

# COUNCIL



**THURSDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2019 - 4.00  
PM**

**Fenland District Council**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Mrs K Mayor (Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor Mrs S Bligh, Councillor C Boden, Councillor G Booth, Councillor M Buckton, Councillor R Butcher, Councillor J Clark, Councillor S Clark, Councillor D Connor, Councillor M Cornwell, Councillor S Court, Councillor Mrs C Cox, Councillor Mrs M Davis (Vice-Chairman), Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor S Garratt (*left at 5.50pm*), Councillor A Hay, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor Mrs D Laws, Councillor D Mason, Councillor A Miscandlon, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor D Oliver, Councillor K Owen, Councillor C Seaton, Councillor W Sutton and Councillor F Yeulett

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor M Bucknor, Councillor Mrs V Bucknor, Councillor S Count, Councillor D Hodgson, Councillor M Humphrey, Councillor Mrs F Newell, Councillor A Pugh, Councillor R Skoulding, Councillor M Tanfield, Councillor G Tibbs and Councillor S Tierney

Councillor Mrs Mayor welcomed Peter Catchpole, newly appointed Corporate Director and Section 151 Officer, to his first Council meeting and thanked Kamal Mehta for his services in the interim period.

**C55/18      PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The minutes of the extraordinary meeting of 17 January 2019 were confirmed and signed.

**C56/18      CIVIC ENGAGEMENT UPDATES**

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

**C57/18      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 Twinning Association Annual General Meeting and Tea Party which took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> January. The event was well received with several new members attending.

Councillor Mrs Mayor drew members' attention to the recommendation in relation to Council Tax that has been proposed by Cabinet following their meeting earlier today. The recommendations in front of members in hard copy form affect the Corporate Budget 2019 and Mid-term financial strategy report. It is this updated recommendation from Cabinet that members will be asked to consider this afternoon and the original recommendations in the published report are therefore substituted with these updated recommendations from Cabinet. Members will also be asked to consider the aspects of the report that this amendment will affect.

**C58/18      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.**

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:

- Councillor Booth asked for an update on the 11-12 High Street, Wisbech project. Councillor Seaton advised that a full update on the project was included in the report recently tabled at Overview & Scrutiny on 18 February titled 'Progress in Delivering the Environment Corporate Objectives'. However, he advised the owner of these derelict properties has acknowledged they were unable to progress an application and redevelopment scheme and the project team has been working hard to ensure FDC does not lose the opportunity to address this site under the scheme and lose the significant HLF grant available. With the assistance of shared Peterborough City Council legal services and with members support, the purchase of the site was negotiated with the owner and completion occurred at the end of January 2019. In parallel with the acquisition work, officers have been looking at options for redevelopment of the site, including detailed engagement with the previously identified potential developer, as well as outlining alternative plans should this not progress to the satisfaction of all involved. The intended developer has now received all relevant details of the buildings along with the Council's preferred transfer legal arrangement which will involve FDC retaining the property with a sole build lease to the developer on which the site will transfer to the developer on completion of works and grant draw down. The developer is in the process of forwarding financial data and works programme and the Council is preparing the legal build lease documentation. Once agreements are in place, updates will be provided to members and posted on the High Street website, which contains regular updates whereby members can follow progress on the overall HLF project.
- Councillor Booth thanked Councillor Seaton for the information and asked if the Combined Authority (CA) is involved? Councillor Seaton stated the only involvement it has is in acting as a safeguard in that if, for any reason, the developer should not be able to complete the development, we have a commitment from the CA to fund the remaining part of the development to completion.
- Councillor Booth asked for an update on the purchasing of new equipment for council meetings, are we still hiring equipment, such as the audio system, and what expenditure has been incurred to date? Councillor Seaton replied that the Council is in the process of procuring new AV equipment for use at Council meetings and aim to have the new equipment in place by the next Council meeting on 23 May. Meanwhile, equipment is still currently being hired at a cost of approximately £1657 per Council meeting and the total cost of hiring AV equipment to date is around £13k. He suggested, for a more detailed explanation, this question should be asked of the Portfolio Holder at portfolio holder questions.
- Councillor Booth referred to a recent report on recycling on BBC Look East which stated that Fenland has the biggest drop in recycling in this area and asked for thoughts or comments on this. Councillor Seaton advised that Councillor Murphy would have more information on this in portfolio holder questions, but it should be noted that the way figures were portrayed in the report were not giving the full picture.

