

COUNCIL



14 DECEMBER 2017 - 4.00PM

PRESENT: Councillor G G R Booth, Councillor M G Bucknor, Councillor M Buckton, Councillor T R Butcher, Councillor J F Clark, Councillor S Clark, Councillor M Cornwell, Councillor S Count, Councillor S R Court, Councillor Mrs M Davis, Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor D Green, Councillor Mrs A Hay, Councillor D Hodgson, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor M J Humphrey, 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 A Pugh, Councillor C J Seaton, Councillor W Sutton, Councillor M Tanfield, Councillor G Tibbs, Councillor S Tierney, Councillor F H Yeulett.

APOLOGIES: Councillor Mrs S Bligh, Councillor C Boden, Councillor Mrs V M Bucknor, Councillor D W Connor, Councillor R Skoulding

C35/17 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 2 November 2017 were confirmed and signed.

C36/17 CIVIC ENGAGEMENTS

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

C37/17 TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL AND/OR THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE.

Councillor Mrs Mayor thanked everybody who attended the Chairman's annual Carol Service on Friday evening 1 December at St Andrews church, Whittlesey; the event was extremely well attended in spite of the cold weather and got the season off to a good start.

Councillor Mrs Mayor stated that she will be undertaking the Chairman's Christmas visits to all Fenland District Council Offices on Monday and Tuesday next week. All staff are welcome to join her and it would be a pleasure to see as many as possible to wish everyone seasons greetings.

Councillor Mrs Mayor informed members that she would be hosting, jointly with the Chairman of the Fenland Twinning Association, a Twinning Tea Party on 24 January 2018, with the aims of raising the profile of the Council's twinning links with Germany and Australia, seeking to increase involvement in the district's twinning activities and finally to increase the membership of the Fenland Twinning Association and help it to raise funding for the work that it undertakes on behalf of the Council. Invitations to this event will be despatched to members early in the new year.

Councillor Mrs Mayor thanked the Corporate Management Team who provided the Mince Pies and Sherry for all those attending full Council.

C38/17 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 have been submitted under Procedure Rule 8.6 and asked if Councillor Booth has any questions under Procedure Rule 8.4.

Councillor Booth asked for clarification with regards to correspondence sent to parish councils stating that the concurrent functions grant are going to be reviewed. He stated that Parish Councils would appreciate some clarity on what these proposals will consist of. Councillor Clark agreed to investigate and respond accordingly after the meeting.

Councillor Booth stated that information supplied to members about the brown bin service stated that the cost will remain at the same level for the new financial year. However, last year when the scheme was launched there was a commitment given that if more people subscribed than was required there would be a reduction in the cost this year, he asked why residents are not being given a reduction in the fee. Councillor Clark referred the question to Councillor Murphy to respond to during the next item.

C39/17 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 French stated that she would like to express her disgust at the way that Clarion Housing are maintaining the heating systems throughout Fenland. She stated that she been in contact with the County Council and Councillor Count has personally written to the residents whose cases she was enquiring about. She confirmed that Adult Services are also involved stating that they are spending a huge amount of money on the health and social care for the elderly but Clarion Housing are not giving a duty of care. Councillor Sutton agreed to share Councillor Mrs French's concerns with Clarion. He confirmed that every effort is being made by Clarion to address the situation with the contractor. He added that a press release is going to be circulated following the meeting that outlines a series of actions that have been agreed with Clarion's property services contractor Morgan Sindall following the issue of an early warning notice to improve. He reassured members that the contractor has already allocated resources to ensure issues are resolved as quickly as possible and that Clarion will be monitoring the situation on a daily basis.

Councillor Mrs French stated that she heard that the service was being improved some time ago, but it appears to be getting worse. She added that she has been told that contractors are unable to order any more parts to carry our repairs because they have not paid the last bill and asked for clarification about this. Councillor Sutton stated that he is unable to comment on that point as he has no knowledge of this.

Councillor Yeulett stated that members have raised concerns about the problems being experienced in Clarion Housing properties and in view of this Clarion and Morgan Sindall have been invited to attend an additional Overview and Scrutiny Meeting which has been scheduled for 8 January 2018; we look forward to a constructive meeting and the opportunity to discuss the issues. He added that all members have been invited to forward any issues that they would like to be raised at this meeting.

Councillor Booth referred to his previous question with regards to the cost of the brown bin service. Councillor Murphy confirmed that the service is better value this year as last year the cost was reduced from £40 to £36 if you paid before the end of December and this year the reduced price has been extended until the end of March. Councillor Booth stated that in practice most people will pay £36 but new customers taking up the service after March would have to pay £40.

