

COUNCIL



2 NOVEMBER 2017 - 4.00PM

PRESENT: Councillor C Boden, Councillor Mrs V M Bucknor, Councillor T R Butcher, Councillor J F Clark, Councillor S Clark, Councillor D W Connor, Councillor M Cornwell, Councillor S Count, Councillor S R Court, Councillor Mrs C R Cox, Councillor Mrs M Davis, Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor D Green, Councillor Mrs A Hay, Councillor D Hodgson, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor S J E King, Councillor Mrs D Laws, Councillor Mrs K F Mayor, Councillor A Miscandlon, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor D C Oliver, Councillor C C Owen, Councillor A Pugh, Councillor C J Seaton, Councillor R Skoulding, Councillor W Sutton, Councillor M Tanfield, Councillor G Tibbs, Councillor S Tierney and Councillor F H Yeulett.

APOLOGIES: Councillor Mrs S Bligh, Councillor G G R Booth, Councillor M G Bucknor, Councillor M Buckton, Councillor S Garratt, Councillor M J Humphrey, Councillor D Mason and Councillor Mrs F S Newell

C28/17 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 14 September 2017 were confirmed and signed.

C29/17 CIVIC ENGAGEMENTS

Councillor Mrs Mayor drew member's attention to the civic activities undertaken by herself and the Vice-Chairman since the last meeting.

C30/17 TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL AND/OR THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE.

Councillor Mrs Mayor thanked the members who recently attended the Macmillan Coffee Morning that took place on 28 September. The event was extremely well attended and as a result we have raised in excess of £700 for this vital charity. Following on from that event the leisure centres have also raised a considerable amount of money holding Bake Offs, Coffee Mornings and a Triathlon at March which were all very well supported, she thanked everybody involved.

Councillor Mrs Mayor reminded members that she will be hosting the Chairman's Community Carol Service on Friday 1 December at 6.30pm at the Parish Church of St. Andrew in Whittlesey and stated that all members are welcome to attend.

C31/17 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 Mayor stated that no questions had been submitted under Procedure Rule 8.6 and asked if Councillor Mrs Bucknor, as leader of the main opposition group had any questions under Procedure Rule 8.4.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that she had raised the issue of Japanese Knotweed at the last meeting and asked for a report back to Full Council. She informed members that she had been inundated with information from other sources but would like to know the approach that this Council intends to take. Councillor Clark confirmed that he has a briefing note which will be

circulated to all members following the meeting.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that she is expecting that the briefing note will contain a coordinated approach whereby County Council, Fenland and external contactors are all following the same process to deal with this issue. She informed members that she has been approached by constituents who are experiencing issues and who are finding it very difficult to get anybody to take responsibility. She stated that when knotweed is removed from Fenland's land, it is important that it is dug out 3 metres deep and burnt, to ensure that it cannot continue to grow, and asked for clarification that these processes are being adhered to. Councillor Clark confirmed that we will work with our partners, but everybody has a different approach and if the knotweed is found to be on private land we have no jurisdiction to go on to that land. He stated that we take this issue very seriously and asked Councillor Mrs Bucknor to pass on the contact details of the constituents who are experiencing issues, stating that he will personally ensure that they get a response;

C32/17 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 Mayor stated that to allow full discussion of this item she is proposing to suspend Standing Orders to enable members to make comments as well as ask questions. This was agreed.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor thanked Councillor Murphy for attending the meeting regarding the new skate park in Waterlees. She stated that Chatteris has 2 skate parks with a child population of 400 and although she appreciates that children will use the facilities in Chatteris from surrounding areas, Waterlees has no skate park with a child population of 1500. She added that she looks forward to the continued support and expertise from officers in assisting them to get the necessary funding, particularly as she has read within the report that staff have just received grant finder training. Councillor Murphy confirmed that he and officers would continue to support with assistance to find funding;

Councillor Tibbs requested an update on the site of the former Wisbech Vehicle Exchange. Councillor Oliver confirmed that officers have been monitoring the area and, Streetscene and Environmental officers continue to carry out inspections. The site has been passed over to the Crown Estate and they are now responsible, but they are not responsible for repairs to the site and if we carry out any repairs the cost is incurred by this Council and we have no way to re-coup that money. We are in discussions with them at the moment and have sent a letter to ask them for a response to our previous correspondence to find out what the proposals are moving forward and if we might be able to work with them;

