

COUNCIL



THURSDAY, 12 MAY 2022 - 4.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor A Miscandlon (Chairman), Councillor N Meekins (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor Mrs S Bligh, Councillor C Boden, Councillor G Booth, Councillor J Clark, Councillor S Clark, Councillor D Connor, Councillor M Cornwell, Councillor S Count, Councillor D Divine, Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor K French, Councillor A Hay, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor M Humphrey, Councillor A Lynn, Councillor C Marks, Councillor D Mason, Councillor A Maul, Councillor Mrs K Mayor, Councillor J Mockett, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor D Patrick, Councillor M Purser, Councillor W Rackley, Councillor C Seaton, Councillor R Skoulding, Councillor W Sutton, Councillor S Tierney, Councillor R Wicks, Councillor S Wilkes and Councillor F Yeulett

APOLOGIES: Councillor Mrs M Davis, Councillor Mrs D Laws, Councillor D Topgood and Councillor S Wallwork

C1/22 TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN FOR THE PERIOD TO THE NEXT ANNUAL MEETING AND TO RESOLVE THAT AN ALLOWANCE OF £4,116 PLUS TRAVELLING EXPENSES BE PAID TO THE PERSON ELECTED.

It was proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and resolved that Councillor Alex Miscandlon be elected as Chairman of the Council for the period to the next Annual Meeting and that he be paid an allowance of £4,116 plus travelling expenses.

The Chairman thanked everyone who voted for him to serve the Council as Chairman for a third term. He stated he do will his best to uphold the standards set and hopes to have a very successful year.

C2/22 TO ELECT A VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR THE PERIOD TO THE NEXT ANNUAL MEETING AND TO RESOLVE THAT AN ALLOWANCE OF £1,000 PLUS TRAVELLING EXPENSES BE PAID TO THE PERSON ELECTED.

It was proposed by Councillor Miscandlon, seconded by Councillor Boden and resolved that Councillor Nick Meekins be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Council for the period to the next Annual Meeting and that he be paid an allowance of £1000 plus travelling expenses.

The Vice-Chairman thanked all members who voted for him and stated he would support the Chairman in any way he can. He added that whilst looking forward to carrying out the role, it was with a tinge of regret that the reason he was able to undertake the role was due to the ill health of Councillor Skoulding and wished him well for his continued recovery.

The outgoing Vice-Chairman, Councillor Skoulding, thanked Councillor Miscandlon for the opportunity of being Vice-Chairman, and members for voting for him. He said it had been a fantastic couple of years and he also wanted to give particular thanks to Member Services for all their support.

C3/22 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 24 February 2022 were confirmed and signed.

C4/22 **TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL AND/OR THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE.**

The Chairman thanked everyone who attended his Civic Reception in March and hoped they found it to be as thoroughly enjoyable an evening as he did. He thanked Member Services for their support in organising the event and all officers for the way they have adapted to working in such challenging circumstances during the pandemic. Along with the return of the Chamber to its intended configuration, he hopes that this third year of his Chairmanship will also see a return to some normality in the fulfilment of the role with the next planned event being the annual MacMillan coffee morning on 29th September.

C5/22 **MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL 2022/23**

It was proposed by Councillor Miscandlon, seconded by Councillor Boden and agreed that the meeting dates for the Annual Meeting of the Council and for the ordinary meetings of the Council for 2022/23 to be as follows:

The Annual Meeting of the Council in 2023 to be held on Monday 22 May 2023.

The ordinary meetings of the Council to be held on:

Monday 11 July 2022
Monday 3 October 2022
Monday 12 December 2022
Monday 20 February 2023

Councillor Booth pointed out that two of those dates clash with Wisbech St Mary Parish Council meeting dates which would affect both himself and Councillor Mrs Bligh. Councillor Miscandlon stated this was duly noted.

C6/22 **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 Miscandlon stated that no questions had been submitted under Procedure Rules 8.6 and asked if there were any questions under Procedure Rule 8.4 from Councillor Cornwell as Leader of the Opposition Group.

- Councillor Cornwell asked, given the District Council is third in a four-tier local government set up, could Councillor Boden give assurance that the delivery of the business plan will not be compromised though what is currently happening at the Combined Authority? Councillor Boden replied that he is unable to give such assurances.
- Councillor Cornwell queried whether it is time that local government in Cambridgeshire and its many tiers was reorganised. He asked Councillor Boden if he has any knowledge of what is happening currently? Councillor Boden responded that it has been Government policy that changes to the structure of local government in parts of the country would take place with the consent of those authorities concerned, with these changes usually being towards the creation of unitary authorities or authorities with an elected mayor. He stated that it is possible that Government may impose changes upon Cambridgeshire and Peterborough given what has been happening. Councillor Boden confirmed that he has had surprising conversations with leaders of other councils within the Combined Authority area about the mechanism which needs to be utilised to abolish the Combined Authority, but he has not initiated these conversations. He feels it is a fluid situation at the moment, and regrettably it

is not because authorities are working collectively towards a more coherent and less bureaucratic system but because some areas are getting so desperate and are talking about the possibility of change either being forced upon us or us, as a matter of desperation, making changes.

