

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the COUNCIL held in Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 27 February 2019.

PRESENT: Councillor R J West – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, T D Alban,
B S Banks, R E Bellamy, L A Besley,
G J Bull, E R Butler, S Bywater,
B S Chapman, J R Clarke, Mrs S Conboy,
J C Cooper-Marsh, S J Corney, S J Criswell,
J W Davies, D B Dew, Ms A Diaz,
Mrs A Dickinson, R Fuller, Dr P L R Gaskin,
D A Giles, Mrs S A Giles, J A Gray,
M S Grice, K P Gulson, M J Humphrey,
Dr N Johnson, P Kadewere, D N Keane,
C J Maslen, H V Masson, L W McGuire,
D J Mead, J P Morris, J Neish, J M Palmer,
K I Prentice, T D Sanderson,
Mrs P E Shrapnel, Mrs S Smith,
Mrs J Tavener, D Terry, D M Tysoe,
D R Underwood, S Wakeford, D J Wells and
J E White.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mrs M L Beuttell, Mrs P A Jordan and R G Tuplin.

58. PRAYER

The Reverend J Randell of Huntingdon opened the meeting with prayer.

59. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Council held on the 19th December 2018 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

60. MEMBERS INTERESTS'

No declarations were received.

61. CHAIRMAN'S ENGAGEMENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Council noted those engagements attended by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman since the last meeting (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). The Chairman reminded Members of the requirement to notify Democratic Services of their absence from forthcoming meetings to enable apologies to be presented and the recent communication regarding car parking arrangements at Pathfinder House.

The Chairman drew particular attention to his support provided for the 'Time to Talk' Initiative led by the Council's Mental Health First Aiders and his request for a presentation to be held at the next meeting of the Employment Committee on this subject. The Chairman also reported upon his attendance at three of the Council's Leisure Centres and work with the Active Lifestyles Team and an opportunity to take part in various activities to promote the health and well-being, both physically and mentally, of residents of the District.

62. 2019/20 BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2020/21 TO 2023/24)

(Councillor L A Besley entered the meeting at 7.14pm)

In conjunction with a report by the Head of Resources and PowerPoint presentation (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book), the Executive Councillor for Strategic Resources presented to Members the 2019/20 Revenue Budget, the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for the period 2020/21 to 2023/24, the Fees and Charges schedule for 2019/20, the Treasury Management Strategy, the Capital Strategy, the Investment Strategy and the Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy for 2019/20 and other associated matters for the Council's consideration and approval.

In accordance with Section (30)2 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Council also considered proposals for levels of Council Tax in 2019/20 for various parts of the Huntingdonshire district.

In his opening remarks, Councillor Gray paid tribute the Head of Resources and his Team that had worked hard on the detail of producing the final budget and the efforts involved since the start of proceedings in July 2018. He also thanks his fellow Cabinet colleagues for their support and assistance in their particular areas of expertise, as well as effective contributions from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel Members.

Members' attention was drawn to the highlights of the budget for the forthcoming year, in particular Councillor Gray reported that the budget gap was now £1.2m by 2023/24 but General Fund reserves was maintained at the 15% minimum requirement. It was noted that the Commercial Investment Strategy was contributing to deliver material benefits and there had been an increase of 20% since its approval in 2015, which was largely attributed to the work of Mrs J Golby, Commercial Estates Manager. Other proposals in the budget included an increase in Council Tax of 2.6% that was deemed affordable for everyone.

Attention was drawn to changes in the budget, including investments in tackling homelessness, intervening earlier to tackle prevention and to ensure that the Council was meeting its statutory obligations. Members also noted the further development of the Waste Management service since the fall in the value of recycled goods and look to develop new innovative ways of working. Councillor Gray reported upon the additional income that was likely to be generated from car parking charges with the change in charging structure through additional dwell times in the car parks. Further savings would be generated from the cessation of highways weed spraying; a

contract that had been passed onto us from Cambridgeshire County Council but had been costing the Council more than budget had been allocated by the County Council.

