

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, 15 May 2019.

PRESENT: Councillor R J West – Chairman.

Councillors J D Ablewhite, T D Alban,
B S Banks, Mrs M L Beuttell, G J Bull,
S M Burton, 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, 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,
R G Tuplin, D M Tysoe, D R Underwood,
S Wakeford and J E White.

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors R E Bellamy, L A Besley, K P Gulson, Mrs P A Jordan and D J Wells.

12. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor D J Mead declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in Minute No. 14 by virtue of his employment, remained in the meeting and took no part in the discussion and voting on the item.

Councillor S J Criswell declared a disclosable interest in Minute No. 14 by virtue of family ownership of a site identified in the proposed Local Plan and left the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting on the item.

13. PETITION

The Chairman invited Mr J Dewis to present a petition submitted on behalf of 158 signatories regarding the proposed closure of St Ives Squash Courts.

Mr Dewis opened his address by introducing himself as Chairman of St Ivo Squash Club and provided an outline to Members of the history of the Club with the current facility at One Leisure St Ives Outdoor Centre an active sports facility used by the Club that was unique by virtue of the availability of four identical courts with a viewing balcony. The Club was an active user of the facility and together with school usage contributed to the overall attendance at the facility. He further explained that many other centres had a smaller number of attendees

in comparison.

Mr Dewis outlined the Clubs' devastation and disappointment at the proposed closure of the squash courts following the receipt of an email on 22nd March 2019 informing them of the proposals to repurpose the squash courts to create a 'Training Shed' facility. Members further noted their concern that there had been no consultation with the users affected by the proposal and they had not had sight of a Business Plan to support this approach following a refusal of a Freedom of Information request.

Members were apprised with the potential funding required to improve the current squash courts and Mr Dewis also provided background to previous funding, including a grant that had contributed to the upkeep of the venue over the years. Despite the drop in usage over the last few years, Members were advised that the Club had 320 current squash users and suggested that an easy solution to improve the facility to increase participation was to replace the flooring in the venue.

Mr Dewis concluded his remarks by outlining their willingness to work with the Council and One Leisure to support the continuance of provision of such a facility that was vital to the diversity of sports, as well as being vital for the health and well-being of residents.

Councillor J M Palmer, Executive Councillor for Partnerships and Well-Being, thanked Mr Dewis for his submission and recommended that he be invited to present his proposal to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partnerships) with comments forwarded onto the Cabinet for a final decision on the re-purposing of the squash courts, whereby the points raised in his submission would be given full consideration.

Councillor T D Alban, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partnerships) invited Mr Dewis to make a presentation to their Panel at their meeting on 13th June 2019.

14. ADOPTION OF HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL PLAN TO 2036

(See Minute No. 12 for Members' interests).

The Council considered a report and separate Appendices by the Planning Service Manager (Growth) on the adoption of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), this included main modifications and the Huntingdonshire Local Plan Policies Map.

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) Councillor R Fuller, Executive Councillor for Housing, Planning and Economic Development, acquainted Members with the background to the preparation of a Local Plan being at the heart of the planning system. The Local Plan provided a framework for development of housing, the economy, community facilities and infrastructure up to 2036, as well as a basis for conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment and adapting to climate change.

Members noted that an estimated 250K new homes were needed across the country every year to meet the unmet housing need, which has seen an increase as a result of increased levels of overcrowding, affordability issues, impaired labour mobility and increased levels of homelessness.

It was explained that the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 was tailored to meet the needs of the District and although aspirational, was realistic in terms of meeting the development and infrastructure needs over the life of the Plan. Members were acquainted with the differences between the existing Development Plan, encompassing a larger suite of documents with a number of policies many years old and out of date that would all be replaced by the new Local Plan to 2036.

The Council were acquainted with the process of production of the Local Plan that commenced in 2011, including the statutory consultations and engagement strategies with communities of Huntingdonshire prior to the submission of the Local Plan to the Planning Inspector. Members were reminded that all interested parties across the District had an opportunity to put forward modifications during the Examination in Public by the Planning Inspector and the Inspector's Report highlighted few issues with the Plan, as well as singling out several of the proposed policies for their strength and quality.

A comparison was made with several neighbouring authorities and the delay in the examination of their Local Plans, compared with the swift progress made at Huntingdonshire from submission to examination. With that in mind, Councillor Fuller paid tribute to his Portfolio predecessors, former Councillors N J Guyatt and R Harrison and Councillors D B Dew and G J Bull who had all assisted in shaping and guiding the Plan over the years. He also placed on record his thanks to Mr A Moffat, Ms C Kerr, Ms C Bond and their Teams and referred to their dedication in delivering such an important document that they should be proud of what they have delivered for the people of Huntingdonshire. He reported that it had been a pleasure to work with such a dedicated, knowledgeable and inspirational team of Officers in their efforts to get the Plan completed.

As the local planning authority, the District Council had been through a significant process to engage with communities and stakeholders in discussions about the future of the District and the Plan had been found sound by the Planning Inspector. It was therefore suggested that the Council should proceed quickly with adopting a Plan that had been found sound and in his concluding remarks Councillor Fuller commended the Plan to the Council and moved the recommendations which were duly seconded by the Executive Leader, Councillor G J Bull.

