

COUNCIL



23 MARCH 2017 - 4.00PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs S Bligh, Councillor G G R Booth, Councillor M Buckton, Councillor T R Butcher, Councillor J F Clark, Councillor D W Connor, Councillor M Cornwell (Until 4.30pm), Councillor S Count, Councillor S R Court, Councillor Mrs C R Cox, Councillor Mrs M Davis, Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor S Garratt, Councillor D Green, Councillor Mrs A Hay, Councillor D Hodgson, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor S J E King, Councillor Mrs D Laws, Councillor D Mason, Councillor Mrs K F Mayor, Councillor A Miscandlon, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor Mrs F S Newell, Councillor D C Oliver, Councillor C C Owen, Councillor C J Seaton, Councillor R Skoulding, Councillor W Sutton, Councillor M Tanfield, Councillor G Tibbs, Councillor S Tierney, Councillor F H Yeulett.

APOLOGIES: Councillor C Boden, Councillor M G Bucknor, Councillor Mrs V M Bucknor, Councillor S Clark, Councillor M J Humphrey

C65/16 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 23 February 2017 were confirmed and signed.

C66/16 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.

C67/16 TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL AND/OR THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE.

Councillor Mrs Cox thanked all who attended the Commonwealth Flag Raising Ceremony earlier this month. The event was well attended and we enjoyed hearing the declaration by the High Sheriff as well as a number of readings from students of Neale Wade Community College.

Paul Medd stated that he is pleased to advise members that the Council has once again been recognised as one of the most efficient Local Authorities in the Country through the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) 'Efficiency Award'. This follows up the same recognition by the LGC in 2014.

The 'Efficiency Award' recognises the Council's innovative and robust CSR approach in making challenging efficiency savings across the authority, whilst still protecting important frontline services for local people. Furthermore, it acknowledges the Council's work in seeking to become a more commercial and self-sufficient organisation. Since 2010, we have achieved approximately £9m in efficiency savings, which represents a significant reduction in our overall funding.

The Council has achieved this through members and officers working closely together as one team to modernise working practices, investing in new technology, and reviewing working patterns to increase productivity. Our programme of modernisation has resulted in continued high levels of customer satisfaction and performance, whilst ensuring the Council is financially sustainable for the future.

The future funding situation continues to be challenging, however the Council remains in a strong position financially, which will ensure a continued focus upon key priorities and service delivery improvements.

C68/16 **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 had any questions under procedure rule 8.4 from Councillor Booth.

Councillor Booth referred to the press reporting of the LEP and an article last week that questioned if FDC should continue to pay their contribution of £800,000 towards the A14 given the lack of progress that's been made on the King's Dyke Crossing. He asked for confirmation this has been investigated and if that is a possibility. Councillor Clark stated that he feels sure that everyone has read the MP's statement and the LEP's reply, but given that the National Audit Office has now confirmed that it is going to look into it, he is happy to let the professional body investigate this and then make a judgement following the outcome from that. With the regards to the £800,000, once again he is going to wait for the outcome from the National Audit Office before making a decision on how we move forward. He stated that with regards to King's Dyke, it has been a long journey but we have learnt from the professionalism of Peterborough Council, when they approach a project they start by negotiating with the land owners and alongside this they also implement the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO), whereas Cambridgeshire County Council do not usually take this route, they try to negotiate first. It came to a stalemate with the landowner for various reasons and a meeting took place to agree a way forward, It was agreed to take out a CPO and within 2 weeks they had access to the land. This is the reason for the 12 month delay but the King's Dyke project is now moving forward.