The Council had recognised the importance of leisure and health, through investment in Active Lifestyles and the One Leisure brand to ensure there was access for all to keep active and healthy, thereby reducing pressure on other services such as the NHS. Members further noted the review of the apprenticeship scheme, additional income generated through the Commercial Investment Strategy and the increase in insurance premiums as a result of the fire at Eastfield House and other accidents incurred by the Council.

Looking ahead, Councillor Gray explained that net expenditure was expected to increase by £1.5m over the period of the MTFs and the Council had previously made provision and assumed the withdrawal of the Revenue Support Grant by 2019/20 in the budget and its long term objective of being 'self-financing', free from Central Government grant during the course of the MTFs. An adjustment had also been made in the budget of £650k each year to account for the Government's Fair Funding Review that would impact on 1st April 2020 and fundamentally reviewing the basis on which the distribution of Central Government funding would be allocated to local authorities.

In respect of the Commercial Investment Strategy, the Council planned to continue to invest in acquiring commercial estates with expected net revenue to the Council of £3.2m, but it was reported that it would be impacted by reduction in charges of the lease arrangements in respect of the Oak Tree Centre, Huntingdon.

Other significant income sources were expected from planning income and parking income predicted to rise from £1.42m to £1.73m. Further investments were expected through the Capital Programme, with expected financing of £2.25m in Disabled Facilities grants, One Leisure improvements, investment in new industrial units expected to provide a financial return for the Council, but also creating jobs and adding to the economy of the area.

With regard to the Treasury Management Strategy, Councillor Gray reported that the Council would continue to be prudent in its approach to investments, using mainly short-term investments that were highly liquid and as a consequence lower risk. Attention was also drawn to the full list of fees and charges and report by the Council's Responsible Financial Officer (Section 151) detailing the robustness of the 2019/20 budget and MTFs, with adequate levels of reserves to assist Members in making decisions on the budget and level of Council Tax.

Councillor Gray moved the recommendations which were duly seconded by the Executive Leader, Councillor G J Bull.

In response and on behalf of the HDC Independent Group and Leader of the Principal Opposition Group, Councillor T D Sanderson thanked Councillor Gray for his presentation and the support of the Head of Resources and his Team in preparing an alternative budget that had not been supported. In referring to other ideas that had not been progressed, Councillor Sanderson reported that he was keen to

investigate extending an invitation to Town and Parish Councils to share treasury management with the District Council and similarly providing a fund for them to bid into helping fund appropriate facilities for young people. He undertook to explore these ideas further in the new financial year.

In commenting upon the reduction in Central Government support and impact on the Council's budget, Councillor Sanderson expressed his Groups concern for the increase in car parking charges and potential that High Street retailers may suffer as a result of these increases, as well as clarity as to whether agreement had been reached with the Waitrose car parks in St Ives and St Neots, as well as Sainsbury's in Huntingdon. He further reported upon his disappointment that there was not support for an increase in Council Tax by 3% and concerns for reduction in Customer Services in Ramsey, Yaxley and St Neots, grants through the Community Chest Fund and felt that the income projects may be a little optimistic.

On behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor Mrs S J Conboy reported upon her concerns expressed previously over the past four years, but commended the Section 151 Officer and Councillor Gray for their work in producing this budget knowing the uncertainty of Central Government funding and the unpalatability of knowing that Huntingdonshire was the fourth worst funded authority. She outlined her support for the prudent proposition of an increase in Council Tax and also supported Councillor Sanderson's further options for Town and Parish Councils to be fully investigated and costed. In commending the clarity of the budget presented, Councillor Mrs Conboy expressed support for the proposals that represented a rational and sensitive approach for Huntingdonshire.

Councillor P Kadewere, on behalf of the Labour Group, recognised the hard work of the Council staff but expressed disappointment that the alternative proposals had not resulted in any substantive changes to the budget that had received cross-party support. He indicated his disappointment similarly with the lack of support for a further increase in Council Tax in light of cuts in Central Government funding.

