

COUNCIL



15 DECEMBER 2016 - 4:00PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Bligh, Councillor Boden, Councillor Booth, Councillor Buckton, Councillor Butcher, Councillor Clark, Councillor S Clark, Councillor Cornwell, Councillor Count, Councillor Court, Councillor Mrs Cox, Councillor Mrs Davis, Councillor Mrs French, Councillor Hodgson, Councillor Miss Hoy, Councillor Humphrey, Councillor King, Councillor Mrs Laws, Councillor Mason, Councillor Mrs Mayor, Councillor Miscandlon, Councillor Murphy, Councillor Oliver, Councillor Pugh, Councillor Seaton, Councillor Sutton, Councillor Tanfield, Councillor Tibbs, Councillor Tierney and Councillor Yeulett.

APOLOGIES: Councillor Bucknor, Councillor Mrs Bucknor, Councillor Connor, Councillor Garratt, Councillor Green, Councillor Mrs Hay, Councillor Mrs Newell, Councillor Owen and Councillor Skoulding

C38/16 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 17 November 2016 were agreed and signed.

C39/16 CIVIC ENGAGEMENTS UPDATE - FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Councillor Mrs Cox referred members to the civic activities undertaken by herself and the Vice Chairman in the weeks preceding Full Council.

C40/16 TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL AND/OR THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE.

Councillor Mrs Cox requested that an extra item be added to the agenda, item 7A, to allow the Portfolio Holder for Finance to make a statement in relation to today's provisional local government finance settlement. Members agreed.

Councillor Mrs Cox thanked all who attended the Chairman's annual Carol Service on Sunday 11 December at St Pater and St Paul's Church in Wisbech stating that the event was well attended and got the season off to a good start. She extended thanks to Councillor Buckton's daughter, Shannon who sang superbly on the day.

Councillor Mrs Cox thanked the staff that have attended the Chairman's Christmas visits, she stated that these have also been well attended and it is a pleasure to see lots of staff across different venues of the Council.

Councillor Mrs Cox stated that she would like to give advanced notice that she is hosting, jointly with the Chairman of the Fenland Twinning Association, a Twinning Afternoon Tea event starting at 5pm on Wednesday 25 January 2017, invitations will be sent out in the new year, the aims of this event are to:

- raise the profile of the Council's twinning links with Germany and Australia;
- seek to increase involvement in the Districts twinning activities; and
- increase the membership of the Fenland Twinning Association.

Councillor Mrs Cox thanked the Corporate Management Team who provided the mince pies and sherry for all those attending Full Council.

C41/16 **TO RECEIVE QUESTIONS FROM, AND PROVIDE ANSWERS TO, COUNCILLORS IN RELATION TO MATTERS WHICH, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIRMAN, ACCORD WITH THE PROVISIONS OF PROCEDURE RULES 8.4 AND 8.6.**

Councillor Mrs Cox stated that we have not received any questions submitted under procedure rule 8.6 and asked therefore if we have any questions under procedure rule 8.4 from Councillor Booth.

Councillor Booth asked, following the agreement on the Devolution deal and the scrutiny arrangements where it appears that it is quite easy for members of any Council to call in a decision, is it time to look at the arrangements we have in place at this Council. He stated that our arrangements in the constitution are quite restrictive and other Councils have relaxed these arrangements so there does not need to be as many members in agreement to call in a decision. Councillor Clark agreed to speak to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and look to produce some recommendations for consideration.

Councillor Booth stated that the first meeting took place yesterday of the Shadow Combined Authority, he asked if there is anything to be reported to Council from that meeting. Councillor Clark confirmed that the agenda pack for that meeting and any future meetings will be placed in the members room and an email will be circulated to members informing them that it is available to read. He offered members a brief update on the meeting, stating that the meeting was setting the combined authority as follows:

- Councillor Count was elected as the interim Chairman;
- 2 vice-Chairmen were agreed, John Holdich of Peterborough City Council and Robin Howe of Huntingdonshire District Council and the lead on fiscal matters of the combined authority;
- Scrutiny members were also agreed each Council is allowed 2 members;
- Members appointed themselves as the members of the combined authority;
- we appointed Paul Medd as the interim Chief Executive;
- We also agreed Kim Sawyer as the Monitoring Officer and John Harrison as the 151 Officer.