**C59/18      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 for full discussion on this item.

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

- Councillor French asked Councillor Murphy what is happening with the river in March whereby a number of boats continue to overstay their mooring times, frustrating local residents, and how

the situation will be resolved, acknowledging that one side is the responsibility of Middle Level and the other side the responsibility of the Council. Councillor Murphy responded that the Council now has a scheme in place to issue penalties to those who stay longer than 48 hours at our moorings and with more boaters mooring in the better weather, formal monitoring will now take place, with those in contravention of the limit being issued with a fixed penalty notice. Unfortunately, some boaters then move to the opposite bank which is not subject to our scheme. He added that the Council is liaising with Middle Level regarding this practice to prevent it occurring and the Council will also investigate Council Tax evasion with these boat owners. Middle Level has recently taken a bill through Parliament to give them more power regarding our waterways and once a formal structure is put in place, they will be able to insist that boat owners are correctly registered and have insurance and a safety certificate. He feels that with these additional powers, fixed penalty notices will be easier to enforce and this should improve the management of the mooring spaces in March Town Centre.

- Councillor Mrs Bligh asked Councillor Seaton if, in respect of his position on the Combined Authority (CA), he could provide an update on bus routes. Councillor Seaton confirmed that the CA is currently undertaking a strategic bus review and his understanding is that both the CA and County Council have extended funding for the routes, how long for he is not sure but he will clarify that.
- Councillor Booth asked how much the audio equipment has cost to date and, although he appreciates the procurement process has to be followed, why is it taking so long to get the new equipment? Councillor Buckton advised he will get back to Councillor Booth on costs as he does not have this information to hand. However, the new equipment will be in place for the first meeting of the new Council in May.
- Councillor Tierney asked Councillor Buckton how the search is progressing for a new location for the Wisbech Bowls Club. Councillor Buckton advised he has met with the committee and they are liaising with Living Sport to identify alternative venues. One location in Long Sutton was found not to be viable, so they are continuing to look at premises nearer. Help is being given to give the club charitable status which will help with funding, so it is still a work in progress.
- Councillor Butcher referred to the Surplus Asset Disposal Programme, making the point that he sits on the Staff Committee, but was not aware that interviews had been held to appoint a temporary Disposals Surveyor and that the post had been recruited to. He asked if local members are still being informed and asked for their opinion as agreed by Cabinet last year. Councillor Oliver advised the post is a part-time, interim 6 month contract and confirmed that ward councillors will be notified when assets are put forward for disposal. Councillor Butcher noted that in respect of the Wisbech Port Estate Review, terms have been shared and discussed with the port operator, but have these terms actually been agreed? Councillor Oliver advised discussions are in place, but he will get back to Councillor Butcher with the exact details and confirm if these have been completed. Councillor Butcher also asked if the Council is still receiving the same rents as two years ago on land let or sub-let. Again, Councillor Oliver advised he will check and get back to Councillor Butcher on this.
- Councillor Booth asked Councillor Mrs Laws how many ongoing planning enforcement cases there are, how old is the oldest case under investigation and what is the average time taken to resolve an enforcement investigation? Councillor Mrs Laws responded that the enforcement service has two full time employees, made up of an experienced senior officer and effectively a trainee. In the calendar year 2018, 296 service requests were received and 321 cases were closed and resolved. 74% of cases where no breach of planning control was found were closed within 56 days of receipt. However, it should be noted that as there is still a legacy of old cases from the pre-shared service era and the figures are slightly distorted. The Council does not currently have an ICT report that gives it an average time from receipt to case closure, but

there are currently have 231 active cases in hand, with the oldest case being received in July 2011. In terms of the legacy cases the Council does not automatically prioritise these on the basis of how old they are and takes into account the impact of the breach of planning control. Prior to October 2015, resourcing in the team was unstable and this caused the build-up of the legacy cases. For example, the number of incoming cases at that time was 300 to 330 and the case closures were standing at 310 to 330 during 2013 and 2014.