Councillor Boden stated that Councillor King was passed a report regarding repairs required at Whittlesey Station with suggestions around funding for those. He asked for an update on progress. Councillor King stated that we have no direct control over Whittlesey Station, it is owned by Network Rail and leased by Greater Anglia and therefore we have to work in partnership with these organisations to get any improvements done. He explained that all partnership working presents challenges and although we get a lot of support from Greater Anglia, unfortunately Network Rail have been less helpful. There have been materials left by Network Rail, which have taken some time to be cleared. There is a pressing issue with regards to lighting, which is particular concern with the darker evenings drawing in; we have managed to get a lot of the undergrowth cut back which has helped, but the current lighting needs improving. We have secured £500,000 which needs to be spent in this financial year, this gives us very limited time to choose a project which can be delivered quickly or there is a risk of losing the funding. We would like to focus some of that funding on the lighting at Whittlesey Station but this is complicated as Network Rail are carrying out a study of Whittlesey as part of the Master Planning process looking at the longer term arrangements and configurations of the platforms; although we are looking forward to the result of

that study, it will not be until March 2018, which is very close to the end of the financial year. He confirmed that we are currently in discussion with Network Rail to find out if we can get an indication whether the lighting schemes put forward will complement their proposals for the station;

Councillor Mrs Laws asked for clarification with regards to the use of brown paper sacks in the brown bins. Councillor Murphy confirmed that the brown sacks which are available from the one stop shops can be used;

Councillor Tierney stated that we recently rolled out Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) areas in Wisbech and the response so far from local people is that it has definitely made a difference, he asked for an update on how the new system is progressing. Councillor Oliver confirmed that the new PSPO's were introduced on 20 October and early indications are that it is going well. The project started with a soft approach which will finish on 5 December; within this time we have been focussing on educating people to let them know that they will not be able to drink in those particular areas and confiscating their alcohol, but not issuing fines at this time, however, if they continue to offend they will be issued with fines. We have noticed that there are some new areas that people are moving to, but are on top of it and monitoring those areas regularly too;

Councillor Mrs French offered thanks to Phil Hughes for getting a barge removed from the river in March, which had been there for more than a year. She added that she looks forward to the introduction of charges for people who overstay;

Councillor Mrs French stated that she has been contacted by residents complaining about the way that contractors have cut back the hedges and trees around park areas. She added that she is concerned that they have been cut back too far, removing cover and protection from any habitat; they have also left a mess and have damaged a footpath. She asked what action will be taken. Councillor Murphy stated that following up these complaints, he visited a resident and has apologised in person. He stated that the trees have been flailed and this causes some mess but that ISS have confirmed that they will make good any damage caused and clear any mess;

Councillor Mrs French asked if the hedge and tree cutting will happen all over the Fenland area. Councillor Murphy confirmed that there will be no further cutting as it is the end of the cutting season;

Councillor Miss Hoy stated that Wisbech Town Council have been working hard on proposals looking to spend some Section 106 funding, one of the proposals is for the skate park in Waterlees, she asked for support for the proposals moving forward. Councillor Tanfield agreed to fully support those proposals;

Councillor Owen referring back to the question asked by Councillor Boden regarding Whittlesey Station, stated that Network Rail do not attend any meetings since the last representative was promoted, but Greater Anglia always do, he added that it would be good to have representation from Network Rail. Councillor King stated that he hopes the appointment at Network Rail will be a more regular attender;

Councillor Mrs Bucknor, referring to the 'blitz day' to concentrate all available resources on clearing the oldest work across the seven ARP partner authorities, stated that the numbers are worrying given that Universal Credit will roll out next year. She stated that Steve Barclay has agreed to investigate whether there is any additional funding available for vulnerable areas where there are high levels of illiteracy. She asked if we are behind with processing housing benefits and with the additional workload from Universal Credit are there any plans in place to prepare for this. Councillor Seaton confirmed that the 'blitz day' was very successful, he stated that we have been given assurance that by the end of the year we will have dealt with the backlog. With regards to the introduction of Universal Credit they will be processed by the DWP, we can help claimants with vouchers for food banks and sign posting to the right people to talk to about claiming, but the

payments are processed by the DWP;

Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that if we have not caught up with processing Housing Benefit claims and Universal Credit are rolled out in May she is concerned that the figures will not be complete enough to apply, and where we have issues with illiteracy this will result in claimants having further difficulties. Councillor Seaton confirmed that he has been assured that this will not be a problem as by the end of the year we will have caught up with the work, he agreed to keep members informed and if there are any problems will confirm processes that will be put in place;