He added that the meetings will be open to the public and so anybody can observe and the minutes will be available when they have been published.

C42/16 **TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM AND ASK QUESTIONS OF CABINET MEMBERS WITH PORTFOLIO HOLDER RESPONSIBILITIES, IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULES 8.1 AND 8.2.**

Councillor Mrs Cox stated that to allow full discussion on this item, she is proposing to suspend Standing Orders to enable members to make comments as well as ask questions. This was AGREED.

Councillor Booth referred to page 20 with regards to the Golden Age Fairs, he asked for an update on the fair that took place on the 23 November. Councillor Cornwell stated that it was an eventful day with an enormous turnout, probably the best attended Golden Age event to date. He added that the new approach that has been adopted towards the Golden Age Events, where we are having less events each year but much bigger events, are proving to be a success. By doing this we are reducing the costs and increasing the attendance considerably, not only by members of the public but by partners too.

Councillor Tierney asked Councillor Murphy if he would consider placing a bin in a road that leads

off of the dual carriage way to the hospital in Wisbech, members confirmed the road is called Whitby Street, he stated that there is always a lot of litter which is regularly cleared by voluntary groups but the litter continues to gather there. Councillor Murphy agreed.

Councillor Booth referring to the progress on analysing neighbourhood planning draft bill asked when we are likely to be able to give neighbourhood planning groups some guidance. Councillor Sutton stated that he has been informed that the head of shared planning is producing a report; he agreed to share the report with members.

Councillor Booth stated that the agenda pack says that you can go online to get an update on the A47, but the update is not very informative. He asked if Councillor King can provide any further updates. Councillor King stated that he is still trying to get the notes from the meeting that was held in Fenland Hall with Highways England specifically to discuss the Guyhirn roundabout, he agreed to circulate them as soon as he gets them. He stated that there was an A47 meeting last week in Norwich, but other than the Guyhirn roundabout all the other improvements are in other areas. He stated that we asked that the priorities are re-examined if and when the Garden Town proposals go ahead, and we did get a commitment that they would re-visit the priorities when the circumstances change. He agreed to circulate the minutes of that meeting too when they are available.

C43/16 STATEMENT ON TODAY'S PROVISIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT

Councillor Seaton made the following statement.

- Today the Secretary of State for Department of Communities and Local Government presented to the House of Commons the provisional local government finance settlement for 2017/18.
- I wouldn't normally update Council at this stage, however due to some of the elements of today's announcement I thought it was important that you were all updated.
- As you know, we have embarked on our own CSR programme which has identified substantial savings of £2.133m which are currently being progressed and implemented. We also submitted our Efficiency Plan, which was accepted by the DCLG and we therefore qualified for the multi-year settlement up to 2019/20.
- The Secretary of State's announcement today confirmed the funding which is linked to the Efficiency Plan of revenue support grant and also the business rates income after the business rates revaluation for April 2017. These figures have not changed substantially from what I presented to Cabinet this afternoon in our draft budget.
- However, within today's announcements, reforms to New Homes Bonus were confirmed. As highlighted previously, this funding is outside of the multi-year settlement and has always been a risk to this council. The key elements of the reforms are to reduce the payment from 6 to 5 years in 2017/18 and then down to 4 years in 2018/19 and beyond. In addition, a national threshold of 0.4% will be introduced where councils only receive the New Homes Bonus for growth above this.
- The impact of these reforms goes further than what was proposed last year, and what was included in our medium term financial strategy. In cash terms, it will mean we will have £455k less income in 2017/18, and £77k less income in 2018/19 with a total impact of £684k by the end 2020/21.
- However, the good news is that due to the business rates revaluation adjustments, the savings plans that are already in place and also the consideration of a vacancy factor for 2017/18, we will achieve a balanced budget for 2017/18.
- The overall impact to the end of 2020/21 is further funding of £6k reducing the remaining savings to £200k by 2020/21 which were set out in the draft budget report and these will be delivered within our current CSR plans.

