

COUNCIL



THURSDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 2021 - 4.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor A Miscandlon (Chairman), Councillor R Skoulding (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor Mrs S Bligh, Councillor C Boden, Councillor G Booth, Councillor J Clark, Councillor S Clark, Councillor S Count, Councillor Mrs M Davis, Councillor D Divine, Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor K French, Councillor A Hay, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor M Humphrey, Councillor Mrs D Laws, 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 C Seaton, Councillor W Sutton, Councillor S Tierney, Councillor S Wallwork, Councillor S Wilkes and Councillor F Yeulett

APOLOGIES: Councillor M Cornwell, Councillor W Rackley, Councillor D Topgood and Councillor R Wicks

C14/21 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 19 May 2021 were confirmed and signed.

C15/21 TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL AND/OR THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE.

Councillor Miscandlon said that members will have received by email a copy of the updated committee list showing the changes that have taken place since the commencement of the municipal year, which are simply to note, with the information having been updated on the website. Also, there will be a continuation of the exception to Rule 19 in that members are requested to please remain seated whilst addressing the meeting.

Councillor Miscandlon then made the following announcement:

“It is with great pleasure to welcome ex-councillor Ralph Butcher to this Chamber who joins us today with his wife, Pat. As you will recall, following a motion on 23 February this year, it was agreed that what had previously been known as the Kings Dyke crossing would be officially named as the Ralph Butcher Causeway. This decision reflects the continuous and tireless determination of Ralph to get this bridge constructed. He fought for this for over forty years. I congratulate him and everyone in this Chamber wishes to thank him for that”.

Councillor Miscandlon then presented Ralph Butcher with a certificate as a token of appreciation and recognition of his contribution to this great achievement.

Ralph Butcher said there were many people he would like to thank. He was first elected to the local council in 1971, 50 years ago and that is when we first talked about the bridge. Over all those years there have been many councillors, some of whom are here today, and officers who have done a lot of work on this bridge and he thanked everybody for all their help over the years.

Mrs Butcher then received a presentation of flowers from Councillor Miscandlon and Ralph Butcher stated that all councillors should know that without the help of their partners, you can never get the job done properly anyway.

Following the presentation the Chief Executive, Paul Medd then made the following announcement:

“I am delighted to announce that the Council has once again been reaccredited for Customer Service Excellence.

CSE is a national standard that recognises public bodies that provide customer-focused, high quality, excellent services. Fenland is one of the few councils that have consistently achieved this rigorous standard for all its services.

Following an assessment in June, the CSE assessor was highly complementary of the Council's emphasis on continuing to deliver excellent customer focused services, especially in view of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated restrictions.

In the final report our assessor said: “It is clear that Fenland has managed the Covid-19 pandemic situation exceptionally well. There was the potential for a significant dip in performance, but Fenland has prevented this through its actions. Since the last review, the Council has increased its efforts to manage the impact of the pandemic”.

The assessor added that: “The Council has played a key role in bringing together and coordinating all the relevant partners to address Covid-19 related needs in Fenland. As a result, residents benefit from many services, including some pioneering, ground-breaking initiatives.

The assessor also noted the following strengths:

- The My Fenland transformation project, which is all about improving the customer journey, has delivered significant benefits to customers, with new and improved access channels including online taxi licence renewals and missed bin enquiries.
- Staff are empowered to deliver excellent services, which has been further enhanced and facilitated by an innovative training programme.
- The Council has increased its interaction with wider communities, including working with travellers and migrant communities to pioneer vaccination promotion. Support has also been given to the Rosmini Centre in Wisbech, enabling it to remain open and continue as an essential conduit for migrants.

As a learning organisation the Council is always keen to identify opportunities for continual improvement, and the areas we would like to focus on for development will be around building on our existing channels to engage with customers and maximise their feedback and the future development of web chat functionality”.

Paul Medd invited Councillor Steve Tierney, Portfolio Holder for Transformation, Communication and Environment, to receive the CSE certificate on behalf of the Council from Councillor Miscandlon.

Councillor Tierney said he wanted to make it very clear that whilst accepting the award on behalf of the staff, the amazing hard work during a couple of difficult years that has led to this point has been done entirely by the staff and he wanted to thank every one of them.