In response to comments raised previously, Councillor Gray encouraged Councillor Sanderson to take forward his suggestions through the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel and suggested that those residents who do not have access to a car should not be subsidising those who park in the Council's car parks.

In relation to a question raised by Councillor B S Chapman on the closure of St Neots Customer Service Centre, Councillor Gray explained that the residents of St Neots would continue to be served by Officers of the District Council and would be better served through alternative channels or home visits.

Councillor D B Dew thanked Councillor Gray for his presentation and referred to the support provided to Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel through the attendance of Executive Councillors, allowing the ability to deal with questions and issues at that time. He welcomed the submission of an alternative budget and explained that there would be the opportunity to take forward issues for discussion through the Overview and Scrutiny process.

Arising from a comment made by Councillor Gray on impact on residents, Councillor S Wakeford suggested that the cumulative impact was likely to affect residents and opportunity costs had not been fully utilised such as the Community Chest funding.

In relation to a question by Councillor J P Morris on the higher net cost of homelessness benefits of £600k, Councillor Gray explained that a prudent approach had been made to this budget but was hoped that it wouldn't be required as a result of earlier intervention and an increased provision of affordable homes in the District.

Councillor J D Ablewhite commented upon the strong financial position of the Council and the prudence of the authority compared to other authorities, supported through the delivery of the Commercial Investment Strategy.

In concluding the debate, Councillor Bull, Executive Leader, thanked Councillor Gray in his role as Executive Councillor for Resources and personally for his skills, knowledge and expertise, as well as other Cabinet colleagues, Overview and Scrutiny Panel Members and the opposition for the constructive approach to participation in the budget process. Despite the difficulties that the Council faced, Councillor Bull expressed his support for the prudent budget approach and the good financial position to confront the challenges ahead.

It having been previously moved and seconded, upon being put to the vote it was further

- a) that the proposed overall Budget 2019/20 and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2020/21 to 2023/24 (Appendix 1) to include the Revenue Budgets at Section 2, the Capital Programme at Section 3 and the 2019/20 Fees and Charges at Section 7;
- b) that an increase of 2.6% Council Tax for 2019/20 be approved, i.e. the Band D Charge will increase to £142.16;
- c) that the Council note the Council Tax Base for the whole Council area and individual Towns and Parishes (para 6.2) as approved by the Chairman of the Corporate Governance Committee on the 3 December 2018 (and subsequent publication as a key decision)

The tax base (T) which is the amount anticipated from a District Council Tax of £1 is	£61,749
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- d) that the following amounts calculated by the Council for 2019/20 be approved in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by the Localism Act 2011 (the Act), the Local Government Finance Act 2012 and associated regulations
 - (i) the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates **£76,675,600**

	for the items set out in Section 31A(2) (a) to (f) of the Act Gross revenue expenditure including benefits, Town/Parish Precepts	
(ii)	the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) (a) to (d) of the Act Revenue income including reimbursement of benefits, specific and general grants, use of reserves and any transfers from the collection fund.	£61,245,620
(iii)	the amount by which the aggregate at (i) above exceeds the aggregate at (ii) above in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act This is the “Council Tax Requirement” including Parish/Town Precepts (item i minus item ii). It is the cash sum to be funded from District, Town and Parish Council Taxes.	£ 15,429,980
(iv)	the Council Tax requirement for 2019/20 divided by the tax base (T) in accordance with Section 31B (1) of the Act District plus average Town/Parish Council Tax (item iii divided by District taxbase)	£249.87
(v)	the aggregate of all “Special Items” referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act. The total value of Parish/Town precepts included in i and iii above.	£6,651,265
(vi)	the Basic Amount of Council Tax for 2019/20 being item iv less item v divided by the tax base (T) in accordance with Section 34 (2) of the Act. The District Council’s Band D Tax for 2019/20	£142.16
(vii)	the basic amounts of Council Tax for 2019/20 for	

those parts of the District to which one or more special items (Parish/Town precepts) relate in accordance with Section 34 (3) of the Act are shown by adding the Huntingdonshire District Council amount to the appropriate Parish Council amount in column "band D" set out in Table 1 attached.

