

COUNCIL



9 MAY 2013 - 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 D W Connor, Councillor M F J Cotterell, Councillor Mrs C R Cox, Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor S Garratt, Councillor P Hatton, Councillor D Hodgson, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor M J Humphrey, Councillor P Jolley, Councillor B M Keane, 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 T E W Quince, Councillor C J Seaton, Councillor R Skoulding, Councillor D Stebbing, Councillor W Sutton, Councillor P A Tunley, Councillor F H Yeulett.

APOLOGIES: Councillor M Cornwell, Councillor M J Curtis, Councillor J R Farmer, Councillor D R Patrick, Councillor G Swan

C1/13 OUTGOING CHAIRMAN

Councillor Humphrey stated that he had enjoyed his time as Chairman as it had been an honour and a privilege.

He thanked:

- Members for giving him the opportunity to represent the Authority;
- Both Councillor Mayor and Mrs Mayor for their support over the last two years;
- Officers of the Council, Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and Solicitor for their guidance;
- Member Services whom he rated excellently excellent in a recent survey;
- A special thank you to Sharon, from both himself and Marie for everything she has done quietly in the background, an immense amount of work and organisation regardless of the request. The success of the Civic Receptions are testament to her organisation and commitment to the job;
- To Marie, a huge thank you. The clothes and hats may be lovely but the support and commitment a Consort gives is again considerable.

Councillor Mayor then presented Councillor Humphrey with his "Past Chairman's" badge.

C2/13 TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE PERIOD TO THE NEXT ANNUAL MEETING AND TO RESOLVE THAT AN ALLOWANCE OF £3,700 PLUS TRAVELLING EXPENSES BE PAID TO THE PERSON ELECTED.

It was proposed by Councillor Melton and seconded by Councillor Garratt and **resolved that Councillor Mayor be elected Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year and that he be paid an allowance of £3,700 plus travelling expenses.**

Councillor Melton stated that it gave him great pleasure in proposing Councillor Mayor as Chairman as he would be a great supporter and ambassador for Fenland.

The Chairman made his declaration of acceptance of office and addressed the Council. Councillor Mayor thanked:

- Councillor Melton and Councillor Garratt for the nomination and stated it was a great honour of which he was very appreciative;
- His wife, Councillor Mrs Kay Mayor for the support she had given during his time as Vice Chairman of Fenland;
- Members for electing him as Chairman and reflected on the previous Chairmen of the Council, whose photos adorn the Council Chamber.

Councillor Mayor stated he was looking forward to next year's Twinning visit as both himself and his wife had enjoyed these over previous years.

C3/13 TO ELECT A VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE PERIOD TO THE NEXT ANNUAL MEETING AND TO RESOLVE THAT AN ALLOWANCE OF £900 PLUS TRAVELLING EXPENSES BE PAID TO THE PERSON ELECTED.

It was proposed by Councillor Hatton and seconded by Councillor Mrs Newell and **resolved that Councillor Mrs Cox be elected Vice-Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year and that she be paid an allowance of £900 plus travelling expenses.**

The Vice-Chairman made her declaration of acceptance of office and addressed the Council. Councillor Mrs Cox thanked both Councillor Hatton and Councillor Mrs Newell for the nomination and stated she would do her best to be a very good ambassador for Fenland and looked forward to working with both Councillor Mayor and Councillor Mrs Mayor.

C4/13 TO SIGN AND CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 21 FEBRUARY 2013

Resolved that the minutes of the Council meeting on 21 February 2013 be confirmed and signed.

C5/13 TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL AND/OR THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE.

Councillor David Broker - Councillor Mayor welcomed Councillor David Broker to Council as this was his first meeting as Councillor for Parson Drove and Wisbech St Mary since his election on 28 March 2013.

Chairman's Annual Civic Reception - Councillor Mayor confirmed to Council that he would be holding the Chairman's Annual Civic Reception on 12 July 2013 at the Manor Leisure Centre in Whittlesey, Members would receive their invitations in due course.