C16/21 **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 received submitted under Procedure Rule 8.6 and asked if there were any questions under Procedure Rule. 8.4 from Councillor Maul as

the nominated representative of Councillor Cornwell, Leader of the Opposition.

Councillor Maul said that at Full Council on 23 February 2021, Councillor Boden had promised to look at the idea of installing electric vehicle charging points within council car parks to meet growing demands. He asked what progress had been made on this.

Councillor Boden said that although it has been our plan for the last two years, the process has been delayed in the attempt to obtain civil parking enforcement, of which installing charging points in our car parks would form a part. However, the County Council has slowed down with their plans for on-street parking, and without their agreement as the Highway's authority we cannot move forward with our plans for both on-street and off-street parking, including consideration for the charging points. Each meeting is now being held every three months. However, there should be a Cabinet paper in October explaining what the timelines will be and hopefully the next time Transport Committee of CCC meets they will have some detail agreed.

Councillor Maul thanked Councillor Boden and said although he appreciated that there was reliance on the County Council, Councillor Cornwell has asked for a procedure to be put in place to keep members updated. Councillor Boden said that when the next Cabinet agenda is published there will be a full update for members with the likely projected timescale.

C17/21 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM AND 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:

1. Councillor Patrick addressed Councillor Hoy regarding homelessness and asked why rough sleeping still exists in Wisbech when several million pounds has been spent on this problem. He also asked why on 28 June at a Wisbech Town Council meeting, Councillor Hoy said she did not know whether the matter was confidential or not when she spoke about the possible eviction of the homeless from the gardens of the property of St Peter's car park. Was she aware that those people were to be evicted, with many of them left out in the rain unable to collect their personal belongings? He asked if anyone at FDC was there at the time to give support and advice for those people, many of them vulnerable, and if not, why not? He would also like to know what is happening with the FDC-owned hostel at Kirkgate Street, which has been closed for three years.
2. Councillor Hoy responded that there will always be difficulties regarding homelessness. A lot of work has been done with the rough sleepers in Wisbech; some have been housed permanently and are doing well, and a full briefing note will be circulated to all members as an update. Unfortunately, however, some have no recourse to public funds due to their immigration status. This is a difficult situation which many local authorities are facing. These people are being visited, but it is a complex issue. We have had discussions with the Home Office about it, and they have been here on several visits but there is no quick fix. Some homeless people have very difficult and complex problems. In relation to the closure order, she mentioned it at Wisbech Town Council purely as an update to members because an FDC officer had rightly mentioned it to her; but the first part of it is to go to consultation. She mentioned it because she was concerned that what she was saying in good faith, which was to inform town council members about a closure order and to seek their views, would potentially be used to say that FDC officers were doing no work on rough sleeping. That is exactly what happened the following morning, which she found depressing because staff do a good job every day and work hard. As it happened the closure order was not required as it involved private land. The landowner felt that people were trespassing, and so took legal action to evict the trespassers as is their right. They were moved on and given time to collect their belongings. We are working with the people that were on the site through

outreach and will continue to do so even if they have no recourse to public funds. In respect of the Kirkgate Street hostel, it was previously run by a provider who no longer wanted to run it. Covid-19 hit but we could not put rough sleepers in the property because it had become run down and we would have immediately had to find a provider to manage it and sort out contract terms. We did provide B&B accommodation and worked with the Ferry Project so managed to house people temporarily. However, the Kirkgate Hostel is an ideal property and officers are currently working on a proposal to get a provider to take it on as accommodation, however as negotiations are underway, she cannot make any further comment on this.