- Councillor Hoy advised Councillor Buckton she had read with interest about the Wildgoose mobile treasure app running in Wisbech Park and asked if he would provide her with further information as she was keen to promote it. Councillor Buckton confirmed he would.
- Councillor Connor asked Councillor Murphy if, now that we have a new contract with Kingdom, he could give confidence to the villages that they will not be left behind in terms of enforcement against dog fouling, which is very prevalent in the villages and causing complaints. Councillor Murphy said that there is a two-year framework with Kingdom with an option to extend for a further two years, during which time they will be carrying out enforcement patrols. In addition, 10% of officer time will be dedicated freely to community activities and they will be consulting with local communities, starting with the Town and Parish Councils, to identify what each would like to see from the extra service.
- Councillor Connor asked Councillor Mrs Laws for an update on the position regarding the unfinished buildings in Newgate Street, Doddington as it is of great concern to the local community and has been going on for a long time. Councillor Mrs Laws advised a site visit has been made and contact is trying to be established with the landowner and building owner. It is a very sensitive situation and although she appreciates the urgency and residents' concerns, there is a proper procedure that needs to be followed. Unfortunately it does take time, but this situation is ongoing and hopefully will be resolved in the near future.
- Councillor Booth asked Councillor Murphy for his thoughts on the Look East report regarding Fenland's reduced recycling rates mentioned earlier in the meeting. Councillor Murphy explained how the figures had been calculated by the BBC to make it look like a 25% reduction, although he is not sure why they calculated them the way they did. Overall less household waste is being collected in Fenland with greater levels of home composting, largely due to the educational work that has been done over the last 2-3 years. The local performance indicator measures the performance of green and blue recycling, but the national indicator also includes waste collected by street cleansing operations and the overall recycling rate for household waste in Fenland from collected waste and household waste recycling sites is 52%. The BBC also compared Fenland with East Cambs who were still using black bags until two years ago, with its recycling rates having increased from 23% to 52% but this is because they have introduced the same system that we have. Councillor Booth suggested that the Council issue a statement explaining the situation as residents will be confused and concerned with the differentiation in figures.
- Councillor Mrs French advised Councillor Mrs Laws that a street in March, which was completed three years ago, still has uncompleted footpaths with Clarion Housing continuing to make excuses and it is disingenuous that they are now claiming that a resident is holding this up and are making her sign a S104. As Councillor Mrs Laws is in regular contact with Clarion, could she please ensure this road gets completed; it is not fit for residents, there is no duty of care from Clarion and there also needs to be an apology to the resident. Councillor Mrs Laws confirmed she was aware of this situation; it has been a very contracted and challenging problem and she can understand the frustration of residents. County Council have no issue about bringing the adopted road up to standard; there seems to have been a breakdown of communication between the builders and Clarion, which she hopes to soon have resolved. Councillor Mrs Laws confirmed she would keep Councillor Mrs French updated.

## **C60/18      FINAL BUSINESS PLAN 2019-20**

Members considered the Final Business Plan 2018-19 Report presented by Councillor Seaton.