Customer Service Excellence (CSE) Reaccreditation - The Chief Executive, Paul Medd, informed Members that once again the Council has been reaccredited for Customer Service Excellence. Customer Service Excellence is the Government standard for public sector organisations to provide high quality, customer-focused service. It measures how public organisations put customers at the heart of what they do. Fenland District Council is one of the few Councils in the country to have this nationally recognised standard. CSE is testimony to members, customer focussed policies and officers commitment to delivering high quality services to local people. Paul Medd thanked everyone on the CSE team as well as staff throughout the Council for making this further success possible. He stated that the CSE Assessor summed up by saying "Staff and members clearly have a passion and desire to provide the best possible

customer experience" and "There is a corporate culture in ensuring that the customer experiences the best possible services." Councillor Melton thanked Paul Medd for the award but stated that the real people receiving this award was Fenland's frontline staff to whom he paid tribute to, especially as staff had gone through extreme change.

Investors in People Award (IIP) Reaccreditation - The Chief Executive, Paul Medd, informed Members that Fenland had been reaccredited for Investors in People. Following a robust external inspection lasting several days, it was confirmed that Fenland had retained the much valued IIP standard with flying colours. The assessor commented that despite unprecedented challenges facing local government, she was highly impressed by the continued strength of the Council and its clear commitment to staff and member development. Investors in People demonstrates that despite the significant challenges facing FDC, the unique one-team culture and commitment to staff and member development remains highly effective. Such recognition will ensure that the Council is well positioned for the future. Paul Medd thanked the IIP project team for all their hard work and commitment in ensuring such a positive outcome. Fenland's Customer Service Excellence success, the IIP achievement, and continued commitment to provide high quality services, offers a reminder that the majority of what Fenland does is the best across the whole country. Fenland District Council remains committed to continual improvement and as such will never become complacent. This positive attitude ensures that Fenland seek to learn from its mistakes in ensuring that the best value is provided to local council tax payers. Councillor Melton stated that private organisations would love to have the accreditation and although Fenland is facing massive budget cuts with an uncertain future it still values its staff as its number one asset, without which the council could not function.

C6/13 **MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL**

Resolved that the Meeting Dates for 2013/14 be AGREED.

C7/13 **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 of the Leader:

- Could he confirm that all major developments carry an appropriate condition that will ensure roads are built to an adoptable standard as he understood from guidance at County Council that a condition is included within planning permissions requiring a road to be built to an adoptable standard, and that a specified constructional level of both road and footway be reached prior to occupation of frontage dwellings. Without this type of condition he understood that there is great difficulty in ensuring a road is adopted;
- Could he confirm the size/scale of development this type of condition would be imposed to ensure that a road to suitable standards i.e. adopted by the County Council would be required. Did Fenland have a policy that requires an adoptable road once a certain number of houses are to be built on a development? If there is no policy should Fenland now introduce one to ensure Council Tax payers are protected in the future should they move into a new estate;
- Could he confirm after what timescale has elapsed would be appropriate enforcement action be taken where a road has not been implemented to adoptable standards.

Councillor Melton replied confirming that on all major residential schemes the Council would seek to impose a condition that as a minimum roads are completed to binder course surfacing level prior to the occupation of any dwellings. As a rule, six or more dwellings would require a road to adoptable standard be provided. It should be noted that due to the wear and tear caused by construction traffic it is rare, for good practical reasons, that a road would be finally completed to

an adoptable standard until the development nears completion. It terms of enforcement action, there is no set time period for taking action but the Council would look at each case on its own merits. Where it becomes clear that a developer has no intention to complete the highway to an acceptable standard then enforcement action would be considered.