3. Councillor Patrick responded that the Ferry Project had initially been prepared to run this property three years ago but had difficulties in coming to an arrangement with FDC over things that needed to be done. However, they are now willing to work with FDC again to reopen the hostel. Councillor Hoy said again due to contract negotiations, she cannot comment on this.
4. Councillor Sutton addressed Councillor Boden regarding the two separate Cabinet IDB posts created at the start of his administration, one strategic and one delivery; that of which is held by Councillor Laws. We are now well into this administration, so what was the objective for the split, what is the outcome and what can we expect in the future? Councillor Boden responded that the objective in splitting the role is that there is a system in place which has a financial impact on this council. The daily work of that needs to be overseen by an individual on Cabinet; the most qualified was Councillor Laws so it was appropriate to ask her. The bigger picture is the extent to which a large portion of our budget is made up by payments which need to be made to the IDBs. This is an unfair system which has been in place for many years, whereby a small number of local authorities have a disproportionately large proportion of their budget taken up by IDB payments of which we are one. He attempted to get interest from some of the other local authorities to see, from a strategic point of view, how the system of IDB payments could be changed so a less disproportionate burden fell on local authorities such as Fenland. Unfortunately, he has been disappointed by the responses and it seems there is not the political will among those authorities that do have the highest burden to push for change. It has been inappropriate during Covid-19 to push this with government departments, but he has not given up though and will try again to seek to change that regime.
5. Councillor Sutton thanked Councillor Boden and asked what other system does he have in mind? Councillor Boden said there are so many possible options; several papers have been written about how systems can change, however he can concentrate on two areas. The first is to have more accountability for IDB payments through the way it is presented on council tax bills, and secondly the way IDBs pay for the capital arrangements they must make. Many IDBs save the money gradually to meet the capital expenditures that know they will have. Therefore, a lot of money is taken from residents in the form of advance payments to fund projects which will materialise in 5, 10 or even 15 years' time. He would suggest we move away from this practice but finance our capital expenditure through loans from the public works loans board. Councillor Sutton thanked Councillor Boden for his response. He does not fully agree with this approach but wished him luck with his endeavours.
6. Councillor Sutton addressed Councillor Mrs Laws and said he noted as usual the very good results from the Planning Team in terms of meeting and sometimes exceeding percentage targets. However, many of these are with an extension of time and he would like to know what these are for although he appreciated that she would not have this information to hand. Councillor Mrs Laws said she would be happy to forward the information on, in the meantime she could report that the service had been overwhelmed by 64 applications in less than five days. Staff are doing their best and there have been extensions of time because, for example, Covid has led to more people wanting work done on their properties. However, one of the main reasons for extensions of time concerns validation. When it was found that agents were getting only 4% of their applications right first time our brilliant tech team provided a workshop for developers which improved validation by 9%. There is also a checklist on the website, but professional developers and agents are not following it which

exacerbates the issue. Councillor Sutton thanked Councillor Mrs Laws.