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

- Councillor Boden thanked the Leader and officers concerned for the tracked changes; it was useful to see how the suggestions made at Overview & Scrutiny have come through to the final report. He is also grateful for the emphasis given to the Combined Authority (CA) both in the report and the Leader's speech. It is increasingly clear that the Council has to look to align its priorities with the CA so that it can get the maximum advantage out of the far greater funding which is available in the CA than from any other source open to us.
- Councillor Boden also raised that, with regards to the promotion of health and wellbeing, the second bullet point in the report mentioned working with partners to reduce health inequalities in the district. He stated that it is more important to reduce the health inequalities between our district and the rest of Cambridgeshire and asked the Leader if he would agree to add that to the objectives? Councillor Seaton thanked Councillor Boden and said he would reflect on that recommendation for the report.
- Councillor Connor said that Councillor Seaton's address failed to mention the £16.4m funds from the CA to address the shortfall of funding for Kings Dyke Crossing and there was no mention the £50k given to the three market towns of March, Whittlesey and Chatteris. Councillor Seaton added that £50k was also obtained for Wisbech and he agreed that Councillor Connor was correct, he had not stated that the money has been and is being provided by the CA to assist in projects that will help make Fenland a more prosperous place.
- Councillor Booth stated that at Overview & Scrutiny meeting he had raised that the performance indicators were not fit for purpose, the report claims that they have been amended but looking at the tracked changes, the only change is that 'Freedom' has been added to the front of leisure centres, everything else is the same. He is disappointed that despite assurances that this would be looked at, no real changes have been made. Some of these performance indicators do not measure what the Council is trying to deliver so how do we know if we are successful or not? Councillor Seaton replied that this is a living document; changes can be made as we go along.
- Councillor Miscandlon thanked the Leader for the CA's input into building development in the Fenland area where they have contributed towards affordable housing and he thanked all those involved with that project.

**Proposed by Councillor Connor, seconded by Councillor Hay and AGREED to approve the Final Business Plan 2018-19.**

## **C61/18      CORPORATE BUDGET 2018 & MID TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

Members considered the Corporate Budget 2018 and Mid Term Financial Strategy report presented by Councillor Hay.

Members were reminded that they were debating and voting on the altered recommendations which gave the option to either set Council Tax with a 1.97% increase [option ix (a)] or alternatively a 0% increase for this financial year [option ix (b)].

Members asked questions and made comments as follows:

- Councillor Hay stated her belief is that members would be doing this Council a disservice by

supporting a 0% increase, as even with a 1.97% increase there would be a deficit in 2019/20 of £553k which will rise should 0% be supported. She feels there are a number of risks, such as the new homes bonus and fairer funding review and any new administration after May will face the prospect of having to go through a second comprehensive spending review to present a balanced budget for 2020/21.

- Councillor Tierney respected the way Councillor Hay had made her case but he held a different view. He said Overview & Scrutiny had looked at the budget and under-spend over recent years and it is broadly their view that there is no need at this time to raise Council Tax. He acknowledged that there are potential risks in the future, but members are not here to do the easy thing, but to do the right thing. There are many people in the area who are already struggling with their bills and feel they are paying enough Council Tax, and there is a very clear case economically through good financial management. If Council Tax is frozen this year, it will be appreciated by the public.
- Councillor Boden agreed with Councillor Tierney's comments stating that members have to bear in mind that 2% increase in Council Tax costs our taxpayers an additional £150k approximately and whilst services which are provided have to be paid for, the Council has been asking for Council Tax increases for a number of years at a time when year-on-year we have been showing a surplus. Taking the last five years cumulatively, each year on average the Council has ended up at the end of the year with a surplus of £870k, which suggests that we have not become as tight in our financial planning as we should be. Councillor Hay made reference to failing to raise council tax by 2% this year will require the need to have a second comprehensive spending review next year but regardless of what the Council Tax increase may or may not be, we should be doing that anyway. The Council needs to continue to review what it does and look for additional savings to transform the way it delivers services to its residents. There is a culture of ultra-caution in this Council, proven by the level of surplus generated over the last five years and the problem with underspending by such a vast amount is that when members are making decisions, they are being made on a false premise. It is very important to get a tighter control of our finances so that members know when it sets a budget those are likely to be the numbers that are going to be the outturn. Therefore, he supports option b and does not expect reserves to go down as a result. This year some £103k surplus is projected but also there is the opportunity for a second Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), so there is scope for additional savings to be had and for better ways of delivering services. Members can deliver something that is ambitious, reflects the needs and desires of our residents and also invades their pockets as little as necessary.
- Councillors Sutton and Connor also voiced their support for option b. Councillor Sutton said he felt there was merit in opting for option a, but there are so many unknowns one way or the other. Not so long ago the Council was centre of national attention regarding its Council Tax being higher than Kensington and Chelsea. Last year he thought he was the only member who felt Council Tax should be frozen and he wishes he had said something then. He cited several roads where one end was in the boundary of Fenland District Council and the other fell under the remit of Kings Lynn & West Norfolk; where there was a vast difference in the Council Tax paid for properties of the same band, with ours being much higher which he felt could not be justified.
- Councillor Booth commented that the report regarding FDC-CSR proposals was incorrect as it mentioned CCTV which was not a CSR proposal. He added that he is also concerned that the forecast surplus is £103k but at Overview & Scrutiny the figure was £139k, and asked for clarification on the differing amount as it is important for figures to be correct. He stated that looking at the projected net service expenditure of the Council that is where £800k additional income is required. He feels that if the Council was more commercially minded and run in a more business-like manner, it would not need to find this money as it would fund itself. He added that he has said previously that Parish Councils are being unfairly treated with regards to