Councillor J Neish, Cabinet Assistant, further added to the congratulations to the Planning Team and Councillor Fuller as Executive Councillor for their work on production of a clear and agreed Local Plan. Councillor E R Butler also thanked Officers and referred to his role as Chairman of the Development Plan Policy Advisory Group over the past few years working closely with Ms C Kerr and Ms C Bond to a tight schedule that had resulted in a

fantastic achievement in the final production of the Local Plan for the residents of Huntingdonshire and as Chairman of the Development Management Committee was delighted to see the removal of the 'tilted balance' on its implementation.

Councillor B S Chapman referred to the large amount of work that had been involved in development of the Plan but remained concerned with the affordability of houses, availability of jobs and community facilities and jobs not being delivered at the same rate as houses making the houses unaffordable. He also raised the Community Infrastructure Levy allocation and suggested that it should be reviewed to reflect the changes in the plans and delivery. The Council were reminded by the Managing Director that Members were not making a judgement on the whether the Local Plan was sound or not, this was the responsibility of the Planning Inspector.

Councillor J D Ablewhite reminded Members that work had been ongoing since 2011 with ample opportunity to comment upon the Local Plan. He welcomed the Local Plan and its ability to push away speculative development to ensure that the Council provides sustainable development. He also commended the Council on its delivery of the Plan compared with experiences of other neighbouring authorities and welcomed the consideration by the Planning Inspector to remove additional sites that has confirmed that the Council has the ability to deliver on housing, sustainability and growth.

Councillor D B Dew referred to his involvement at the start of the review of the Local Plan and with many planning policies out of date, the Council had been pushed to receive unwelcome development over the years. With the removal of the 'tilted balance', the Local Plan would bring certainty for the residents of the District and a collaborative approach to development. He also reminded Members of the large amount of consultation that had been undertaken, including Parish Councils and community groups, and outlined his support for the Plan.

Having referred to the length of time taken to bring this Plan to its conclusion, Councillor Mrs S J Conboy commended the Planning Inspector on a well-run process and thanked Officers and Members for their tremendous work. She also welcomed the clarity that this would bring to decision making based on policies.

Councillor T D Sanderson thanked Councillor Fuller and Officers for their work but intimated that he would be voting against the Plan as the communities that he represented, including Alconbury Weald, had been scaled back in its vision as a freestanding new settlement and felt that the Master Plan for Alconbury Weald should be reviewed to look at alternative locations for the Enterprise Zone that may impact upon the availability of housing in that location.

Councillor P Kadewere, Leader of the Labour Group, explained that the Local Plan would not appear as it would if a Labour administration had crafted it in and reminded Members of their belief that this Council should be more ambitious and set a 50% minimum for affordable housing. He further commended the Plan on the basis of the hard work involved in the production of the Plan, rather than leaving the rules tilted in favour of developers, thereby going against

democracy would not be an option.

Councillor D A Giles referred to his length of service on the Council, together with the Vice-Chairman of the Council, had seen the Local Plans and policies evolve over many years. He welcomed the Local Plan and congratulated the staff on their efforts in its production, as well as the removal of two sites that had not been included but requested consideration be given to increasing the number of shops with dwellings above in St Neots.

In referring to his dual role as a County Councillor, Councillor S Bywater explained that the Local Plan brought certainty to assist colleagues at Cambridgeshire County Council in planning for school numbers and thanked Councillor Fuller for his determination in its completion.

Councillor Bull, echoed the sentiments of fellow Members and reiterated the conclusion as a positive outcome for the residents of Huntingdonshire. Despite his disappointment of some Members focus on site specific issues, the Local Plan provided certainty for the District and thanked Officers for a remarkable job and urged Members to support the Plan. The Chairman, Councillor R J West, confirmed his support for the Plan and commended the staff involved with production of the document.

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

RESOLVED

that a recorded vote be taken on this item.

Whereupon, the Council

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Inspector's Report containing the Inspector's main modifications to be the submitted Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 in order for it to be found sound as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report now submitted be noted;
- (b) that the schedule of Main Modifications to the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report now submitted be noted;
- (c) that the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036, including main modifications and additional modifications relating to presentational improvements, factual updates, grammatical and typographical corrections as detailed in Appendix 3 to the report now submitted be adopted;
- (d) that the Huntingdonshire Local Plan Policies Map be adopted;
and
- (e) that a copy of the Final Sustainability Appraisal report, including a Sustainability Appraisal Post-Adoption Statement, be made available for inspection alongside the Local Plan.

The following Members voted for, against or abstained from the Motion -

For the Motion – Ablewhite, Alban, Beuttell, Bull, Butler, Bywater, Clarke, Conboy, Corney, Davies, Dew, Diaz, Dickinson, Fuller, Gaskin, Gray, Grice, Humphrey, Johnson, Kadewere, Keane, Maslen, Masson, McGuire, Morris, Neish, Palmer, Prentice, Shrapnel, Tavener, Tuplin, Tysoe, Underwood, Wakeford, West and White.

Against the Motion – Sanderson

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

The meeting ended at 7.47pm.

Chairman