- Councillor Cornwell asked if Councillor Boden would confirm, resulting from a question at the last meeting concerning the massive drainage levy the Council now funds, that he has sent a paper to our MP as he said he would to attempt to raise the problem at a national level? Also, could he advise of any other action taken in relation to that matter. Councillor Boden responded that he has been in contact with MP about this situation and also with councillors in other areas just outside Cambridgeshire and Peterborough who share the same concerns, with a view to working more together to effect change. Matters are proceeding in this matter, and regarding the individual drainage levies, one of the drainage boards agreed they would not increase their drainage levy this year. He hopes to work with Councillor Cornwell as it comes to the setting of drainage levies next year in ensuring that Fenland District Council gets a full complement of councillors to ensure that unrealistically high drainage levy proposed increases are not agreed.
- Councillor Cornwell said that in a previous question about climate change, Councillor Boden had stated that Councillor Tierney would be presenting a Council approach to climate change, but no timescale was mentioned and he asked if one could be given? Councillor Boden responded that he hopes a resolution will be presented at the next meeting of full Council. Councillor Cornwell thanked Councillor Boden.

C7/22 **TO ASK QUESTIONS OF CABINET MEMBERS WITH PORTFOLIO HOLDER RESPONSIBILITIES, IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULES 8.1 AND 8.2**

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

- Councillor Patrick asked Councillor Murphy if he had yet visited the open space at Petts Close as requested at the last meeting? Councillor Murphy stated he had not yet. Councillor Patrick then asked if the grounds maintenance contractors, Tivoli, are being properly monitored as he has photographs of areas in Wisbech that have not been mown this year and Wisbech is looking poor because of it. Councillor Murphy said he was sorry to hear that, but the Council has had more compliments on grass cutting in the district this year. He asked Councillor Patrick to provide him with further information after the meeting and he will investigate. Councillor Patrick thanked Councillor Murphy.
- Councillor Booth stated that the issue of rural fly tipping had been raised last night at a meeting of Parson Drove Parish Council, who will be writing to the Council to ask if more can be done to deal with the blight in this area, with also the mention of making more use of CCTV. Councillor Booth made the point to Councillor Murphy that the Council has the powers for this and needs to be more proactive. Councillor Murphy said unfortunately this is something the Council is always looking at as it is so prolific, as soon as an area is cleared, more appears. Officers sift through all the fly tipping to find invoices or means of identification and unfortunately this takes a lot of time to do. The Council has had some good results lately, but it is ongoing. Councillor Murphy stated with regards to CCTV, the Council has tried using cameras, but they have been stolen previously and it is not cost effective to put up more, however, he can assure Councillor Booth that this issue is being looked at all the while.
- Councillor Sutton asked Councillor Murphy if he is aware of the cessation of the collection of crisp packets from the terracycling scheme. He stated that there is a group in Christchurch that has collected close on a tonne of various items for the scheme over the last few years, along with other similar groups in the district and it is disappointing that many of these items will now likely go into the green bins. He asked if there is any intention to bring any of this into mainstream recycling and if not, why? Councillor Murphy said there are no plans, items are sorted at Waterbeach but the Council has nothing to do with waste when it gets there

and would not have the resources to sort through waste to collect the number of crisp packets that would be required to collect a tonne. Councillor Sutton said that was a shame as some £400 had been raised for a local school as a result of this and he asked if this is something that Recap could look at? Councillor Murphy replied that he is Chairman of Recap and again they would not be looking at this. Councillor Sutton said it is a shame that terracycling has finished and the Council cannot pick this up.

C8/22 POLITICAL PROPORTIONALITY REPORT

Members considered the Committee Structure, Political Balance and Allocation of Seats report presented by Councillor Boden.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor S Clark and AGREED:

- 1. to maintain the Committees and Panels set out at Appendix A of the report for the 2022/23 municipal year;**
- 2. that the terms of reference set out at Part 3 of the Council's [Constitution](#) in relation to the committees and panels referred to above should continue as currently drafted;**
- 3. the allocation of seats and position of Chairman and Vice-Chairman on those committees subject to political balance arrangements as set out in Appendix A of the report;**
- 4. the appointments to seats allocated in accordance with paragraph 3 above (as set out in Appendix B) to include co-opted or non-members, and**
- 5. the list of Outside Bodies and allocation of seats in accordance with political balance arrangements as set out at Appendix C of the report for 2022/23, with the appointments to be made by Cabinet.**

C9/22 CPCA APPOINTMENTS (INC EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE)

Members considered the Combined Authority Membership and Other Appointments report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Boden mentioned that one change not reflected in the papers is that on the Combined Authority Housing and Communities Committee, Councillor Mrs Laws was made the primary member with Councillor Boden the substitute.