(viii) the amounts to be taken into account for 2019/20 in respect of categories of dwellings listed in particular valuation bands in accordance with Section 36 (1) of the Act are shown by adding the Huntingdonshire District Council amount to the appropriate Parish Council amount for each of the valuation bands in the columns "bands A to H" set out in Table 1 attached.

- e) that the amounts of precept issued to the Council by Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Fire Authority and for each Parish Council for each of the categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands in accordance with Section 40 of the Act shown in para 6.3 attached be noted;
- f) that, having regard to the calculations above, the Council, in accordance with Section 30 (2) of the Act, hereby sets the figures shown in para 6.4 as the amounts of Council Tax for 2019/20 for each of the categories of dwelling shown. ***This is the total Council Tax to be collected, incorporating the requirements of all of the relevant bodies, for each town or parish area;***
- g) that the Council notes that, in accordance with Section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the basic amount of its Council Tax for 2019/20 is not excessive. **The basic amount at b(vi) above is not excessive as defined by the Government;**

Tax Base 2019/20

Abbotsley	261
Abbots Ripton	136
Alconbury	561
Alconbury Weston	292
Alwalton	115
Barham & Woolley	30
Bluntisham	735
Brampton	2,075
Brington & Molesworth	167
Broughton	92
Buckden (inc Diddington)	1,176
Buckworth	53
Bury	628
Bythorn & Keyston	145
Catworth	152
Chesterton	60
Colne	362

Conington	72
Covington	45
Denton & Caldecote	26
Earith	586
Easton	82
Ellington	237
Elton	288
Farcet	527
Fenstanton	1,229
Folksworth & Washingley	350
Glatton	131
Godmanchester	2,661
Grafham	238
Great & Little Gidding	127
Great Gransden	449
Great Paxton	366
Great Staughton	328
Haddon	24
Hail Weston	247
Hamerton & Steeple Gidding	51
Hemingford Abbots	330
Hemingford Grey	1,280
Hilton	455
Holme	237
Holywell-cum-Needingworth	979
Houghton & Wyton	777
Huntingdon	7,510
Kimbolton & Stonely	597
Kings Ripton	84
Leighton Bromswold	79
Little Paxton	1,553
Morborne	11
Offord Cluny & Offord D'Arcy	534
Old Hurst	101
Old Weston	98
Perry	268
Pidley-cum-Fenton	172
Ramsey	2,843
St Ives	5,985
St Neots	10,980
Sawtry	1,879
Sibson-cum-Stibbington	225
Somersham	1,397
Southoe & Midloe	154
Spaldwick	251
Stilton	773
Stow Longa	70
The Stukeleys	654
Tilbrook	123
Toseland	38
Upton & Coppingford	84
Upwood & The Raveleys	433
Warboys	1,470
Waresley-cum-Tetworth	143
Water Newton	45
Winwick	46
Wistow	227

Woodhurst	157
Woodwalton	82
Wyton-on-the-Hill	422
Yaxley	2,947
Yelling	152
	61,749

- h) that the future savings targets of £1.2m of Net Expenditure by 2023/24 be approved; and
- i) that the 2019/20 Treasury Management, Capital and Investment Strategies, MRP Statement and Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy (Appendix 4) be approved.

In accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Order) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 the following Members voted for, against or abstained from the Motion -

For the Motion – Ablewhite, Alban, Bellamy, Besley, Bull, Butler, Bywater, Clarke, Conboy, Corney, Criswell, Davies, Dew, Dickinson, Fuller, Gaskin, Gray, Grice, Gulson, Humphrey, Keane, Maslen, Masson, McGuire, Mead, Morris, Neish, Palmer, Prentice, Shrapnel, Tavener, Tysoe, Underwood, Wells, West and White.

