

COUNCIL



26 JULY 2012 - 4.00PM

PRESENT: Councillor G G R Booth, Councillor M G Bucknor, Councillor Mrs V M Bucknor, Councillor T R Butcher, Councillor J R Chambers, Councillor J F Clark, Councillor M Cornwell, Councillor M F J Cotterell, Councillor Mrs C R Cox, Councillor M J Curtis, Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor S Garratt, Councillor P Hatton, Councillor D Hodgson, Councillor M J Humphrey, Councillor P Jolley, Councillor S J E King, Councillor K G Mayor, Councillor Mrs K F Mayor, Councillor A K Melton, Councillor A Miscandlon, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor Mrs F S Newell, Councillor D C Oliver, Councillor C C Owen, Councillor D R Patrick, Councillor T E W Quince, Councillor R E Scrimshaw, Councillor C J Seaton, Councillor R Skoulding, Councillor W Sutton, Councillor P A Tunley, Councillor H B Wegg, Councillor F H Yeulett.

APOLOGIES: Councillor M I Archer, Councillor D W Connor, Councillor J R Farmer, Councillor B M Keane, Councillor K Peachey and Councillor D Stebbing

12/12 TO SIGN AND CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 10 MAY 2012

The minutes from the meeting of 10 May 2012 were signed and confirmed.

13/12 TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL AND/OR THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE.

ARMED FORCES DAY - The Chairman thanked those who attended the recent Armed Forces Day celebrations and Veterans badge presentation at St Peter's Church, March. Badges were presented to 44 veterans on the day in addition to several presented during home visits for those not well enough to attend the ceremony in person, the event was extremely successful with lots of positive comments from both veterans and their families. He thanked Sharon Smith and the Member Services Team for their hard work in organising a very successful day.

CHAIRMAN'S CIVIC RECEPTION - The Chairman thanked all those who attended the Annual Chairman's Civic Reception on Friday 13 July. The event took place at the Thomas Clarkson Academy and was a great success. He also thanked both Sharon Smith and Anna Goodall for their hard work.

14/12 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 Booth asked the Leader that given the press coverage regarding the lack of homes built by Roddons what action has been taken by Fenland District Council? Councillor Melton stated that the target figures were Fenland District Council's and not Roddons and as Leader of the Council he was ultimately responsible and has since attended, with Fenland's Chief Executive, an extremely constructive meeting with the Local Director of Roddons and Circle Anglia. Councillor Melton stated that he had also attended another meeting, chaired by Councillor Owen which included all main stakeholders, to discuss a way forward, working closer with others to bring forward proposals to make sure we meet or exceed targets over the next two to three years. It is

recognised that organisations are reliant on Section 106 fees and therefore Fenland will examine all kinds of financial investments to bring housing forward within Fenland as Fenland have a duty to supply homes for those that cannot afford to buy.

Councillor Booth stated that Overview and Scrutiny Committee last year had recognised the economic conditions and therefore planning applications would be taken forward; what applications have been taken forward and how will this progression be tracked. Councillor Melton stated that if developers and housing associations wish to work in partnership then Roddons would welcome this. There will be a complete land audit carried out resulting in a list of available land, some not suitable for development but could be used for other purposes and land swap arrangements may also be looked at. Fenland officers will fast track applications that come forward and meet all the criteria.

Councillor Booth stated that at the previous Council meeting it had been agreed that a member of the opposition would be joining the new Conduct Committee; yet no approach to the opposition has been made. There is a need for transparency and this has been diminished as the opposition had not been allowed to choose a candidate. He stated he had nothing against Councillor Skoulding but it would have been courtesy to have been approached. Councillor Melton acknowledged this point and stated that in future this would be arranged.

15/12 TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM AND ASK QUESTIONS OF CABINET MEMBERS WITH PORTFOLIO HOLDER RESPONSIBILITIES, IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULES 8.1 AND 8.2.

Councillor Owen presented an update on the Fenland Core Strategy stating the preparation of the Core Strategy is a priority of the Council:

- It will set the framework for growth and prosperity in Fenland, helping the delivery of thousands of new homes and thousands of new jobs;
- It will ensure new development is high quality, built to the latest design and sustainability standards;
- It will also ensure development is built in the right place at the right time.

The Core Strategy has also been written in a way which is flexible, not rigid, supports growth and promotes investment in Fenland.

Most importantly, it now matches the very latest in government policy - namely, it clearly aligns very well with the recently published National Planning Policy Framework.

The Core Strategy was approved for consultation by Cabinet in June with the public consultation launched today.

