

COUNCIL



THURSDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 2018 - 4.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs K Mayor (Chairman), Councillor Mrs M Davis (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Benney, Councillor Mrs S Bligh, Councillor C Boden (arrived 16:05), Councillor G Booth, Councillor M Buckton, Councillor R Butcher, Councillor D Connor, Councillor M Cornwell, Councillor S Count, Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor S Garratt, Councillor Mrs A Hay, Councillor D Hodgson, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor M Humphrey, Councillor S King, Councillor Mrs D Laws, Councillor D Mason, Councillor A Miscandlon, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor D Oliver, Councillor K Owen, Councillor A Pugh (arrived 16:14), Councillor C Seaton, Councillor R Skoulding, Councillor W Sutton, Councillor G Tibbs, Councillor S Tierney and Councillor F Yeulett

APOLOGIES: Councillor M Bucknor, Councillor Mrs V Bucknor, Councillor J Clark, Councillor S Clark, Councillor S Court, Councillor Mrs F Newell and Councillor M Tanfield

Officers in Attendance: Gary Garford, Kamal Mehta

Observing: Peter Catchpole

C37/18 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 13 September 2018 were confirmed and signed.

C38/18 CIVIC ENGAGEMENTS UPDATE

Councillor Mrs Mayor drew members' attention to the civic activities undertaken by herself and the Vice Chairman in the weeks preceding Full Council.

C39/18 TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL AND/OR THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE.

Councillor Mrs Mayor thanked members who attended the Macmillan Coffee Morning on 27 September 2018. It was a record year as it had been extremely well attended and over £1500 was raised for this vital charity. She paid special thanks to the leisure centres; two had held quiz nights and one held a coffee morning, and the proceeds from these events helped make this fantastic amount.

Councillor Mrs Mayor thanked members who attended the Chairman's Annual Civic Reception held at the Neale Wade Academy; as with other civic events we were able to showcase what Fenland has to offer.

Councillor Mrs Mayor reminded members that she will be hosting the Chairman's Community Carol Service at the Parish Church of St Peter in Wimblington on Sunday 2 December 2018 at 3pm. All are welcome to attend for a traditional Carol service followed by refreshments.

No questions had been submitted under Procedure Rule 8.6 and Councillor Booth, as leader of the main opposition group, asked questions under Procedure Rule 8.4, as follows:

- could the Leader provide an update on the skills and apprenticeship budget of the Combined Authority and advise how this is benefitting Fenland? The Leader replied that the Combined Authority has been asked to provide the information requested, unfortunately that has not yet been received and asked if it would be acceptable to send Councillor Booth a written answer as soon as possible. Councillor Booth stated that would be acceptable and he felt other members would also be interested in this. The Leader advised he will make sure members are informed.
- could the Leader confirm if the Combined Authority is investing in affordable housing projects in Fenland and if so when will this take place? The Leader responded as follows:
“The Combined Authority has invested £150,000 in an affordable housing scheme in Whittlesey which through that and other funding sources will deliver 37 affordable homes. Officers have also been liaising with the Combined Authority on an exploratory pipeline on a further 6 sites for a further 244 funded affordable homes. As with all development negotiations schemes will fall out and other schemes will come in which is why officers have been tracking over 100 potential sites in the last 12 months where there is planning permission or there are applications for planning being considered. As part of this the Council have been engaging with active Registered Providers in the patch to see what can be negotiated including purchasing the whole site to develop all tenures on it.
The Combined Authority and the Council recognise that viability issues are greater here than in other areas of the Combined Authority area therefore over the summer a meeting was held with Registered Providers, the Council and the Combined Authority to explore how best to work together in developing an affordable housing programme in the future both for Homes England and Combined Authority consideration.
Overall there is a programme of 158 affordable homes to be delivered by end of 2019/20 mainly through Registered Provider and Homes England financing. As well as this there is a further 3 sites controlled by Registered Providers which will deliver a further 189 affordable homes with completion dates to be determined.”
Councillor Booth thanked the Leader for the update.
- can the Leader give an update on the review of local government structure in Cambridgeshire being undertaken by the Combined Authority? The Leader thanked Councillor Booth for the question and confirmed he would provide a hard copy of the answer. The Combined Authority continue to work with their appointed consultants, ResPublica, to develop public service reform proposals, which at this time are specifically focussed upon future sustainability and social care and health. The details of these proposals have yet to be established and will be shared with the leaders and their constituent councils once they become available. To the best of his knowledge there are currently no CPCA proposals to review the structure of local government in Cambridgeshire. Councillor Booth stated that he did find the last comment a little surprising given Mayor Palmer has been on the radio mentioning the need to look at the structure of local government saying that there are too many tiers, which Councillor Booth had raised before particularly when this Council agreed to the Combined Authority. Can we give commitments to aiding those reviews because it is something that electors are keenly aware of and they feel there is too much bureaucracy in this county? The Leader reiterated that, to the best of his knowledge, there are presently no proposals to review the structure of local government in Cambridgeshire.
- in relation to the recent parish council conference that the Leader attended, when he gave a commitment that parish councils would be informed when pre-planning applications were received within their area and that information be passed onto the parishes, he asked when is that going to be delivered? The Leader commented that there is already an avenue to do that whereby parish council clerks can take availability of the website to view what is in the pipeline,