Councillor Booth stated that the LEP is going to be invited to an Overview and Scrutiny Panel Meeting in May and he wants to ensure that we have all the facts ready for that meeting and Councillor Yeulett is planning to meet with the MP prior to that meeting too. As a Council we need to be more robust in defending some of the points that the LEP have made against us in response to Steve Barclay. He stated that he does not believe that our response has been robust enough as they have almost insinuated that we are not doing our job and we should have been pressing the point that we are fighting for the people of this district. Councillor Clark reassured Councillor Booth that those representations have been made, but not in public. He confirmed that we have sent letters to the LEP asking for an explanation about what they have said about us. With regards to having the facts for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel Meeting, it needs a professional body to investigate further for the facts to be established, but understands that Councillor Yeulett is intending to go ahead with that meeting. Councillor Yeulett stated that we have a date to meet with the LEP which is on 17 May, following the County Council Election, we were constrained by purdah but that date has now been confirmed. The panel will have a pre-meeting before that date where they will formulate their themes and focus for the meeting.

Councillor Booth referring to the Wisbech Garden Town Proposals, stated that with regards to the consultation responses the report was not clear. It says that 68% of people support the idea in principle, it does not say that it is 68% of 131 people. He stated that the population in Wisbech and the surrounding villages is around 38,000 and therefore the percentage of those engaged with this is 0.003. He added that he does not feel that we have done enough as a Council to engage with the public. He stated that he felt the questionnaire contained loaded questions, and asked if this Council will ensure that more public engagement takes place moving forward. Councillor Clark stated that this funding is just over £2m for a 2 year project to present to Government, he confirmed that during that 2 years there will be more consultation. He stated that we are at an early stage but that he has not come across anyone that is against this, and although some have

reservation, we have to look at what the outcome is of the Market Town. It could drive the rail link and the A47 projects forward, we have the devolution now that is formed and there is a lot of support by the combined authority. It is a project that is just going to keep moving forward and will become clearer and clearer as it does so.

Councillor Booth stated that he has reservations and is concerned whether the infrastructure will come first or the housing. Wisbech is already gridlocked at rush-hour and people do not appreciate the scale of the development being talked about with 10,000 more houses which will practically double the size of Wisbech. He stated that the report 'over paints the picture' about the level of support based on the small sample that responded. Councillor Clark stated that if we do not start somewhere we will be exactly where we are in 10 or 20 years' time, we have to start to address it somewhere. He stated that with regards to whether we get the infrastructure in place first, he feels that one will drive the other and over a period of years, things will happen alongside one and other.

C69/16 TO CONSIDER RECOMMENDATIONS (IF ANY) FROM CABINET, THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANELS AND COMMITTEES.

Members considered a recommendation arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Councillor Yeulett presented the Constitutional Amendment - Changes to the Overview and Scrutiny Call-In Procedure Report.

Councillor Booth stated that having had the discussion at the Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Panel Meeting and looking at the arrangements in place at neighbouring authorities the Panel came up with the right decision and asked Full Council to endorse that decision.

Councillor Yeulett referred members to bullet point 2 of the report and he stated that the Panel are being increasingly used to inform Cabinet and Council Decisions with the focus on Overview, he stated that this member input enhances the decision making process and reduces further the need for call-in. He stated that he did not support this recommendation at the O&S meeting and will not be supporting it today. He asked members to vote against the recommendation.

Proposed by Councillor Booth, seconded by Councillor Mrs Laws but not supported by the majority. Therefore the recommendations were not agreed.

C70/16 MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR GAVIN BOOTH REGARDING STATE PENSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR ALL WOMEN BORN AFTER 6 APRIL 1951

Under Procedure Rule 10, Councillor Booth submitted a Motion regarding state pension arrangements for all women born after 6 April 1951.

Councillor Booth stated that he had been approached by a resident who asked him to put forward the following motion:

'The Council calls upon the Government to make fair transitional state pension arrangements for all women born on or after 6th April 1951, who have unfairly borne the burden of the increase to the State Pension Age (SPA) with lack of appropriate notification.

Hundreds of thousands of women had significant pension changes imposed on them by the Pensions Acts of 1995 and 2011 with little/no/personal notification of the changes. Some women had only two years notice of a six-year increase to their state pension age.

Many women born in the 1950's are living in hardship. Retirement plans have been shattered with devastating consequences. Many of these women are already out of the labour market, caring for

elderly relatives, providing childcare for grandchildren, or suffer discrimination in the workplace so struggle to find employment.