7. Councillor Sutton said he voiced his concerns when it was agreed to move monthly Planning Committee meetings to five-weekly. Since then, he has noted an extra nine applications going through Committee compared to last year but with an additional seven meetings to cope with that. This is not value for money, and he asked if Councillor Mrs Laws and the Leader could look at reverting to meetings being four-weekly, even if they have to start earlier. Councillor Mrs Laws said she has already discussed this with officers; it is not feasible to hold a meeting on one day a month, even if starting early to get through more applications. Each meeting needs to start with the Chairman's pre-meet and breaks and lunch would have to be factored in. Furthermore, some applications are major and involve transparent, lengthy, and intense debate; they are not five-minute discussions. So yes, it is something that is being looked at, but she cannot make any promises or provide a decision at this moment. Councillor Sutton thanked Councillor Mrs Laws.
8. Councillor Sutton addressed Councillor Mrs French stating that in the February meeting it was minuted that she said she would come back with an explanation of what WVI is. Councillor Mrs French apologised but said this is Councillor Tierney's portfolio. Councillor Tierney said that he would be happy to come back to Councillor Sutton with an explanation.
9. Councillor Sutton addressed Councillor Benney on the moratorium on sales of land in Wisbech. Due to this there was the possibility of a company moving out of Wisbech, taking with it some 60-80 jobs but now that the moratorium has expired has any discussion taken place with the company with a view to staying in Wisbech? Councillor Benney said he knows what is happening in the area but due to its commercially sensitive nature he cannot say any more than discussions are ongoing. He takes on board the comment about the moratorium but there have been no further conversations he is aware of that would lead to the company to reopen discussions about purchase of the land. When a solution is found and an announcement made, he will inform Councillor Sutton but is sorry he cannot be more specific.
10. Councillor Booth addressed Councillor Sam Clark regarding smoking cessation. He is surprised to read that we still have a high rate of smoking in Fenland given that when we last had the Director of Public Health in Overview & Scrutiny, they said we were making good inroads and reducing the rate, and therefore it appears we might be going backwards. He asked Councillor Clark if she has any observations on that. Also, they have listed three prioritisation plans but they are only suggested, so does she know what impact they might have as they appear to be quite specialised areas. Councillor Clark said she will investigate this and get back to him with an answer.
11. Councillor Booth picked up on the point regarding IDBs. He said part of the issue around funding of IDBs is a lack of understanding which was highlighted at North Level when we wrote to the Treasury regarding the fact that IDBs will have to pay full rate on red diesel. A response from a Treasury Minister showed that lack of understanding about how IDBs are funded and of the impact on council-tax payers. Therefore, there are some education issues in government about IDBs and one suggestion is to maybe approach making IDBs a precepting authority in their own right. Councillor Boden said Councillor Booth has hit on a point that the civil service does not fully understand IDBS as an area that is quite specialised and only affects a small minority of the country but does affect it quite seriously. However, there are many problems linked to precepting, so he would be cautious about that.
12. Councillor Booth addressed Councillor Murphy regarding the household waste collection. He said we are below our target level and this was raised this at Overview & Scrutiny. He has looked at some tables that indicate we are not doing as well as suggested and figures are starting to show that. He asked if we could look at the way we do recycling, look at the initiatives and other ideas for items that we can recycle. Councillor Murphy responded that the recycling rate is still very good. He attended a RECAP meeting, and all are suffering from same sort of thing. More items are now being recycled, and people are creating more recycling as they are spending more time at home. We are close to being cost neutral. Councillor Booth thanked Councillor Murphy but said the plea is what else can we do and

what else can we recycle? We should be exploring more ideas to hit our targets. Councillor Murphy responded that all the councils in Cambridgeshire are doing this. We are currently waiting for the Government to come back to us regarding kerbside collections, if they want us to do this then it will be costly in terms of money required for more vehicles and bins. He pointed out that if one cubicle on a refuse vehicle fills up, it needs to be emptied but the other cubicle may be virtually empty. For perspective, we currently have about 14 vehicles at a cost of £275k each. The new kerbside vehicles cost about £395k each, and electric vehicles will cost about £450k each. We will either continue as we are now, or the Government will have to pay a lot of money towards this.

13. Councillor Yeulett addressed Councillor Benney saying he is pleased to see construction work at Stainless Metalcraft. He asked if there has been any development with the Albert Bartlett site in Chatteris? Councillor Benney said yes, he had visited Bartletts with members of the Economic Growth team; 90% of the site is being re-let and there are plans to expand on the land behind that, which is excellent news for Chatteris. Many of the staff at Bartletts are now working at Chelmer Foods who have moved into area and are looking to expand in Chatteris. He is very pleased with the work that Toby and Oliver Bartlett have done to get the sites let. Most of the interest in the area fails because we have not got the units of the size that companies need so this has helped.
14. Councillor Yeulett said this is a pleasing response and asked about the rest of district. Councillor Benney responded that there has been some activity in Whittlesey with companies in negotiations with other landowners, although he cannot elaborate on this. In Wisbech there is interest with the FDC-owned industrial units.

C18/21 MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR SAM CLARK REGARDING THE QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL, KING'S LYNN

Councillor Sam Clark presented her motion regarding the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in King's Lynn.

Councillor Hoy seconded the motion and Councillor Miscandlon opened the motion for debate.

1. Councillor Booth said he would support this but wondered if Councillor Clark would make an addition to the motion to send a copy of the resolution to Norfolk and Cambridgeshire county councils given that we are trying to support services in the area. This hospital serves many Fenland residents, and it gives Norfolk a good message that we are willing to support projects in their area.
2. Councillor Bligh agreed with Councillor Booth, but she also wondered if the Royal Family have been questioned on this. They may have used this hospital and they have residents in Sandringham. Their support could add weight to this.
3. Councillor Clark thanked both Councillor Booth and Councillor Hoy for their comments, which she would take on board although the latter request may prove more difficult.
4. Councillor Sutton stated his full support for the motion and said why would you not?