Councillor Count stated that he has been campaigning for many years for late trains to and from March and recalls signing a petition some years ago to get the service extended. He stated that the advice was that we needed to wait for the franchise to come out and then lobby for that franchise, which we did, along with many others including FDC and County Council. Despite all of this it was missed out of the franchise and included as an option which they decided was not worth pursuing. About 2 years ago, he asked how much this would cost, so that he could discuss with partners other options to achieve it. The response was a long list of how very difficult this would be. He added that the impact on the area is huge, if you want access to jobs at Addenbrooke's, Hospital which has 38,000 employees, many on 12 hour shifts, you cannot get a train in time to start or finish work, if you have another job there may be times where you are expected to do overtime, but you would not be able to fulfil that duty, also you would not be able to socialise with the people that you work with and you cannot access the nightlife of places like Cambridge. All of these factors mean that people do not move to these locations, not because we do not have a train station but because the station has an inadequate service, which runs through the other towns in our community too, so is a huge issue for us all. He expressed concern that by following the same path to lobby for inclusion in the franchise will not have the results that we need as it never has before. He asked if we can do something different and take on a new approach to lobby with support from the Secretary for State for Transport and a commitment that it will be included in the franchise and not just an option. Councillor King agreed, stating that he shares Councillor Count's frustration. One of the key issues is the capacity at Ely North, however, it appears that the work will begin soon. The train companies want to run more trains and want to run them later. He confirmed that he is happy to look at other ways to lobby, but stated that the problems start by the number of emails that are not acknowledged by senior officers at Network Rail. Network Rail are a Government Organisation, and the Government should be sorting these issues out as in his opinion Network Rail is not an effective organisation. He added that we have to work in partnership with these organisations, other train operating companies are willing and enthusiastic but Network Rail is a huge bureaucracy, he agreed to keep on trying. Councillor Count stated that for clarification the Ely Junction issues apply during the daytime, but for the hours that we are looking to extend the service there would already be space on the network to run extra trains. He confirmed that it is Department for Transport that we would need to lobby to be included in the franchises that we have been discussing;

Councillor Boden stated that he was concerned when Councillor Mrs Bucknor said that Universal Credit will be rolled out in Fenland in May next year; and confirmed that Universal Credit will be rolled out in the Wisbech and Ely Jobcentre Plus areas in May 2018, however the Peterborough Jobcentre Plus area will be rolled out the week after next. He added that Councillor Seaton was correct when he explained this is the responsibility of the DWP, but in Fenland, we have contracted the CAB to provide advice, information and support to claimants. He asked, given how imminent this is, to what extent we will be signposting this support to claimants. Councillor Seaton confirmed that the CAB are offering this service and that we will be signposting residents to them if they require any assistance;

Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked if we have had confirmation yet if the CAB office is closing in Wisbech. She added that she is concerned about the level of support required as it appears that claimants have to regularly go online, and for this reason some people will require on-going support.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor referring to the Better Care fund asked if we have had a response to find out if we have been successful. Councillor Cornwell agreed to investigate and report back;

Councillor Mrs Bucknor referring to the Nene Waterfront Project asked when an update will be available on the outcome of the bid submitted. Councillor Butcher confirmed that we do not yet know if that bid was successful. Gary Garford confirmed that we will find out this month and agreed to inform members of the outcome;

Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that she queried an email regarding the drought damaged road repairs as Fenland was not mentioned and asked if a County Councillor could advise if we had submitted a bid and if it had been successful. Councillor King stated that this is a County Council matter but roads are a matter of concern for everyone; he stated that he believes this is a duplicated list that had previously been circulated concerning a Challenge Fund which we bid for which had very strict criteria set. Unfortunately none of the roads that we considered to be damaged met that criteria, so none of the roads within Fenland were bid for. This was out of our control, but has released funding to be spent on other roads and the County Council have indicated a figure in excess of £500,000 to be spent on Fenland roads. He agreed to confirm this with County Council and feedback to members.

C33/17 ADOPTION OF THE MARCH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Members considered the Adoption of the March Neighbourhood Plan presented by Councillor Sutton, he stated that, as recommended by Cabinet at its meeting of 19 October 2017, Council adopts the Plan following the successful referendum result on Thursday 7 September 2017 and make it part of the Development Plan for Fenland. He offered congratulations to the members of March Town Council who worked very hard to develop their plan and stated that he is looking forward to other Neighbourhood plans that are currently in process as this is very good for the area and gives local people the chance to have their say.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs Laws, seconded by Councillor Miss Hoy and AGREED to adopt the March Neighbourhood Plan and make it part of the Development Plan for Fenland and that the Decision Statement attached at Appendix A of the Council Report be published following adoption of the plan.

(Councillors Skoulding, Court, Mrs French, Pugh and Owen declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item by virtue of the fact that they are March Town Councillors)

C34/17 PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARY REVIEW CONSULTATION SUBMISSION

Members considered the Parliamentary Constituency Review - Fenland District Council Consultation Submission Report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that she could not be sure that all members, with the exception of those on the working party, had read the report as the original agenda pack stated that the report was to follow. Councillor Boden confirmed that the information was available to all members, and explained that there had been no changes to what was previously discussed.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Tanfield and AGREED with the consultation response that the whole of the Fenland District be retained within the North East Cambridgeshire Parliamentary Constituency in accordance with the current proposals put forward by the Boundary Commission for England.