what is delayed etc. As a lot of clerks have not signed up, a further reminder has been sent out to parish councillors to remind them that both clerks and members can sign up and have this information, which is already out there but it is not being used at the moment. Councillor Booth commented that he understood that the pre-planning application process was outside the statutory planning notifications sent out, so does not think this is possible under the scheme talked about. The problem with signing up is that notifications are received about everything and the system cannot be tailored for the relevant information only so this may have put people off.

C41/18 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM AND ASK QUESTIONS OF CABINET MEMBERS WITH PORTFOLIO HOLDER RESPONSIBILITIES, IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULES 8.1 AND 8.2.

Standing orders were suspended to allow full discussion for this item.

Members asked questions of Portfolio Holders in accordance with Procedure Rules 8.1 and 8.2 as follows:

- Councillor Booth asked Councillor Mrs Laws if she could confirm the actions planned to improve the planning processes involving Parish and Town Councils following the PAS review, and when will these actions be delivered? Councillor Mrs Laws advised that further training has commenced with more to follow. The Town and Parish Councils have been provided with information and instruction on how to receive direct notifications of new applications and appeals and the decisions on these. Access to the online planning file enables the councils to view any consultee comments which can help them form comments on the applications. In addition, they will be able to view the officer or committee report which will explain how the decision on the application was arrived at. It is proposed that a web page will be created where larger applications will be listed together with a regularly updated progress report, which will enable the Town and Parish Councils to track these proposals. With regard to the Local Plan, any new plan will be prepared through a thorough engagement process with the councils. Also, a continual programme of planning training for all members has been made available. Councillor Booth added that the parish councils are aware of the reports available to them but they are frustrated not to hear directly from planning officers. An automated message stating reports are available is not in the spirit of better engagement envisaged, resulting in parish councillors feeling ignored and that their local knowledge is not being utilised.
- Councillor Mrs Bligh asked Councillor Murphy if more enforcement patrols could be committed to the villages? Councillor Murphy replied that there are fewer patrols because less is happening in the villages than the towns, but he will arrange a further patrol of the villages in this instance.
- Councillor Mrs Bligh stated that there is still an issue with dog fouling and asked if Councillor Murphy would consider anti dog fouling stencils to be spray painted on pavements? Councillor Murphy responded that this method was used about five or six years ago and did not work.
- Councillor Bligh noted that the Council has committed investment to markets in the Fenland towns and requested a breakdown of the investment amount per town. Councillor Murphy agreed to provide this.
- Councillor Tibbs asked Councillor Oliver for updates on Wisbech Vehicle Exchange and the abandoned building at the top of Petts Close? Councillor Oliver advised that although he currently had no update on Petts Close, he will obtain one. In relation to Vehicle Exchange, the owners have recently applied for a restoration order and have been instructed to sell the property within a certain timeframe, therefore, the Council does not want to take any enforcement action based on that but if there is no further development, then notice will be served to clear the site.
- Councillor Tierney advised Councillor Oliver that a business in Wisbech was visited by the Police this week and told no action could be taken because the Council had reversed a PSPO no drinking ban. This is not the case, and he asked if Councillor Oliver would ask the Police, if