- The consultation will run for 6 weeks from today to 5pm on Wednesday 5 September;
- Documents will be available in each of the libraries, leisure centres and @ Your Service Shops. Representation forms will be available and there is an online portal for the public to make their comments;
- There will be a special Fenlander page in the Cambs Times and banners in the @ Your Service Shops to make the public aware;
- Previous consultees will be engaged directly;
- Each Member has their own information pack which contains the latest documents, consultation details and various supporting information.

Fenland is making excellent progress with the Core Strategy, and whilst there are some legal loop holes to get through, the launch of this consultation is a key milestone towards finalising this

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essential document for the future of Fenland.

Councillor Yeulett asked Councillor Mrs French for an update on the burnt out property in Nene Parade, March. Councillor Mrs French replied:

In March 2011 fire gutted 7 Nene Parade a historic listed building. The owner, liaising at all times with Fenland District Council and the emergency services, took immediate action to make the building safe. Unfortunately such was the extent of the damage to the fabric of the building that restoration has been unfeasible and listed building consent to demolish has been granted. Currently this is pending archaeological liaison between the owner (via Ken Elener acting as agent) and the County.

The owner has kept Fenland District Council fully informed during this process and is making every effort to progress matters as speedily as possible. Fenland District Council will continue to offer any assistance required and to monitor structural integrity of the building pending demolition.

It is Fenland District Council's understanding that once this demolition has been completed replacement dwelling options will be considered by the owner.

The neighbouring property, number 8 Nene Parade, has also been closely monitored following the fire although previously it has been empty and run down for a number of years. Structurally the property is safe but the demolition of number 7 may impact on this property. The potential impact here will be carefully managed and Fenland District Council will work closely with Ken Elener in this regard.

The owner of number 8 has so far failed to make any contact with Fenland District Council or Ken Elener. Efforts to trace him continue. In the meantime concerns on the condition and security of the property have been raised. These concerns have been passed on to the police and smashed windows boarded on more than one occasion. Environmental Health has passed the property from a public health perspective but will continue to monitor the property.

Fenland District Council will make a further assessment of the situation once the future plans for number 7 are established and will do everything possible to bring both these properties back into positive use.

Councillor King asked Councillor Mrs French for an update on the derelict properties in Wisbech. Councillor Mrs French replied:

- **The Phoenix** - Expert valuation and development advice has been sought in relation to the Phoenix in accordance with the Cabinet Decision of 19 April. This will inform our options going forward and the intention will be to engage further with the Bank of East Asia with this advice in hand. In addition those structural engineers responsible for making the remaining facade of the building safe have confirmed its continuing structural safety;
- **11/12 High Street and 1 Nene Quay** - A barrister has been engaged to take forward recovery action against the owners. In addition building control continue to monitor the structural integrity of the properties. 11/12 High Street is to be considered by the same commercial property valuation expert as the Phoenix which will inform recovery action going forward;
- **24 High Street** - A further valuation has been commissioned in relation to the property to inform our options going forward. In addition initial engagements have been made with potentially interested parties in order to ensure maximum interest in the event of a sale. This is seen as the best means of bringing the property back into use. As with the Phoenix the continued structural integrity of the building has been confirmed with the contractor who carried out the original works to the property to make it safe;

- **Rear of the Five Bells pub in Orange Grove, Wisbech (brick rubble)** - the extent of land covered by this query is split into multiple ownership. Earlier this month all those owners were written to with a request that they update Fenland District Council as to their intentions for the site. We currently await replies to inform options going forward.

Councillor King thanked Councillor Mrs French for her response.

16/12 TO CONSIDER RECOMMENDATIONS (IF ANY) FROM CABINET, THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL AND COMMITTEES

No recommendations to be considered

*** FOR INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL ***

17/12 YOUTH DISTRICT COUNCIL PRESENTATION

The Vice-Chairman of the Youth District Council, Sollie Davies, gave a presentation informing Members of the work that the Youth District Council has achieved over the previous twelve months and what it would like to achieve in the future.

Councillor Melton thanked and congratulated Sollie Davies on a very professional presentation and exclaimed that he was an example of what can be achieved by young people and stated how he had enjoyed the level of debate at a recent Youth District Council meeting that he had attended. Councillor Melton that the Sollie Davies represented the vast majority of young people in Fenland and it was easy to look at those causing trouble and 'tar them with the same brush', but that was not true; people like Sollie Davies are the future of Fenland. He thanked both Councillor Steve Garratt and Ross McGivern for their involvement in the Youth District Council.

18/12 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2011/12

Councillor Mrs Newell presented the Corporate Governance Annual Report 2011/12 and acknowledged the good work carried out by Rob Bridge and his team.

Councillor Booth asked what action had been taken in relation to the New Bribery Act to which Councillor Mrs Newell stated she would need to look into this and come back to him.