Councillor Miscandlon asked if Councillor Booth wished to make an amendment to the proposal based on his comment. Councillor Booth confirmed he did and proposed the following be added to the motion:

‘(d) to send a copy of this resolution to Norfolk and Cambridgeshire County Councils.’

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Patrick and the amendment was opened for debate.

Councillor Tierney said he did not think this necessary; if it succeeds, it is straightforward to ask officers to send copies of the original motion to different parties without building it into an amendment unless we do not believe they will do that. Councillor Hoy said she thought that Councillor Clark had already accepted Councillor Booth's motion and therefore agreed this was unnecessary.

Councillor Miscandlon accepted that Councillor Clark had agreed Councillor Booth's proposal and took a vote on the motion with the addition he suggested.

The Motion, including the additional item, was approved.

C19/21 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

Members considered the Corporate Governance / Audit and Risk Management Committee Annual Report 2020/21 presented by Councillor Kim French as Chairman of the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Councillor Miss French thanked members of the Committee for their participation and enthusiasm and officers for their hard work in servicing the needs of the Council.

Proposed by Councillor Kim French, seconded by Councillor Booth and Council AGREED to acknowledge the work of the Corporate Governance Committee and Audit and Risk Management Committee and its compliance with CIPFA's annual checklist for 2020/21.

C20/21 O&S ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

Members considered the Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report presented by Councillor Mason, as Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor Mason paid tribute to Anna Goodall for the tremendous amount of work she had put into supporting the panel over the last few years, providing ample information and advice to all members, for which he is grateful. He welcomed Amy Brown in the coming year as a supporting officer to the panel.

Councillor Booth said he would like it to be noted that when the report came before Overview & Scrutiny, he raised the point that in Section 6.8 regarding urgency decisions we ought to amend the wording to reflect that this is only done in exceptional circumstances and was done because of Covid. However, the text has not been updated and he feels it is an important point to make; this is a check and balance that we need to ensure it is used sparingly. Councillor Mason said he will ensure it is included in the report.

Proposed by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Connor and Council AGREED to acknowledge the broad scope of work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel during 2020/21.

C21/21 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

Members considered the Treasury Management Annual Report 2020/21 presented by Councillor Boden as Leader and portfolio holder for finance.

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

C22/21 FENLAND ELECTORAL REVIEW - COUNCIL SIZE REPORT

Members considered the Fenland Electoral Review – Council Size report presented by Councillor Boden.