Against the Motion – Chapman, Diaz, Johnson, Kadewere and Wakeford.

Abstentions – Banks, Cooper-Marsh, D A Giles, S A Giles, Sanderson, Smith and Terry.

63. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2019/20

In compliance with the requirements of Sections 38 - 43 of the Localism Act 2011, Councillor D Tysoe, Executive Councillor for Digital and Customers presented a report by the HR Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) in connection with the District Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2019/20.

The Statement, which is required to be approved by the Council by 31st March 2019 was now produced annually and detailed the Council's policies relating to Officer remuneration.

Accordingly and having noted that a copy of the Pay Policy Statement would be publicised on the Council's website along with data on senior salaries under the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency 2011, it was moved by Councillor Tysoe, duly seconded and

RESOLVED

that the Policy Statement for 2019/20 be approved.

64. EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR PRESENTATION

Councillor J Palmer, Executive Councillor for Partnership and Well-Being, addressed the Council on Active Lifestyles and One Leisure. A

copy of Councillor Palmer's PowerPoint presentation is appended in the Minute Book.

Members noted that despite the provision of Leisure Services not being a statutory function, in conjunction with the Council's Corporate Plan of aiming to support people to improve their health and well-being and the Annual Governance Statement, Leisure and Health had contributed to supporting these areas through the Active Lifestyles Team and five Leisure Centres.

Members were apprised with attendance at activities delivered by Active Lifestyles, forecasting to increase to over 55k in 2018/19 against a budget of £192k and reduction in cost of delivering the service by £82k that was expected to reduce further in 2019/20. This was largely attributable to the successes of £1.5m of grant funding to support the service over the past four years. Looking ahead, Councillor Palmer reported upon various proposals to introduce a concessionary pricing scheme for residents on particular benefits or certain degenerative health conditions, expanding the number of classes to increase average attendance and extension to the Exercise Referral Scheme.

In reporting upon One Leisure, it was noted that it delivered nearly 2.25m attendances across the various activities and key to ensuring its continued success is developing a change in approach, through a staffing structure review, reviewing processes and performance management, as well as maximising opportunities for business development to maintain the memberships and compete with the ever increasing private sector provision.

Arising from a question from Councillor Dr N Johnson on the exercise referral scheme and opportunities to work with the Team focussing on the younger age bracket, Councillor Palmer encouraged Councillor Johnson to provide further detail for investigation after the meeting.

Following a question from Councillor T D Sanderson and Councillor D A Giles on the consultant's report on One Leisure and confidence in achieving the predicted income as identified in the budget, Councillor Palmer explained that the recommendations would be implemented through the implementation of an improvement plan, change in culture and a performance management process to ensure that these targets were achieved.

Councillor Ms S Smith raised a question in relation to a predicted drop in attendances of disabled people from the previous year of over 400, whereby Councillor Palmer undertook to provide a full response after the meeting.

Following praise for Councillor Palmer, Councillor J P Morris questioned how many Members of the Council were One Leisure members, whereby it was reported that 12 out of 52 held memberships and it was explained that the development of One Leisure Champions were starting to report on customer experiences and identify any issues to maintain the levels of memberships at One Leisure.

In relation to a question from Councillor Ms A Diaz on the

development of activities to encourage younger people to participate, Councillor Palmer referred back to his summary of provision provided by Active Lifestyles but welcomed opportunities to develop this area further.

Councillor T D Alban commended Councillor Palmer and the Team for their proactive and innovative approach to One Leisure and open space provision, such as their extension of charging for courts from 16 to 18 years old.

Following a question from Councillor Dr Johnson on pressures from the private sector in direct competition, Councillor Palmer explained that the provision of fitness instructors and ability to retain them was being addressed through a change in approach in the gyms to improve the customer experience.

Councillor Palmer undertook to investigate the availability of public swimming versus private bookings following concerns raised by Councillor D J Wells in relation to availability and restrictions on usage.