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

- the appointments and nominations to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Board and Non-Executive Committees for the municipal year 2022/23 as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report to include the amendment stated above;**
- to note the proposed nominations to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Executive Committees for the municipal year 2022/23 as set out at Appendix 3 of the report.**
- that the Chief Executive be authorised to make any amendments to the appointments to the Combined Authority Board, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee in consultation with the relevant Political Group Leaders, if the political balance is amended by the Authority between now and the next Council meeting and at any time throughout the municipal year.**

C10/22 LICENSING REPORT - TAXI TARIFF

Members considered the Taxi Tariff Licensing Report presented by Councillor Humphrey.

Councillor Count proposed an amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Connor, to the recommendations by the inclusion of an additional recommendation, as follows:

For licensing officers to conduct a review into the availability of taxi provision within Fenland and report their findings to the Licensing Committee to make recommendations to full Council as appropriate.

Councillor Count said this was an opportunistic amendment proposal as the Licensing Committee has done an excellent job under the chairmanship of Councillor Humphrey. He fully endorses the recommendations as laid out and will be supporting them regardless of what happens to his amendment. Councillor Count highlighted his own experience, along with reports from many others, of the difficulties of getting a taxi in March, particularly on a Sunday or during the late hours. When he raised this with other councillors and members of the public, he has found this to be aligned throughout Fenland. He would expect the villages to have more difficulty, but March is a major town, so he is concerned by this lack of provision. Councillor Count does not know what the cause is, there could be any number of reasons and certainly nothing drawn out in the consultation responses, but by putting forward this recommendation, officers can investigate by talking to the drivers and find out why we do not have the coverage so we can maybe create an action to improve the availability of the taxi service in the area.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Tierney said that in respect of the rise in taxi fares, it is his understanding that this is the maximum fare that drivers can charge; they can charge less if they want to. Fenland District Council is merely setting the maximum fare but not insisting on a rise in fares and he felt it important to clarify this. He said that Councillor Count raises an interesting point that it is difficult late at night to get a taxi but why? Is it because there is not the demand, or does the Council put obstacles in the way to people becoming a taxi driver? He suggested that a few councillors may wish to be involved in the review.
- Councillor Hoy commented that she has often spoken to drivers about this, they say it is not worth it financially because the maximum fare we set is quite low. With the current price of diesel, the fare gained will not go far, particularly with additional costs such as insurance. She would be interested to see what comes back in the report. Also, she had not realised that the Council does not even have to set a maximum fare at all, it could set no fare and the market may find a natural rate and perhaps officers can look at that too.
- Councillor Wilkes agreed it is difficult to get a taxi and almost impossible on Sundays or after 6pm on weekdays. He is reliant on taxis and feels imprisoned when he cannot get one, however, if the Council has no option to have this tariff increase, his concern is also for those who are taxi reliant but with limited income or pensions. He asked if there would be additional concessions for such people?
- Councillor Lynn pointed out that most drivers earn their money on Fridays and Saturdays and are out until 3 or 4am. They may have given up their day to earn £15 on a Saturday and so lost a day with family. The reason why they are not available on a Sunday is because perhaps they do not get enough calls to warrant being available.
- Councillor Sutton said this is all down to market forces. It seems to him that if the problem is so bad in so many towns, budding entrepreneurs should buy a taxi.
- Councillor Booth requested that the review does look at the impact on the villages. There are some good local firms that look after the villages, but the provision of service and the cost is a barrier to people living in them, particularly if they want to visit the towns, which also then affects the economy of the towns.

- Councillor Humphrey said he would be happy to take this amendment away and for Licensing to conduct a review to take to Licensing Committee for recommendation to Full Council. A survey can easily be conducted with the trade, but he did want to emphasise the fares relate to hackney carriages and not private hire.
- Councillor Connor said if councillors are to be involved in the review at Councillor Tierney's suggestion, then he would like to be involved, which is likely anyway as he is on the Licensing Committee. He thanked Councillor Count for that amendment and hopes that Council supports it.

Councillors voted on the additional recommendation, which was agreed unanimously.