Women born in this decade are suffering financially. These women have worked hard, raised families and paid their tax and national insurance with the expectation that they would be financially secure when reaching 60. It is not the pension age itself that is in dispute - it is widely accepted that women and men should retire at the same time.

The issue is that the rise in the women's state pension age has been too rapid and has happened without sufficient notice being given to the women affected, leaving women with no time to make alternative arrangements. The Council calls upon the Government to reconsider transitional arrangements for women born on or after 6th April 1951, so that women do not live in hardship due to pension changes they were not told about until it was too late to make alternative arrangements.'

Councillor Booth stated that he was approached by the organisation Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI) which has all party political support. It is not that they do not recognise that there should be equality with retirement age but it is about the notification that people were given. He added that in the Cambridgeshire constituency this affects around 5000 people and there are 115 district, borough and county councils that have adopted the motion including Luton, Rutland and Waveney. He asked Councillors to support the motion and show our support.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Court; the Chairman opened the Motion up for debate.

Councillor King thanked Councillor Booth for flagging this issue up, he stated that he accepts this is not a political issue because of the cross parliamentary support for it. He stated that the principle of the motion we all support but he feels that this does not have a direct relevance to this Council. This is exclusively a parliamentary issue and he is concerned that if we go down this route of debating motions that we do not have any direct control over, we will be in a situation like at the County Council with endless debates that go on for hours about matters that have no relevance to them at all. He stated that we need to focus on things that we are responsible for and we can deal with. He suggested that we do not support the motion but that we contact our MP individually to lobby him about this matter.

Councillor Booth thanked Councillor King, he stated that he understands his point of view but does not agree the logic behind his reasons. He stated that we should be showing our support to the people in this district that are affected by these changes. Therefore he suggested that as a Council we can lobby the Government and ask them to reconsider the current situation and show our support for the people affected.

The Motion was dismissed.

C71/16 PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY REVIEW - FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL
CONSULTATION SUBMISSION

Members considered The Parliamentary Constituency Review - Fenland District Council Consultation Submission Report presented by Councillor Sutton, he informed members that Councillor Mrs Mayor's name has been omitted from the Member Working Group List and apologised to Councillor Mrs Mayor for this oversight, he reassured her that this would be amended before it is submitted.

Councillor Mrs Newell asked if the MP has been advised and does he support this. It was confirmed he has been advised and does support this.

Proposed by Councillor Yeulett, seconded by Councillor Owen and AGREED the consultation response that Chatteris, Doddington and Wimblington be retained within the North East Cambridgeshire Parliamentary Constituency in accordance with the original proposals put forward to the Boundary Commission for England.

C72/16 APPOINTMENT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR AND CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER (S151 OFFICER)

Brendan Arnold left the room.

Members considered The Appointment of Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer) and Interim Arrangements Report presented by Councillor Clark. He offered thanks to the Appointments Panel especially Councillor Mrs Davis whose expertise really shone through.

Councillor Owen asked, with regards to previous employment, what was Brendan Arnold's last appointment. Councillor Clark stated that his last appointment was at Hull City Council.

Councillor Owen asked if Councillor Clark is happy that the manner of Brendan Owen's departure from Hull City Council is satisfactory and there are no concerns. Councillor Clark confirmed that he is 100% happy.

Proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Seaton and AGREED to approve the appointment of Brendan Arnold as the Council's Corporate Director from 24 April and commencing the statutory role of Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer) from the 8 May.

Brendan Arnold returned. He stated that it is a great honour to be here today and that he is looking forward to serving the Council and the people of this community in the years ahead. He added that it may be a very challenging journey, however, this Council has a very good record of excellent service and with the support of the Chief Executive he is looking forward to that journey. He stated that he is delighted to be coming to Fenland and looks forward to meeting members in the days ahead.

C73/16 LEISURE SERVICES - MANAGEMENT OPTIONS PROJECT

Members considered the Leisure Services - Management Options Project Confidential Report presented by Councillor Tanfield.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses.

Proposed by Councillor Seaton, seconded by Councillor Hodgson and AGREED the recommendations within the Confidential Council Report.

4.55pm

Chairman