double taxation in having to pay for street lighting. Members have an opportunity to rectify that with this budget and make Council Tax more equitable. It is an achievement to officers that they have been able to find additional funding through government grants and finances which have helped the Council meet its budgets, but the Council needs to be mindful as they will not have £800k every year.

- Councillor Hay thanked Councillor Booth for acknowledging the one-off grants. In respect of the £139k, officers are continually looking at budgets so this figure will change but she does not expect it to increase any further. She added that to the best of her knowledge CCTV was in the CSR. Investment strategy is being looked at and she hopes that the Council will act more commercially in a way to bring in extra revenue.
- Councillor Miss Hoy responded to Councillor Sutton's comments regarding Council Tax. She stated that it is not that simple to compare two authorities as they have different precepts. This Council may charge more on the highest band, but the majority of houses in Fenland are in Band A, with 84% being in bands A-C. Fenland's Council Tax is average and the previous Leader had already been on the BBC to defend this. She confirmed that she would be supporting a 0% increase.
- Councillor Tierney responded to Councillor Sutton's comment with regard to thinking he was the only councillor last year who was arguing for 0% Council Tax. He said he has always argued the case for a 0% Council Tax freeze except on one occasion as a town councillor and that was for a specific purpose.
- Councillor Mrs French addressed Councillor Hay's statement regarding CCTV being included in the CSR undertaken in 2016. She asked it be stated for the record that a shared service was never discussed.

**Proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Tierney and AGREED that:**

- Option ix (b) the Band D Council Tax level for Fenland District Council services for 2019/20 be set at £260.46, the same level as the current year 2018/19 (no increase) and a contribution of £150,720 is made from General Reserves in 2019/20 to secure a balanced Budget.

The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 impose an obligation on Local Authorities (after 25 February 2014) to record all votes on decisions on budget and council tax, with this in mind Members voted on option ix (a) as follows:

In favour of the proposal for option ix (a) - None

Against the proposal for option ix (a) – Councillors Benney, Mrs Bligh, Boden, Booth, Buckton, Butcher, J Clark, S Clark, Connor, Cornwell, Court, Mrs Cox, Mrs Davis, Mrs French, Garratt, Miss Hoy, Mrs Laws, Mason, Miscandlon, Owen, Sutton, Tierney, Yeulett

Abstentions to option ix (a) – Councillors Hay, Murphy, Oliver, Seaton,

The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 impose an obligation on Local Authorities (after 25 February 2014) to record all votes on decisions on budget and council tax, with this in mind Members voted on option ix (b) as follows:

In favour of the proposal for option ix (b) - Councillors Benney, Mrs Bligh, Boden, Booth, Buckton, Butcher, J Clark, S Clark, Connor, Cornwell, Court, Mrs Cox, Mrs Davis, Mrs French, Garratt, Miss Hoy, Mrs Laws, Mason, Miscandlon, Owen, Sutton, Tierney, Yeulett