they did give this advice, not to give incorrect information in future? Councillor Oliver confirmed the matter is in hand.

- Councillor Mrs Bligh noted that the M11/A47 link could impact Fenland and asked if it could be confirmed where, and in future will the affected ward members be informed when they do know? Councillor Seaton advised that there would be an impact but this is a long way off. He confirmed that anyone affected by any extension to the M11 will be fully informed.
- Councillor Garratt asked Councillor Oliver whether anyone from the Community Safety Partnership had been linked to the IRM coordinator in Fenland. Councillor Oliver replied in the negative.
- Councillor Booth asked if Councillor Mrs Hay could confirm how to determine the measure that 93.9% of enquiries to the Council are dealt with at first point of contact and what is the accuracy of that figure? Councillor Mrs Hay stated that all Customer Service staff undertake an extensive induction programme to ensure they are able to deal with the diverse nature of customer queries and continue to receive regular training and updates. The percentage of calls resolved at the first point of contact is automatically measured directly from the telephony software. Any calls that require a transfer to any other internal or external number are deducted from the number of calls received and answered. The figure that remains is the number of queries that are resolved. Furthermore in order to further validate these figures staff maintain a post call record of the nature of the call and any outstanding issues to ensure that the telephony statistics match manual records. This helps to identify any service areas where issues arise that are unable to be resolved as this will inform any future training plans. Councillor Booth thanked Councillor Mrs Hay for the explanation but his concern is that the metric is having the unintended consequence of customer service staff stating they are resolving issues at the first point of contact without this always being the case and stated two examples. Councillor Mrs Hay stated she would take this up with the staff concerned if Councillor Booth could provide further details; however, she reiterated that the staff are very highly trained and are always trying to provide satisfaction to the customer.
- Councillor Owen asked Councillor Murphy when and where a discussion took place to stop planting winter bedding? Councillor Murphy responded that the Council has cancelled winter bedding this year in order to save money identified during the CSR review and going forwards the annual saving will be just over £9,000 per year. Our supplier has made available a number of plants this week in order that we can plant out a bed at St. Peters in Wisbech for a forthcoming special event. FDC has received one complaint from an In Bloom group, who would have liked to have been given notice so that they could have planted the cancelled bedding or planted specific beds with their own plants, which has been agreed as a valid complaint and in the future the Council will ensure adjustments are communicated in a timely manner, however, no complaints have been received from the wider community. Many councils have reduced their bedding programmes and planted more shrubs, and the Council will consider this approach with some of our open spaces to ensure that towns continue to look good but at substantially reduced cost as it recognises the importance of well-maintained green spaces to the community and how they contribute to health and wellbeing, with volunteer groups continuing to receive support through our Street Pride Co-Ordinator. Councillor Owen asked if he was correct in his understanding that some of the cancelled plants had already been acquired and paid for? Councillor Murphy stated this was not correct, summer plants had been purchased and planted, but winter plant orders were cancelled. Councillor Mrs French also raised her concern that the groups were not informed sooner and that the Town and Parish Councils were also not consulted on whether they would like to contribute. Councillor Booth stated that the villages already do not get a fair share and with further cut backs how is that fair to the villages who also pay their council tax, making the point that services need to be applied proportionately across the whole district. Councillor Tierney reminded everyone that all areas had been cut but, although the CSR was a strategic level document which guided members to where they may make savings in the future, that does not mean that members do not need to be informed of decisions in good time, and in the instance of winter bedding it is communication where we have let ourselves down as talking to everyone can help mitigate some of the more problematic outcomes.