Councillor Tierney stated that other Councils have cancelled events and markets due to the bad weather, however FDC ran the Wisbech Christmas Fair and it was a very successful day. He offered congratulations and thanks for all the hard work to make the event such a success.

Councillor Owen stated that he welcomes the comments from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel with regards to the additional meeting that has been scheduled for 8 January. However this meeting is still a number of weeks away and he is concerned because of the seriousness of the lack of heating and the lack of attention by the housing association to address the issues and to resolve the problems and feels that something should be done sooner. Councillor Clark stated that everyone shares these sentiments, he assured members that we have been pushing Clarion and they have issued the following statement:

'We are disappointed that there are some residents which have been left for an unacceptable amount of time without heating or hot water. This is not the service we expect for our residents and we have served Morgan Sindall with an early warning notice to improve. We are monitoring this on a daily basis to ensure that Morgan Sindall is doing everything it can to resolve the outstanding cases as soon as possible.'

Councillor Clark also confirmed that a press release will be circulated after the meeting which states that we urge any residents that are experiencing heating and water problems to contact Morgan Sindall directly to ensure that issues are resolved in the most timely manner. Morgan Sindall is required under the Clarion contract to provide temporary heating where residents are waiting longer than 24 hours for repairs and stated that we should hold them to that requirement. He added that if residents remain dissatisfied with the service, Clarion has a formal complaints process which can be accessed via their website and he encouraged members to help residents to access that complaints process where necessary which leads to a compensation process. He stated that as a Council we are doing all that we can to hold Clarion to account and to address the outstanding issues.

Councillor Owen stated that most of the complaints affect elderly people or people with young children and babies, some have been offered alternative accommodation, but older people are not happy to be moved and want the problems to be fixed, some have been offered heaters but people are worried about paying bills from running electric heaters. He stated that it seems odd to be asked to contact Morgan Sindall rather than Clarion who have the power to do something. Councillor Clark stated that Morgan Sindall are the appointed contractors and that is why they are dealing with these cases directly, however if they do not carry out the work that they are contracted to do the complaints process is directed to Clarion. He added that Morgan Sindall are required to provide temporary heating and if they have not provided this we can help to put them in touch with the right people and if residents are concerned about heating bills there is a compensation process to reclaim any additional costs incurred.

Councillor Booth stated that members were given a dedicated email address which they could use to make contact and asked if this could be updated to a Clarion contact and recirculated. Councillor Clark agreed.

Councillor Miscandlon stated that he is concerned with the instruction to contact Morgan Sindall directly and asked if that would automatically register as a complaint with Clarion. Councillor Clark stated that he is not familiar with the process and suggested that if anybody contacts Morgan Sindall and are not satisfied with the service they should contact Clarion directly to complain.

Councillor Humphrey stated that he was part of the working group that was involved with the transfer of the housing stock and at that time there were 6 FDC members on the board. He asked if those are still members or how many now are involved. Councillor Sutton confirmed that the original contract had members from FDC on their board, that contract lasted for 5 years and when Clarion updated the contract FDC Officers negotiated a place for 1 member, Councillor Sutton represented FDC on one of the groups but this group has now been abandoned and we are in the process of negotiating our place in the new arrangement.

Councillor Bucknor asked what the advantage is for residents to go straight to Morgan Sindall rather than to Clarion. Councillor Clark stated that Clarion have made the decision that this is the way to access their service and that is the process that we have been given to pass on to residents when they contact us. He stated that Morgan Sindall have been contracted to carry out the repairs and we would assume that they have a checking mechanism for Clarion to hold them to account if they are not fulfilling their contract requirements.

Councillor Bucknor stated that we should be in the position to escalate these issues as there have been a lot of people without heating or hot water and he understands there is a requirement that Morgan Sindall have to repair a fault within 48 hours. Councillor Clark reiterated that Clarion have confirmed that in the first instance issues should be reported directly to Morgan Sindall, and they are required under contract to provide temporary heating where residents are waiting longer than 24 hours for the boiler to be fixed and at that stage you direct your complaint directly to Clarion. He stated that it is up to residents and us to hold them to account.

Councillor Mrs French stated that from reports that have come to her it appears that Morgan Sindall are the problem, people are contacting them directly, are waiting on hold for 45 minutes and are being cut off, engineers are not attending appointments that have been arranged and heaters are not always being supplied when they should be. Councillor Clark stated that we have heard that Morgan Sindall have employed 10 more telephone operators to help them to deal with the level of enquiries so he hopes that the situation will improve moving forward. He reiterated that Clarion have a complaints process and a compensation process and he urged residents and members to make full use of these services.

C40/17 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY MID-YEAR REVIEW 2017/18

Members considered the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-Year Review 2017/18 presented by Councillor Seaton.