Proposed by Councillor Humphrey, seconded by Councillor Mrs Mayor and AGREED

- **to approve the proposed Table of Fares set out in Appendix B of the report, as recommended by the Licensing Committee**
- **for licensing officers to conduct a review into the availability of taxi provision within Fenland and report their findings to the Licensing Committee to make recommendations to full Council as appropriate.**

(Councillor Wilkes requested it be noted in the interest of transparency that he is taxi reliant)

(Councillors Patrick and Rackley declared a pecuniary interest in this item, by virtue of the fact that they are taxi drivers, and left the room for the duration of this discussion and voting thereon)

C11/22 FDC RESPONSE TO LGBCE ON DRAFT WARD PROPOSALS

Members considered FDC's response to LGBCE on Draft Ward proposals report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Boden thanked Councillor Davis for suggesting it would be helpful to increase the number of councillors to 43 for a better scheme of warding within the town of March. Although the proposal did not work out, it worked out very well on the basis of 42 councillors, using the historical links at County Council divisional level between Christchurch and March and Benwick and March.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Booth said it is apparent that if you are not part of the ruling group your comments will be disregarded, and he will not be supporting this. He would like to put on record that the parishes he represents, Parson Drove and Wisbech St Mary, are very disappointed with this process and that the Council has not taken their comments on board.
- Councillor Sutton said he will not support this. He finds any increase in members totally unnecessary and does not back the boundary changes as they are. His view is that putting towns and villages together will never be a good idea as they are very different packages and village residents do not want to be associated with the towns and vice versa.
- Councillor Tierney said he will be supporting this. He made the point that there will never be a scheme that everyone is happy with. Councillor Tierney stated that he has worked hard in his ward, but these changes will mean it will not exist and will form part of another ward with the effect this will have or what the future will bring being unknown. He is not sure that Councillor Sutton is right about villages and towns; people choose where to live and just try to get along together and he knows people in villages who will often say they live in Wisbech, it just depends on the nature of the conversation. He feels that people are not concerned over ward boundaries; they just want a councillor to help them when they need it.
- Councillor Patrick requested a recorded vote on this matter.
- Councillor Cornwell expressed the view that an impasse has been reached and not everyone is going to be satisfied. He stated that members of the Fenland Independent Alliance are totally against this proposal and will be generating its own response. He also

requested a recorded vote.

- Councillor Boden agreed there is no system of ward boundaries that will ever satisfy everyone. He stated that the LGBC uses statutory criteria that exists to ensure that Council wards as best as possible reflect the communities that exist within the area, and it is a balancing exercise to reflect all the criteria. He believes the proposal put forward here matches the criteria of the LGBCE as far as it is possible to do so, which is not perfect, but nothing ever is.

It was proposed by Councillor Patrick that a recorded vote be taken, which was supported by Councillors Bligh, Booth, Cornwell, Sutton, Wicks, Wilkes and Yeulett

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Connor and AGREED the revised proposals as outlined in the report which will result in 18 District Council Wards representing 42 District Councillors. As a result, the average number of electors per councillor will be 2046, and

- **Endorse the LGBCE proposed future district warding arrangements in relation to**
 - **Chatteris North and Manea**
 - **Chatteris South**
 - **Elm and Wisbech St Mary**
 - **Parson Drove and Roman Bank**
 - **Whittlesey East and Villages**
 - **Whittlesey Lattersey**
 - **Whittlesey Northwest**
 - **Whittlesey South**
 - **Wisbech Leverington**
 - **Wisbech North**
 - **Wisbech Riverside**
 - **Wisbech South**
 - **Wisbech Walsoken and Waterlees**
- **Agree to the revised proposals be submitted to the LGBCE as outlined in the report in relation to**
 - **Doddington and Wimblington**
 - **March East and Christchurch**
 - **March North**
 - **March South**
 - **March West and Benwick**
- **Delegate to officers to formally submit the Council consultation submission to the LGBCE for consideration by the deadline of 06 June 2022.**

In favour of the recommendations: Councillors Benney, Boden, J Clark, S Clark, Connor, Count, Mrs J French, Miss K French, Hay, Hoy, Humphrey, Lynn, Mason, Mayor, Meekins, Miscandlon, Mockett, Murphy, Purser, Rackley, Seaton, Skoulding and Tierney

Against the recommendations: Councillors Bligh, Booth, Cornwell, Divine, Maul, Patrick, Sutton, Wicks, Wilkes and Yeulett

Abstention: Councillor Marks

C12/22 ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP - S.113 AGREEMENT (CONFIDENTIAL)

Members considered the confidential Anglia Revenues Partnership – S.113 Agreement report presented by Councillor Mrs French.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs French, seconded by Councillor Boden and AGREED to approve the Head of the ARP and the ARP Operational Improvement Board negotiating and entering into a renewed Section 113 agreement to enable ARP officers to provide ongoing fraud services to Norwich City Council.

(A discussion was held on whether the item needed to be held in private and following a vote members resolved to exclude the public from the meeting for this item of business on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972)

5.10 pm

Chairman