- It is clearly disappointing news that the reforms to New Homes Bonus will mean substantial less income in this area, however with the success of our CSR projects and business rates growth in the District, we will continue our excellent track record of delivering savings and will continue to achieve this by working together to develop options and choices to achieve a balanced budget in future years.

C44/16 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT - 2017 SCHEME

Members considered the Council Tax Support - 2017 Scheme Report presented by Councillor Seaton. He recommended that from a financial point of view looking at the savings and the risks and based upon the feedback from customers we leave the Council Tax Support at 14% to take effect from 1 April 2017.

Councillor Booth stated that he was part of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel when they looked at this scheme. He agreed it is a pragmatic approach and fully endorses the recommendation that it remains at the same level.

Proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Tierney and AGREED to approve The Council Tax Support Scheme to take effect from 1 April 2017 as set out in Section 8 and appendix C of the Council Report.

C45/16 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY MID-YEAR REVIEW 2016/17

Members considered the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-Year Review 2016/17 Report presented by Councillor Seaton.

Councillor Yeulett asked for clarification with regards to why it is not advantageous to pay off the Public Works Loan Board. Councillor Seaton stated that there is £4.5m set aside for the debt but to pay it off we would have to pay an additional £3.5m and that is why it is not financially viable to repay that at present.

Councillor Yeulett referring to Paragraph 5.2 stated that investments in March 2016 were £18.55m and have risen to £25.75m which looks very positive, he asked for some clarification about this. Councillor Seaton stated that the difference is a fluctuation in cash flow during the year; seasonal changes within the cash flow affect the figures. Councillor Booth added for clarification that at the 31 March Council Tax bills have been sent and that is when the cash flow would be at its lowest.

Councillor Booth stated we are talking about reduced income from investments next year but he informed members that he read an article that said the US are expected to increase interest rates which could potentially increase the pressure for the bank of England to start increasing its interest rates too and feels that this is something to be mindful of moving forward. Councillor Seaton reassured members that the financial management team are consistently looking at these matters.

Proposed by Councillor Buckton, seconded by Councillor Boden and AGREED to note the report and approve the increase in the CFR and the borrowing strategy.

C46/16 CAMBRIDGESHIRE FLOOD AND WATER SPD

Members considered the Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD presented by Councillor Sutton.

Councillor Booth referring to page 398 and the management of surface water and sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) stated that he feels that SuDS where possible should be managed by Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs). He added that he is concerned that there is a key requirement that any management plans be agreed by the local planning authority and asked if we are

confident that we have the expertise in-house to be able to deal with these matters or will we be working closely with the IDBs to ensure that we are happy it is going to be managed appropriately. Councillor Sutton stated that he is comfortable that we can work with the IDBs, Cambridgeshire County Council is the lead local authority so they will have a lot of input too. He added that he is also concerned about management companies and stated that Middle Level are in negotiations with Cardea in Peterborough to start managing their SuDS scheme.

Councillor Booth stated that it is pleasing to see a policy document coming out of the County Council that features Fenland so heavily.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs Laws, seconded by Councillor Booth and AGREED to approve and adopt the Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD.

C47/16 ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2017-20

Members considered the Asset Management Plan 2017-20 presented by Councillor Butcher.

Councillor Booth stated that with regards to community assets, the document talks about community value as opposed to financial value and about a policy around how we might deal with these matters, he added that he is disappointed that it is not included with this document and that we have to establish another policy. Councillor Butcher agreed and reassured members that community assets will all be looked at individually and assessed on their own merits.