**Against the proposal for option ix (b) - None**

**Absentions to option ix (b) – Councillors Hay, Murphy, Oliver, Seaton**

**Proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Tierney and AGREED that:**

- (i) the General Fund revenue budget for 2019/20 as set out in Section 8 and Appendix A be approved;
- (ii) the Medium Term Financial Strategy as outlined in this report and Appendix B be adopted;
- (iii) the Capital Programme and funding statement as set out in Appendix D be approved;
- (iv) the adoption of the Business Rates Retail Relief scheme detailed in paragraphs 5.4 – 5.6 be approved;
- (v) the expenses detailed in Section 10 be approved to be treated as general expenses for 2019/20
- (vi) the Port Health levy for 2019/20 be set as shown in Section 11;
- (vii) the adoption of additional Council Tax premiums on Long Term Empty Properties as detailed in Section 12 be approved;
- (viii) the Treasury Management, Capital Strategy Minimum Revenue Provision, Investment Strategy, Prudential and Treasury Indicators for 2019/20 as set out in Section 15 and Appendix E be approved;

**The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 impose an obligation on Local Authorities (after 25 February 2014) to record all votes on decisions on budget and council tax, with this in mind Members voted on recommendations (i) to (viii) as follows:**

**In favour - Councillors Benney, Mrs Bligh, Boden, Booth, Buckton, Butcher, J Clark, S Clark, Connor, Cornwell, Court, Mrs Cox, Mrs Davis, Mrs French, Garratt, Hay, Miss Hoy, Mrs Laws, Mason, Miscandlon, Murphy, Oliver, Owen, Seaton, Sutton, Tierney, Yeulett**

**Against – None**

**Abstentions - None**

**C62/18 COUNCIL TAX RESOLUTION**

Following Council's approval of a 0% Council Tax increase for 2019/20, a revised Council Tax resolution report was circulated to members.

Members considered the revised Council Tax Resolution Report presented by Councillor Hay.

Councillor Booth commented that in light of what has just been agreed, with a surplus of £100k, we need to make sure that we use that to offset any potential increase next year instead of going into reserves.

**Proposed by Councillor Booth, seconded by Councillor Sutton and AGREED to pass the resolution set out in the revised report as follows:**

- To approve the Council Tax Resolution as amended to reflect a 0% Council Tax increase for Fenland District Council for 2019/20.

**The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 impose an obligation on Local Authorities (after 25 February 2014) to record all votes on decisions**

**on budget and council tax, with this in mind Members voted on this item as follows:**

**In favour of the proposal - Councillors Benney, Mrs Bligh, Boden, Booth, Buckton, Butcher, J Clark, S Clark, Connor, Cornwell, Court, Mrs Cox, Mrs Davis, Mrs French, Garratt, Hay, Miss Hoy, Mrs Laws, Mason, Miscandlon, Murphy, Oliver, Owen, Seaton, Sutton, Tierney, Yeulett**

**Against the proposal – None**

**Abstentions - None**

**C63/18 FENLAND LOCAL PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATE**

Members considered the Fenland Local Plan Review and Update report presented by Councillor Mrs Laws.

Members asked questions and made comments as follows:

- Councillor Owen stated that in terms of a shared service with Peterborough, they should be aware that this is a Fenland plan for the benefit of Fenland and not for the benefit of any other authority area.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that this plan, started in 2007, was supposed to be a fluid document but this has not been the case. She hopes that the plans of any Town or Parish Council will be taken seriously. March had theirs adopted and approved but planning applications are coming in that officers are not taking seriously and this has got to stop.
- Councillor Booth asked what would happen to the neighbourhood plans. They cannot go against a local plan but if it changes so dramatically, will they have to be started again?
- Councillor Mrs Laws assured Councillor Owen that she accepted his comments and agreed that this is very much a plan for Fenland; also an important part of the consultation process is to go out to Town and Parish Councils. She added that she understood the comments made by Councillor Mrs French and also agreed that Councillor Booth was correct, any drastic difference to the plans would mean they would have to be started again. A neighbourhood plan works in conjunction with the local plan so members must look at what the community wants to put forward, but the local plan takes priority. However, although there may be a slight variation, community minds would likely have the same objective.
- Councillor Booth mentioned that a workshop was held after the PAS report, which is not referenced in the report. One idea was for a working party on the local plan, and he hopes this will be taken forward. Nick Harding, Head of Planning, said as a consequence of reviewing the local plan some elements of the neighbourhood plan are already in place which will fall by the wayside. There is more emphasis on national planning policies.
- Councillor Boden was happy to support the proposal put forward by Councillor Mrs Laws but it is not just a matter of producing a new local plan, which will reflect changes in national policy. He said members need to look at the existing local plan, recognise the areas where it has not been successful, learn from it and aim to do better. The desire is for innovative change and a look at other local authority changes.
- Councillor Connor asked how a lack of five-year land supply could affect the new local plan. Councillor Mrs Laws explained that a comprehensive document would be coming out in March.
- Councillor Sutton stated he supports the updated local plan but would like to use the planning