- Councillor Sutton stated that about a year ago Councillor Mrs Bucknor received a dossier regarding the damage caused by Japanese Knotweed, with some actions being taken on Council owned land, but at the time it was unaware of some trials being undertaken by Leeds University. He asked Councillor Murphy if officers were aware of this dossier and that it held a contrary view stating that no evidence was found to suggest the plant causes significant damage to buildings; he suggested that officers read this report and put out a press release to show there are opposing views to what has been said locally. Councillor Murphy was not aware of the trial but agreed to look into it.
- Councillor Garratt stated that a key worker from St Giles Trust, an agency supporting the homeless, had told him she receives more help and support from officers at this Council than any other council throughout Cambridgeshire. Councillor Mrs Laws thanked Councillor Garratt and confirmed she would relay this to the housing staff; they work tirelessly and the comment was appreciated.
- Councillor Owen stated that the Government is making assisted provision of vehicle electric charging points to local authorities and asked how many of these the Council has bid for and been awarded, and at which locations? Councillor Murphy responded that the local MP had made a similar enquiry in March 2018, for which members at the time were consulted and the response was conveyed to the MP by Councillor Oliver. The key sentiments of the note responds to some of the issues raised by Councillor Owen, but he stressed there has been no request from the community for such points so the demand is not there. Apart from the cost of these points in our car parks, the use is difficult to manage without increased management and enforcement of parking to ensure no-one parks in the bays all day. Councillor Owen is correct about the Government scheme, which provides up to 75% of capital costs but it does not provide ongoing revenue costs of power, maintenance and management of the facilities. This Council is not the highway authority, therefore, it has no powers to allocate space on streets for residents to charge their own vehicles. Taking all the factors into account, it is felt that the Council is unable to justify the provision of such facilities.
- Councillor Mrs French asked Councillor Murphy when the trees removed from West End Park due to disease or vandalism will be replaced? She also asked if he was aware that every time the County Council remove a tree, they supply two further trees in the district, so he may be able to request replacements from them. Councillor Murphy was not aware of this and will make enquiries; mature trees are very expensive to replace, unfortunately there is not enough money in the budget to replace them all.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that there is now a defibrillator outside Fenland Hall supplied by Councillor Skoulding due his fundraising efforts and asked if the Council would consider reimbursing the cost? Councillor Mrs Hay conveyed her thanks to Councillor Skoulding and advised she will be talking to him and officers regarding this.
- Councillor Count stated that as a March resident he would like to formally register that he is putting in a call on the car parking spaces to be looked at for an electric charging point. Councillor Booth added that the Parish Councils have recently been written to by the County Council asking if they want to participate in a pilot, so there is work underway regarding this.
- Councillor Booth asked Councillor Oliver for an update on FACT and the investigation undertaken by this Council. Councillor Oliver confirmed he would have an update for the next meeting.
- Councillor Garratt asked if it the Council would agree to send a letter of congratulations to Jordan Gill on the success of his boxing career? Councillor Buckton agreed to do this.

C42/18 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT & ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY MID YEAR REVIEW 2018/19

Members considered the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-Year Review 2018/19 presented by Councillor Mrs Hay.

Councillor Boden asked if, in consideration of future versions of the report, a slight modification could be made to the statement regarding UK employment numbers as latest figures given by the

Office of National Statistics suggested growth rather than stagnation. Councillor Mrs Hay stated she will ask officers to look at that.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Seaton and AGREED to note the report.