65. QUESTIONS TO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

Councillor J M Morris outlined a series of questions directed towards Councillor J A Gray, Executive Councillor for Resources, on the sale of the Council's housing stock in 2000, specifically whether the £8,504 cost per property was good value for money, any unspent capital remaining of the £65m and a list of the top five capital projects and amount spent per project. Whereby Councillor Gray confirmed that the receipt per property was net of government levy and not the market value of the house but based on a prescribed formula to ensure the Registered Social Landlord could trade effectively, but confirmed that the value transferred to the Council represented a fair value. He confirmed that no capital receipts remained and the five main capital projects were Pathfinder House and Eastfield House with a combined cost of £24.3m, £15.5m towards social housing schemes, £5m on town centre improvements, £4.8m towards Disabled Facilities Grants and £3.2m on the set up costs of the garden waste wheeled bin scheme District wide. It was also confirmed that the capital receipts were wisely invested for the benefit of the residents of the District.

In response to a question by Councillor T D Alban on development of the Council's customer service portal, Councillor D Tysoe, Executive Councillor for Digital and Customers, confirmed that the Council had undertaken a soft launch of the portal, with 500 residents already signed up and on-line and over half had logged on out of hours that clearly demonstrated an unmet demand for the offer of services outside normal office hours.

Arising from a question from Councillor P L R Gaskin on an update following the recent letter in the Hunts Post from a resident on progress with the Old Falcon, St Neots, Councillor R Fuller, Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning and Economic Development explained that there had been a misunderstanding with St Neots Town Council as to what action they believed the District Council was

undertaking following a motion discussed by St Neots Town Council as the relevant procedures had not been followed. Councillor Fuller further reported upon correspondence between the Town Clerk and Corporate Director (Delivery), whereby the procedures were explained and it was clarified that the Town Council would be required to fund the entire purchase and legal costs under the legal provisions that the Town Council had relied upon to initiate further action. Having received this clarification the Town Clerk had informed the Corporate Director (Delivery) that no further action was required by the Town Council at this time. Councillor Fuller confirmed that positive discussions between the District Council and the owner of the Old Falcon were ongoing and that planning applications for the site were expected to be forthcoming.

Councillor P Kadewere raised his concerns in relation to the recent spate of racist stickers targeting minority groups in St Ives, whereby Councillor G J Bull, Executive Leader, indicated his disapproval of any such behaviour and the Managing Director encouraged concerns to be raised direct with herself or the Corporate Directors.

In relation to a question from Councillor T D Sanderson on the delay with occupation of the Trinity Place car park in Huntingdon and clarity as to whether agreement had been reached with the Waitrose car parks in St Ives and St Neots, as well as Sainsbury's in Huntingdon on the new car parking charges, Councillor R Fuller reported that there was no dispute over the ownership but the hold-up had been attributed to a delay in the land transfer back to the Council and was currently being negotiated by both Legal Teams and with regard to the supermarket car parks the operational aspects had been agreed.

Councillor L W McGuire raised a question in relation to whether the Labour Group had accepted their increase in Members' Allowances following the Labour Group letter in the Hunts Post highlighting concerns to the increase in Members' Allowances, Councillor Bull confirmed that all members of the Labour Group had accepted the increase in their basic allowance.

Arising from concerns expressed by Councillor J D Ablewhite in relation to a false and misleading statement made during an ITV television interview with Councillor Dr N Johnson suggesting that there were discussions taking place regarding a reduction in the frequency of bin collections. Whereby, Councillor Fuller confirmed that there had been no consideration or proposal to change the frequency of collections. In response, Councillor Dr Johnson confirmed that he had been interviewed following the announcement of the 2019/20 Local Government Financial Settlement, acknowledged that he had spoken without having a clear knowledge of the facts and apologised for the confusion and any offence taken.

In relation to a question from Councillor Ms J Tavener on progress with the Council's sickness absence levels, Councillor Tysoe confirmed that there had been an overall reduction in staff sickness absences from an average of 11.1 days in 2016 to 9.7 days in 2018/19.