process to help make the villages sustainable.

- Councillor Mrs Laws advised that there are some shortcomings in the local plan but the consultation process is key. Members can learn, involve the Town and Parish Councils and have a working group, to ensure the villages keep their individuality.

**Proposed by Councillor Miscandlon, seconded by Councillor Booth and AGREED to approve:**

- That a full review of the local plan is commenced soon after the local council elections in May 2019 but with technical reports being commissioned before then.
- That the Corporate Director (Growth and Infrastructure) is delegated to appoint PCC Planning Policy team via a Service Level Agreement (SLA) to carry out the required Local Plan review and to engage the relevant specialist advice related to the evidence documents within the allocated budget.
- That the Local Development Scheme (Appendix 1 of the report) is the timetable for the production of the new local plan, which will include the required consideration of Cabinet and Council at appropriate stages of the review.

**C64/18 SENIOR MANAGER PAY POLICY**

Members considered the Senior Manager Pay Policy Statement Report presented by Councillor Hay.

Members asked questions and made comments as follows:

- Councillor Booth recalled many years ago that there was going to be an investigation into the returning officer fees as it was felt archaic to pay a fee for what is essentially a service provided by the Council, particularly when councils are having to cut budgets. There could potentially be a saving here and should the Council not write to the local government minister regarding this?
- Councillor Sutton addressed the monitoring officer and asked what would happen if members do not agree with this pay rise today? The response of the Monitoring Officer was that if Council were unable to come to agreement today, there would have to be an Extraordinary Council Meeting held before 1<sup>st</sup> April.
- Councillor Boden stated that he was under the impression that in the case of parliamentary elections, all monies are reimbursed by central government so there is no cost to the local Council. He said that Councillor Hay had admirably laid out the legislative background but did she believe the outcomes from the pay structure throughout the Council are good? Councillor Hay advised that it was entirely appropriate.
- Councillor Sutton said there has been a lot in the press about the Chief Executive's pay in correlation to that of the Prime Minister. He feels this is unfair because it could equally be argued that the Prime Minister is underpaid. As this comes up every year he wonders if members could perhaps hold an independent review and Council come back to consider the outcome. The monitoring officer advised there is not the time to carry out a review before 1<sup>st</sup> April.
- Councillor Owen reminded members that pay is based on responsibility. Carrying out elections is highly responsible, therefore that is reflected in the pay.
- Councillor Hay pointed out that the Chief Executive's pay is slightly misleading as it also includes the car allowance. Also, the pay was set by the previous leader and was well below that of his predecessor. Since then the only increases are the nationally agreed cost of living

rises.

- Councillor Booth said, in relation to Councillor Sutton's point, there is a difference between having a policy and a contract of employment. This is just a policy that we follow going forward to set a salary.
- Councillor Miss Hoy said she initially felt the pay was too high but, having realised that it is a big responsibility and a legally binding one, she understands why the pay is as high as it is. The public do have a perception of the payment being too high but, as Councillor Booth said, this is a policy not a wage negotiation.

**Proposed by Councillor Owen, seconded by Councillor Seaton and AGREED to adopt the Senior Manager Pay Policy Statement for 2019/20 at appendix 1 of the Report as required by the Localism Act 2011.**

*(Councillor Garratt left the meeting at 5.50pm and therefore did not vote on this item)*

Councillor Mrs Mayor ended the meeting by thanking all members for their contributions to Council over the past term and especially those who are retiring or are not standing for election.

5.58 pm                    Chairman