(Councillor Booth declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item by virtue of the fact that he works for the Yorkshire Building Society)

C43/18 COUNCIL AUDIO/VISUAL EQUIPMENT

Councillor Mrs Mayor advised members of a proposed alteration to the recommendation contained within the report to include an annual maintenance contract for the preferred option to maximise performance of the equipment. Members agreed to alter the recommendation accordingly.

Members considered the options within the report presented by Councillor Buckton. Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Mrs French did not support the webcasting as she felt it was too expensive and unnecessary for this Council.
- Councillor Skoulding felt that microphones could be shared and an integrated voting system too expensive when people can simply put their hand up.
- Councillor Boden stated functioning microphones are important in order to do the work of this Council and it is commendable to propose a system that can be added to with additional functionality if required in the future, but he shared Councillor Skoulding's concern regarding the cost of the voting system and felt it was not value for money for such a small council.
- Councillor Tierney agreed with this view, although he felt that we have to be forward thinking regarding webcasting.
- Councillor Booth agreed with all the comments, but felt the webcasting costs are too expensive and need to be looked at again.
- Councillor Pugh felt the projector/screen costs were too expensive and needed to be reconsidered.
- Councillor Sutton stated there is no doubt a new system is needed, but questioned the number of microphones required and felt that these could be shared.
- Councillor Booth suggested an amendment, and that members look at Option 2. He also felt the costs for the webcasting and projector need to be looked at again.
- Councillor Buckton clarified the issue of costs for all of the items in the report and confirmed they were indicative costs obtained through research and if Members approve any of the recommendations a proper procurement would be undertaken to identify best value. In terms of Option 1 microphones, the recommendation is as it is because of the additional functionality and there is no opportunity for add-ons in the future with the other options. With regard to web or audio broadcasting of Council meetings, he asked if members are minded to look at that as an option for the future, then further work will be carried out to look at what options are available as there may be some free broadcasting opportunities but there are some issues around quality.

Councillor Booth proposed to amend the recommendation to Option 2, and investigate Option 4, this was seconded by Councillor Yeulett.

Councillor Boden asked if that meant the integrated voting system would be removed. Councillor Booth agreed that would be the case.

Councillor Count agreed that that the Council does need a modern system for meetings and the current situation is unfit for purpose, however, he would suggest now is the time to explore webcasting further, but for a cheaper option, which is transparent, the way for the future and will

help with engagement.

Councillor Yeulett agreed; he seconded the proposition because he felt that the more open the Council is the better, it may also be an opportunity for younger people to become interested and get involved.

Members discussed further the issues regarding maintenance. The Chairman stated that this would be dependent on procurement as to what maintenance is included and that an extended warranty would be looked at.

Councillor Connor stated the importance of a good projector for Planning Committee. Councillor Miscandlon concurred, stating that it is imperative to replace the projector, although he agreed with Councillor Pugh earlier comments on the costings.

Councillor Mrs Hay suggested that the proposal be amended to include it was agreed that the projector needed to be replaced

Proposed by Councillor Booth, seconded by Councillor Yeulett and AGREED to

- **approve the replacement of the projector**
- **approve Option 2 and the associated maintenance costs**
- **delegate further consideration of Option 4 to the Corporate Director of Finance and the Portfolio Holders for Finance and ICT to appoint the most economically advantageous provider.**

(Councillor Owen requested it be recorded that he abstained from voting on this item)

C44/18 APPOINTMENT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR AND CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER (S151 OFFICER)

Members considered the Appointment of Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer) presented by Councillor Seaton.

As he had not been part of the Member Appointments Panel, Councillor Booth asked for confirmation that all appropriate due diligence had been undertaken and completed. Councillor Seaton assured him that it was a very rigorous process.

Proposed by Councillor Connor and seconded by Councillor Owen and AGREED to approve the appointment of Peter Catchpole as the Council's Corporate Director (S151 Officer).

(Peter Catchpole who was present at the meeting left the room for this item)

5.38 pm

Chairman