Councillor Booth stated that this item has been discussed by the Corporate Governance Committee in some detail over the last few years and suggested that members agree the recommendation.

Proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Booth and AGREED to note the report.

C41/17 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT - 2018 SCHEME

Members considered the Council Tax Support - 2018 Scheme presented by Councillor Seaton.

Councillor Sutton stated that despite the financial constraints this Council is under he is pleased that we have maintained 14% over the last few years. This shows that we are taking into consideration the impact that this could have on our residents.

Proposed by Councillor Yeulett, seconded by Councillor Tanfield and AGREED to approve the Council Tax Support Scheme to take effect from 1 April 2018 as set out in the report.

C42/17 FENLAND HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY 2018-21

Members considered the Fenland Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-21 presented by Councillor Cornwell.

Councillor Yeulett stated that he hopes that this strategy delivers as for many years this part of the County has been looking to improve the outcomes for deprivation, health standards, education and aspirations, and we have put a lot of resources into this without a lot of success. There is a change in attitude now at the County Council and the Combined Authority and this is high on their agenda which can only be a good thing. He stated that resources should follow need and that this gives us some momentum towards addressing these issues. He asked for an update on the current status of Doddington and Wisbech Minor Injuries Unit (MIU). Councillor Cornwell stated that he attended a briefing and referring to the Local Urgent Care Hubs (previously the MIU's) in Ely, Doddington and Wisbech. Ely has been up and running since the summer with some good results. The other 2 have had a few problems around GP resources, the hubs need a GP on duty while they are open but the practices in these areas are having difficulty recruiting GP's. The South Fens Hub (Doddington) is expected to go live around the middle of 2018 but Wisbech will be delayed a little longer, which is unfortunate as the areas of most need and deprivation will be the last ones to benefit from this service. He added that CCG's nationally are being asked to create Urgent Treatment Centres which are virtually the same as the Local Urgent Care Hubs, the main difference will be the opening hours. So the hubs can quite easily morph into the new Government requirement. We are closely monitoring the situation and putting pressure on the CCG to get these services delivered in this area.

Councillor Yeulett stated that with an increase in the number of elderly people in the area that is a welcome update and he urged Councillor Cornwell to continue to push forward on behalf of FDC. Councillor Cornwell reported that Ely MIU, which is one element of the hub, reported that more people are going to the hubs for a wider range of treatment and the ambulance crews in that area are able to take local people to the hub before they would need to attend A&E.

Councillor Booth stated that during the discussions at the Overview and Scrutiny Meeting it was recognised that in Fenland we have either been standing still or in some cases have moved backwards with regards to health and wellbeing, we need to deliver these services for residents and hopefully we will see an improvement moving forward. Councillor Cornwell stated that if there are any improvements that we can make to assist with the overall changes we will do that, but as part of the CSR members agreed to reduce the funding to the Community Support Services.

Councillor Davis stated that North West Anglia Authority have taken over the outpatient care at Doddington Hospital and that she and Councillor Connor have been invited to attend their monthly meetings as a result of some complaints they raised with them, she added that she hopes this will raise the profile of Doddington Outpatients with them.

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

- **Approve the Fenland Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-21;**
- **Note that a delivery plan for the strategy will be refreshed each year as part of the Council's business planning processes;**
- **Note the changes to local arrangements for health and wellbeing liaison.**

**C43/17 MEMBERSHIP OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH COMBINED
AUTHORITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Members considered the Membership of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report presented by Councillor Clark.

Proposed by Councillor Seaton, seconded by Councillor Mrs Davis and AGREED:

- **that Councillor Mark Buckton is appointed as the second substitute member to the Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2017/18;**
- **that the Chief Executive be authorised to make any consequential changes to this or any other appointment to the Combined Authority in consultation with the relevant Group Leaders.**

C44/17 CONSTITUTION UPDATES

Members considered the Constitutional Updates Report presented by Councillor Sutton, he referred to an additional note which had been circulated to make clear that Cabinet will approve all planning policy documents except the Final Fenland Local Plan.

Councillor Mrs French stated that she welcomes this amendment; it took March Town Council 4 years to go through the process and feels that this will make a huge difference; she added that the March Town Neighbourhood Plan was used by town planners at their conference as an example of one of the best in the Country.

Councillor Booth asked for clarification that decisions on designated neighbourhood plan areas would now be taken by officers and asked whether Cabinet and Council will approve Planning Policies. Councillor Sutton Agreed.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs French, seconded by Councillor Miscandlon and AGREED the changes to the Council's Constitution and to delegate the Monitoring Officer to update the master document and the Council's website.

5.00pm

Chairman