It was DECIDED that:

1. **The Council acknowledge the scope and achievement of the Corporate Governance Committee's work, including the commitment to ensuring effective governance arrangements across the Council and its partners, and**
2. **The Annual Report be ADOPTED**

19/12 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2011/12

Councillor Clark presented the Treasury Management Annual Report 2011/12.

Councillor Booth thanked Rob Bridge for the recent training he had received and asked if the policy regarding reliance on rating agencies is too restrictive. Councillor Clark stated that these rating agencies carry a lot of weight and in the insurance world make a difference in the terms that are offered; they may be considered but at present had not been. The Council has no wish or desire to not use AAA rating agencies.

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It was DECIDED that the report be NOTED.

20/12 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2011/2012

Councillor Jolly presented the Overview and Scrutiny Annual report 2011/12 and thanked all Members for their involvement and Anna Goodall for her hard work. He stated that the Panel were currently working on the issues of members of Middle Level and outside bodies reporting back to the Council. He made it clear that he would take anything to the Panel that Members requested and would sign up to any call in made by Councillor Booth or Councillor Mrs Bucknor as the opposition needs to know that they will be heard.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked about the progression made regarding more signage in Fenland. Councillor Cornwell replied stating he had been in contact with Cambridgeshire County Council explaining the problem regarding brown signs and had been asked to produce case histories; this has been completed and sent off.

It was DECIDED that the broad scope of work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel during 2011/12 be NOTED.

21/12 BOUNDARY COMMISSION FENLAND ELECTORAL REVIEW: REVIEW OF FENLAND WARD BOUNDARIES - FDC SUBMISSION

Councillor Melton presented the Boundary Commission Fenland Electoral Review: Review of Fenland Ward Boundaries - FDC Submission report and thanked all Members who attended the workshops to feed into the process. Councillor Melton explained he was proud that this had been a Member led process and thanked Carol Pilson and officers for the way in which the process had run. He warned that even though this report had been submitted it may not be the scheme that the Boundary Commission adopt. There were a couple of areas within the report where Members' opinions differed and in these incidents two options have been put forward and the Boundary Commission will make the final decision; they may come back with an entirely different recommendation.

Councillor Booth stated this had been a lengthy piece of work and officers had worked hard with constraining factors; it was an excellent report and well worth putting forward.

Councillor King also thanked the officers involved for their hard work and patience through this process.

It was DECIDED that the proposed electoral arrangements set out in the Council's draft submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England be APPROVED.

22/12 CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Councillor Melton presented the Constitutional Amendments report.

It was DECIDED that:

- 1. The amendments to the constitution as set out in the report be APPROVED with immediate effect;**
- 2. The Monitoring Officer be authorised to update the Constitution with necessary amendments to ensure consistency of the Constitution;**
- 3. The Chief Solicitor be authorised to make such typographical amendments as necessary to produce revised clean text copies of the Constitution.**

23/12 **PROCUREMENT REVIEW**

Councillor Melton thanked all involved, including Councillor Clark, Cabinet colleagues, Councillor Jolly and the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and stated there had been several issues of concern around procurement, particularly regarding the use of local trades people. Councillor Melton stated the Council has a duty to look at employers and employees from its own resources.

Councillor Clark presented the Procurement Review Report and thanked the Members of Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Corporate Governance and officers involved.

Councillor Jolly thanked Councillor Clark and Rob Bridge for their work involved with Overview and Scrutiny and for always being honest and up front regarding issues raised.

Councillor Patrick stated that many details had to be sent though when applying online for work at Cambridgeshire County Council to which Councillor Clark said he would look into.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked how this would be promoted in Fenland so that all businesses have the opportunity to tender for work. Councillor Clark stated that no action could be taken until this report was approved today but it was hoped to be advertised in the Fenlander and promoted as soon as possible.

Councillor Owen stated that the Council would save a considerable amount of money once this Review was approved. Councillor Clark stated the Council had spent well in the past but it had been difficult for local businesses to engage in the process but this review would now benefit the people of Fenland.

Councillor Patrick asked if this process could be made simple for the local businesses. Councillor Clark stated this would be taken on board and there was a need to make the process simple; he could not comment on the Cambridgeshire County Council website.

Councillor Booth stated this process should be reviewed in six to twelve months time to ensure any issues are overcome to which Councillor Clark stated he would be happy to commit to a review in six to twelve months time to tackle any teething problems.

Councillor Melton stated that the Council would rely on those submitting tenders, successful or not, to feedback on the process.

It was DECIDED that the Procurement Strategy and Code of Procurement be APPROVED.

5:00pm

Chairman