined Authority had discussed for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough in 2030, including the area being the number one place to live in the UK, eliminating the problems of commuting out of the area and attracting inward investment post-Brexit.

Arising from a question from Councillor J D Ablewhite on the disparity in the provision of infrastructure with the proposed river crossing to open up the Wyton development being overtaken by the development in Cambridge City and the North Cambridgeshire Scheme scoring higher and progress to take this further, Councillor Howe explained

that the feasibility of the river crossing had not been completed and progress with the North Cambridgeshire scheme was further ahead. It was proposed that priority would be given to taking the river crossing scheme back to Central Government for large scale investment to take the project forward.

Councillor D A Giles commended the volume of work that had been undertaken by the Combined Authority and in particular the work on the future regeneration plans for St Neots, but questioned the plan to deliver 100K homes and Councillor Howe explained that the Combined Authority had committed to deliver 100K homes but was not in a position to nominate sites currently. It was further explained that the consultation by the Department for Communities and Local Government referred to in Minute No. 31 ante did not relate to the plans presented by the Combined Authority.

In response to a question from Councillor T D Sanderson on the increase in staffing costs at the Combined Authority, whereby Councillor Howe referred to the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that had called in the item on Officer and Support Structure and explained that a reserve had been allocated and as there had been a change in policy direction it had been necessary to approve a revised staffing structure to support these expansive plans.

Arising from a question from Councillor Mrs S L Taylor on provision in the budget for adult education in St Neots, Councillor Howe explained that although there was no devolved budget from the Combined Authority for education in this area, initiatives had been planned to make funds available for linkages to education establishments.

Councillor Mrs S A Conboy raised a question in relation to consultation on the third river crossing and Councillor Howe reported that there was currently no preferred route and as part of the feasibility study a full consultation would follow.

In response to a question from Councillor J A Gray on the potential for conflict between councillors on the Combined Authority voting for projects in their respective areas as opposed to diverting the funding to projects that could deliver the largest impact, Councillor Howe explained that the establishment of the Independent Economic Commission for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough would assist in informing the strategies and investments of the Combined Authority through economic forecasting to determine the potential impact of various investments and return on investment.

Arising from a question from Councillor P D Reeve regarding the potential for the Combined Authority to benefit from delivering quick wins by revisiting projects such as the Ramsey Northern Gateway Project, Councillor Howe explained that Ramsey Town Council had been engaged with the market town regeneration plans and urged the Town Council to make formal representation to the Combined Authority on investigating the potential of resurrecting the Project.

In response to a question from Councillor D B Dew on the relationship between the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Combined Authority Councillor Howe explained that the LEP should be very much part of the delivery system and the new model of governance to

be developed would enable the relationships to be maintained between businesses and local democracy.

Councillors R C Carter and T Hayward provided an update on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Hayward provided an overview of the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its terms of reference and drew particular attention to the recent call-in decision of the Combined Authority on the Officer and Support Structure. Members were apprised of the reasoning and background to their justification to call-in this decision, together with the procedure that followed.

Councillor Carter outlined his concern in relation to the Portfolio Holders' responsibilities at the Combined Authority being combined with their roles as Leaders of their respective authorities and applauded Councillor Howe's decision to step down as Leader of the Council to concentrate on his role as Deputy Leader of the Combined Authority. Members were advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings had been receiving a presentation from a Portfolio Holder and it was agreed that questions would be presented to them in advance of their attendance at these meetings to enable a more in-depth knowledge to be obtained of their Portfolios.

Arising from a question from Councillor P D Reeve regarding the extent of publicity and promotion of the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and allowing access for public to ask questions, Councillor Hayward reported that the summary of decisions had been published on the website but explained that as the Committee was not a decision making body, questions from the public should be directed towards the Combined Authority.

34. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE 2016/17

In conjunction with a report by the Internal Audit and Risk Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) Councillor M Francis, Chairman of the Corporate Governance Committee, presented the Annual Report for 2016/17 of the Corporate Governance Committee that outlined the work that had been undertaken by the Committee over the previous year. Members' attention was drawn to their recent meeting with the Council's external auditors Ernst and Young who had issued an unqualified value for money statement that the Council had proper arrangements in place to achieve value for money and adequate resources were in place.

Councillor Francis commended the Members of the Committee for their engagement and contribution to the Committee and constructive challenge when required. He also thanked the Managing Director for her support in resolving issues surrounding the reporting of performance targets that had seen considerable improvement and the Officers that had reported to the Committee over the past year, particularly Mr D Harwood and support by Democratic Services. He also drew attention to a large improvement in debt management and the control procedures in place to monitor the shared service governance arrangements. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Annual Report 2016/17 of the Corporate Governance Committee be received and noted.

35. OUTCOMES FROM COMMITTEES AND PANELS

A copy of the list of meetings held since the last meeting of the Council 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 Hayward asked for an update in relation to the takeover of Hinchingsbrooke Hospital with ambulance delays and the Tree Strategy, whereby Councillor T D Alban, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Environment), reported that the Chief Executive of North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust had been invited to their last meeting and explained that the issue of ambulance delays had not been discussed but was willing to pursue this issue further. In relation to the Trees Strategy, Members noted that a Task and Finish Group had been established and welcomed Councillor Hayward's contribution to the Group.

Arising from a question by Councillor T D Sanderson in relation to when the other stages of the strategic review of car parking would be undertaken, whereby Councillor D B Dew, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth), undertook to establish the timeframe and report back to Councillor Sanderson.

In relation to a concern raised by Councillor P D Reeve on discussions at the Car Parking Task and Finish Group regarding a suggested single pricing approach of car park fees across the District and implementation in Ramsey and Councillor Dew explained that Ramsey had been included in the review, as with the other market towns in the District and no decisions had been taken on any pricing policies at this stage. The Managing Director undertook to check the content of the Notes of the Task and Finish Group to ensure that a clear message was being presented to Members.

36. VARIATIONS TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

There were no changes to report.

The meeting ended at 9.20pm.

Chairman