Councillor D A Giles questioned the logic behind the decision to change the car parking charges, whereupon Councillor Fuller

explained that the changes would result in an increase in revenue from car parking charges but with the ability to pay on exit may mean that shoppers may stay longer in the town centres. He reminded Members that the concept had been discussed at length through the Car Parking Review Working Group, with further discussion and debate at Overview and Scrutiny (Performance and Growth) and Cabinet.

Councillor Tysoe responded to a question from Councillor S Wakeford on the terms and conditions of employment of staff at the Council and lack of recognition by the authority of staff that who were members of a Trade Union and undertook provide a full response on the issue after the meeting.

Further to comments made earlier in relation to the Old Falcon, Councillor B S Chapman stated that he believed the Town Council's proposal to initiate Compulsory Purchase proceedings had been undertaken properly at the time. He also indicated that the Town Council may not have been aware of the discussions Councillor Fuller referred to in his previous answer and questioned whether there had been an exchange of correspondence, whereby Councillor Bull refuted his remarks and confirmed that the Council had received written communication from the Clerk of St Neots Town Council.

Following a question from Councillor Ms S Smith on consideration of offering more incentives through reduced price activities and membership of One Leisure to encourage a wider take up of younger people, Councillor J M Palmer, Executive Councillor for Partnership and Well-Being, undertook to investigate this issue further.

66. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY - UPDATE

In conjunction with the decision summaries of the recent meetings of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, Councillor G J Bull presented an update of their activities. Copies of the decision summaries are appended in the Minute Book. In so doing, Councillor Bull reported upon his attendance at the meeting of the Combined Authority held earlier that day and confirmed that that they had received confirmation from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government approving the recognition of the Business Board as successor to the Local Enterprise Partnership enabling the unlocking of funds for economic generation in this area.

Members noted their discussions, including the award of grant funding from the Affordable Housing Programme to Fenland District Council, the work programme of the second phase of the Strategic Spatial Framework, budget and quarterly performance monitoring, further funding agreed for the University of Peterborough and it was confirmed that the interviews for the Chief Executive would be taking place on 26th March 2019. Councillor Bull also commented upon work being undertaken on confirming details of the East West rail consultation for the Cambridge to Oxford rail connection to ensure the maximum benefit for St Neots to enhance its future growth.

In response, Councillor B S Chapman welcomed Councillor Bull's

comments upon the East West rail connection and questioned how it linked or was in conflict with the Greater Cambridge Partnership plan and Cambridgeshire Autonomous Metro (CAM). Whereby, Councillor Bull confirmed that he was as keen to ensure that St Neots was well connected and did not anticipate any conflict with the CAM.

Councillors and T D Sanderson and J Neish provided an update on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In particular attention was drawn to discussions at the meeting held earlier that week on 25th February 2019, including concern expressed regarding the retention of an office by the Mayor of the Combined Authority at East Cambridgeshire District Council despite the staff relocation to Alconbury Weald, Strategic Bus Review, probity of the expenditure and income from the Mayor's Charity Ball and consideration and voting thereon of the call-in request of the management restructure. Councillor Sanderson also reported upon concerns raised by Members in relation to funding for the CAM and the turnover of staff in the position of Chief Finance Officer.

67. OUTCOMES FROM COMMITTEES AND PANELS

A copy of the list of meetings held since the last meeting of the Council held on 19th December 2018 is appended in the Minute Book and Members were advised that any issues or questions could be raised in relation to these meetings.

68. VARIATIONS TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

The Executive Leader, Councillor G J Bull, announced that he had appointed Councillor J Neish as Assistant Cabinet Member for the ensuing Municipal Year.

On the recommendation of Councillor Bull, it was

RESOLVED

that Councillors Ms A Dickinson and J White be appointed to the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) in place of Councillors L A Besley and J Neish.

The meeting ended at 9.33pm.

Chairman