Proposed by Councillor Tanfield, seconded by Councillor Sutton and AGREED to:

- **approve the Asset Management Plan 2017-20;**
- **adopt the Asset Management Plan 2017-20 as a Policy document of FDC;**
- **approve the appointment of the Director of Growth & Infrastructure as the Council's Corporate Property Officer.**

C48/16 FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR APPOINTING THE COUNCIL'S EXTERNAL AUDITORS

Members considered the Future Arrangements for Appointing the Council's External Auditors Report presented by Councillor Buckton - Chairman of the Corporate Governance Committee.

Proposed by Councillor Seaton, seconded by Councillor Boden and AGREED:

- **That Fenland District Council opt-in to the PSAA sector led auditor appointment arrangements for the Council, subject to receiving a satisfactory invitation to opt into the PSAA's appointing person arrangements; and**
- **To delegate acceptance of the invitation to the Corporate Director & Chief Finance Officer, as the Council's Section 151 Officer.**

(Councillor Boden voluntarily declared a non-disclosable pecuniary interest in this item as a member of the Audit Registration Committee - Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales)

C49/16 POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES REVIEW

Members considered the Polling Districts and Polling Places Review Report presented by Councillor Booth - Member of the working group.

Councillor Boden welcomed the proposals, stating that there are various technical problems in a number of parts of the district and all of those problems have been satisfactorily addressed in these proposals. He offered thanks to Anna Goodall and other officers who responded to the comments and questions from members of the Council and other interested parties. He added,

although not for consideration today, there are some unsatisfactory results which came from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's Report on the County Council boundaries that will affect Town Councils in March and Whittlesey, and informed members that Whittlesey town council will be putting forward a request for a change to be made to the electoral arrangements for the town council.

Councillor King offered thanks to the review working group, he stated that he is delighted to see that the polling places for the district ward Octavia Hill have now been consolidated on to one site which is central to the ward and provides better access for people with disabilities.

Councillor Booth offered his thanks to Anna Goodall and Elaine Cooper for their work preparing these proposals, the working group are really just a sounding board and they have carried out the technical work behind the scenes.

Proposed by Councillor Miss Hoy, seconded by Councillor Yeulett and AGREED to

- **note the outcome of the review and the consultation undertaken;**
- **approve the changes recommended to polling districts and polling places, as detailed in the report to Council;**
- **note that the next review is the compulsory review to be undertaken during 2018/19 and delegates authority to the Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer to determine any changes to polling places within a ward, in the intervening period between formal reviews.**

C50/16 NOTIFICATION OF APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY MONITORING OFFICER

Alison Stuart left the room.

Members considered the Notification of Appointment of Deputy Monitoring Officer Report presented by Councillor Clark.

Councillor Booth asked what the financial impact of this arrangement is. Councillor Clark stated that when the legal officer left the Council we decided to enter into an agreement with Peterborough City Council, we are going to let that arrangement run for 12 months and then evaluate the service we have had and the cost of that service before we make a decision about the future.

Councillor Booth stated that if we have entered into an agreement with Peterborough City Council they are going to invoice us so we should have an indication of the costs to date. Councillor Clark stated that the posts of the 2 legal officers who left the Council are still vacant so that money is available to pay for the legal services from Peterborough City Council, when we review the arrangements we will make the decision to appoint our own legal team again or continue to use the legal services at Peterborough.

Presented by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Yeulett and AGREED to:

- **Note the appointment of Kim Sawyer, Director of Governance and Alison Stuart, Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services - Peterborough City Council, as the Council's Deputy Monitoring Officers;**
- **Approve that Fenland District Council enter into a Section 113 (of the Local Government Act 1972) agreement for the new Deputy Monitoring Officers to be able to carry out their duties.**