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

1. Councillor Hay said she fully supports the recommendations. Our workload has increased with the additional CPCA committees, but we want to give our best for residents and there needs to be enough members to spread the load. It is better to be proactive rather than reactive so reviewing the boundaries now will ensure that councillors represent closer to the average number of electors overall come the 2023 elections and that the number of electors supported by members is equitable. Furthermore, if we want to attract good quality candidates to stand for council the workload must not be such that it puts people off and prevents them from standing.
2. Councillor Booth said that he broadly supports the recommendation but feels there still needs to be a root and branch review of local government in our area. We have too many tiers of local authority and that does not appear to be progressing. However, this will help to keep the situation equitable as stated by Councillor Hay, and it is important we have the right number of councillors to ensure we have a diverse representation. *(Councillor Booth and Councillor Maul left the meeting at 5.34pm)*.
3. Councillor Tierney agreed with Councillor Booth that there are too many tiers of government in Cambridgeshire. However, for this review it comes down to whether you think councillors are good value for money or not, and he believes they are. He has always voted against rises in councillor allowances but that is not because he does not value the work they do; they put a large amount of their time into their work in helping residents and if paid it would probably be less than minimum wage. A small increase in the number of councillors to spread the load and be more effective in helping residents can only be a good thing. Yes, it is a small extra cost to have additional councillors, but it would be great value for money and the people that do contact their councillors are often very welcoming of the help they get.
4. Councillor Sutton said from the comments he made at the last Council meeting it would be no surprise that he does not support this and does not think we should put more on our council-tax payers at this time. County councillors represent a greater number of residents as does Peterborough City Council, which is a unitary authority fulfilling both district and county roles, so he fails to see why we cannot reduce the number of members we have. He feels the Leader was swayed from his original opinion stated at the working group, of reducing the number of members to 30 which Councillor Sutton would support fully. Therefore, he would like to add a bullet point to the recommendations and propose that if the LGPCE do agree to extra councillors, there will not be a cost to the taxpayer, but to members as a reduced allowance to pay for the extra resource.
5. Councillor Boden said as a point of order we have an independent panel that deals with members' remuneration and we may be infringing the work of that panel by the wording of that amendment. *(Councillor J Clark left the meeting at 5.40pm)*
6. Councillor Miscandlon agreed. He said by adding that amendment we would be impinging on an independent body that advises this council in terms of remuneration. If the amendment is passed and accepted, it would have to go back to the time the IRP rationalised their decision about our allowances and that representation could be made at that time but not as part of the amendment. Councillor Sutton said although he finds it bizarre, he accepts the advice given. Councillor Miscandlon confirmed that member allowances are set or recommended by the Independent Review Panel and members cannot influence this; we can only give our opinion when interviewed, but the decision is theirs not ours.
7. Councillor Mrs Mayor said the amount of work carried out by the member working group was considerable. Although not part of the group, she had an opportunity to look at all the figures for 39-48 members which she enjoyed delving into and asked the Leader a lot of questions. 42 is the recommendation and that is the obvious number for her having examined the data thoroughly. She welcomes the report and fully supports it. We need to wait for the LGPCE to make the decision, but it cannot get any better than 42.
8. Councillor Hoy said it is interesting that Councillor Sutton voted for an increase in

allowances at the last Council meeting, but now wants a decrease. She does not disagree with his logic about not wanting to put additional financial burden on the taxpayer but for her the most important question is do you consider three more councillors a burden? If we are saying approximately £5k a year basic allowance per additional councillor, over a four-year term this represents only 0.02% of our budget. Yes, it is public money but if they are going to provide quality and be good, proactive councillors and get things done, it will be worth it. The number can sometimes be irrelevant, but you must start somewhere. We set that number at 42 and she believes that is the right number.

9. Councillor Miscandlon thanked Councillor Hoy and said he wanted to explain a few aspects. This council does not have the power to say how many members we have; it is up to the Boundary Commission; we only make a recommendation. If they say no, it's dead in the water. Also, Members' allowance is set by the independent review panel and brought to the council for councillors then to decide if it is appropriate or not and vote either on an increase or decrease. He accepts Councillor Sutton's concerns for the future, but we are not the decision makers on that, these are independent bodies that come to us, we are governed by what they tell us.
10. Councillor Mrs Laws said we are looking to the future; we can only look at the planning applications that have been decided on recently or are in the process. We are not taking into account what is going to be built or what will come forward in future, we do not know how many properties we will have to represent. We are being driven to supply more homes, so she feels that we do need these extra representatives. No member of this council sees reward as monetary reward, they could not pay us for the hours we put in and that is not why we do it; we do it to represent our electorate. Some of us have more demanding wards than others but she totally welcomes an increase and sees it as a necessary increase to put forward to the Boundary Commission. We do not know how many of the electorate we will be representing in the future.
11. Councillor Yeulett said he is not in support of this and agrees with all that Councillor Sutton as he does not think we should put an extra burden on taxpayers.
12. Councillor Benney stated the number has been worked out by statistics and based on factual information in front of us. The size was set at 39 years ago, this recommended number of 42 will take us to 2027 and is a natural balancing out of numbers. Ultimately, we do not make the decision; we recommend it, and it may be rejected by the Boundary Commission. Every number is contentious if you want it to be, but this will not be decided by us. We need a base line to work from and he supports the number of 42.
13. Councillor Count said he fully supports the recommendation of 42 and welcomes Councillor Benney's comments. His contention is that people have not identified that every Fenland resident is entitled to fair representation and that is the whole point of the review. Some members are burdened by twice as many issues as others, so we need to strive to have a fair representation for our councillors. Also, much has been said about other tiers of government, but the role of a district councillor is not the same as that of a county or parish councillor because the services offered are so different. District councillors are focussed on the household, whereas county councillors scrutinise large documents that are policy driven. He dislikes the term tiers of government; there is no such thing; tiers relate to a management structure that exists in business. As a county councillor there is no way he can tell a district councillor what to do, likewise a district councillor cannot tell a parish councillor what to do. His final point is one of allowances and the extra burden on the taxpayer. One of the reasons the proposal for an increase is being driven forward is the sheer quantity of housing that has been and continues to be delivered in Fenland. As those households arrive, they pay rates and some of that money comes to Fenland with a certain percentage then going towards members allowances. If you increase the number of households but do not do anything about members allowances, there is no impact as the cost is being lowered to the resident as the sharing of the burden is between the greater quantity of households.
14. Councillor Mrs French said she is also in full support of this paper. She would like to thank the Leader and officers for the hours they put into this report. It is a welcome document, and she would like the Chief Executive to thank the staff personally.

15. Councillor Miscandlon concurred with Councillor Mrs French and invited Councillor Boden to sum up.
16. Councillor Boden said it is entirely appropriate to second the comments made by Councillor Mrs French about the staff; they have put in a lot of work. In summary, the basic reasons for the recommended increase to 42 are laid out in the report and given in his presentation and he does not want to move too far away from those reasons. We have come up with a figure which is exactly the average of our neighbouring authorities in statistical terms which gives validity to the number we have come up with. In respect of Councillor Sutton's earlier comment although he was predisposed towards a reduction in the number of councillors, he has listened to all the evidence, without which he would not have recommended the small increase. Furthermore, he has no intention of any extra burden being placed on taxpayers in the next budget or subsequent ones whilst he is Leader and portfolio holder for finance.
17. Councillor Boden asked the Chairman if a recorded vote could be taken as it would be helpful to show the LGPCE the level of support for this recommendation and the feeling of the Council.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and AGREED:

- **The Member Working Group recommendation that the future Council size should be 42 elected representatives.**
- **To delegate to the cross-party Member Working Group in conjunction with officers to add in the rationale for the selected Council Size figure and any discarded options within the proposed consultation submission Council Size range, prior to formally submitting the Council consultation submission to the LGBCE for consideration by 5 October.**
- **For Members to note the principles outlined above in relation to stage 2 of the LGBCE process in relation to warding arrangements.**

In favour of the Proposal: Councillors Benney, Bligh, Boden, S Clark, Connor, Count, Mrs Davis, Mrs J French, Miss K French, Hay, Hoy, Humphrey, Mrs Laws, Lynn, Marks, Mason, Mrs Mayor, Miscandlon, Mockett, Murphy, Patrick, Purser, Seaton, Skoulding, Tierney, Wallwork, and Wilkes

Against the Proposal: Councillors Divine, Sutton and Yeulett

Abstentions: None

(Councillors Booth, Maul and J Clark left the meeting prior to the recorded vote taking place)

C23/21 APPOINTMENT OF MONITORING OFFICER AND NOTIFICATION OF DEPUTY MONITORING OFFICER

Members considered the Appointment of Monitoring Officer and Notification of Deputy Monitoring Officer report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Boden stated that the report speaks for itself; Amy Brown has shown herself to be more than capable and competent to be our acting Monitoring Officer during the period of maternity leave for the existing Monitoring Officer. As far as the Deputy Monitoring Officer position is concerned, it is merely for us to note since this post is devolved to another officer.

Proposed by Councillor, seconded by Councillor Tierney and AGREED:

- **To approve the appointment of Amy Brown, Head of Legal and Governance as the Acting Monitoring Officer for the Council to cover a period of maternity leave. These**

arrangements will come into immediate effect from the date the maternity leave commences.

- **To note the appointment of Kathy Woodward, Internal Audit Manager as Acting Deputy Monitoring Officer for the Council during the period in which Amy Brown is Acting Monitoring Officer.**

(Amy Brown left the room for this item).

6.07 pm

Chairman