Councillor Booth asked what provision or support is being made for staff employed at the museums across Fenland to ensure their ongoing success and support for the District's Tourism Strategy. Are there any plans to change this support and how will it affect the running of the Museums across Fenland in the market towns? Councillor Butcher responded stating that the museums were awarded £50,000 this year, the same core grant as the previous year. This went to the Wisbech museum who then provided curator help to Chatteris, March and Whittlesey. Presently, the museum has only received one twelfth of the monies as there are some details needed regarding agreeing the SLA; Fenland is currently awaiting a reply from the Trustees but the intention is to continue the support once the SLA is agreed.

C8/13 **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 King asked the Leader if the meeting scheduled for the end of April regarding the English Heritage and dilapidated buildings had taken place and had any more thought be given to the scheduled seminar. Councillor Melton responded stating that the meeting scheduled for the end of April had not taken place due to Purdah but dates are currently being fixed for both the meeting and seminar. Councillor King thanked officers for clearing the eyesore at Orange Grove; it was a huge improvement and demonstrates what can be achieved working with owners. Could the same approach be adopted for buildings on the South Brink as there are some in a dreadful state; the Council needs to act quickly to avoid more dilapidated buildings. Councillor Melton thanked Councillor King for his comments and gave his assurance that the same action would be taken where necessary but due to commercial confidentiality could not give any details but stated when he received further details he would brief Councillor King and other Wisbech members.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked if an audit had yet taken place with regard to dilapidated buildings and when would members be advised of the results. Councillor Melton replied stating he had a schedule of dates of when these would take place but could not give an update at the moment but gave his assurance that the work was well advanced. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that many residents in Wisbech were angry about how long this was taking therefore could the process be pushed forward as the Wisbech residents cannot be let down; it would be helpful to have an update on Constantine House as this was the first building to be seen on the way into Wisbech. Councillor Melton stated as soon as has confirmed details he would update Councillor Mrs Bucknor and understood that the Wisbech residents felt angry as this was the gateway into Wisbech. There are plans and improvements that need to be done.

Councillor Mrs French stated that Cambridgeshire County Council was replacing street lights throughout the whole of Fenland. There are some street lights that belong to Fenland that the County will not replace and these are on the main entrance into March, A141 in Westry and at Wimblington. A speed reduction cannot take place along these roads until the lights are updated. Councillor Melton asked Gary Garford, Corporate Director, to respond. Gary Garford stated that Fenland had asked Cambridgeshire County Council to take on these lights but this was not possible. Fenland has no programme or budget to carry out a bulk replacement of the street lights that it owns and therefore they are replaced or updated as and when required.

Councillor Owen asked who had made the decision to not supply biscuits at meetings and how much had this cost last year. Councillor Clark responded stating that as money gets tighter there is a need to look at budgets and a decision was made that biscuits be withdrawn from meetings.

5

£1,500 was spent last year on biscuits and he did not think that the tax payers would appreciate Fenland spending their money on biscuits. Councillor Owen asked who made the decision and when. Councillor Clark stated an unofficial request had been made at Cabinet and it had been unanimously agreed that biscuits were no longer to be ordered; the decision was then taken to Group and again it was unanimous that biscuits be discontinued.

Councillor Owen stated that Fenland staff were its number one asset and over the past couple of years there have been various restructures and he was now concerned that because the government is restricting funding that Fenland will struggle to provide its services in the excellent manner it has done in the past. Councillor Melton stated there was concern with services and the capacity to provide them which was why he has asked officers to find further savings from any unnecessary and unwanted bureaucracy; anything that is not statutory needs to be looked at resulting in Fenland preserving frontline staff and continuing to provide a first class service. Councillor Owen stated he agreed with the disposing of red tape but Councillor Melton had implied that discretionary services would be looked at in depth and unfortunately these are the ones that the public have an invested interest in as these were the leisure centres, car parks and public conveniences.

Councillor Owen stated that a road sweeper had recently been out of action which had resulted in the usually very clean March town becoming littered and asked when another one would be expected. Councillor Murphy stated that other road sweepers had been used whilst the March sweeper had been out of commission for five weeks but a new one had arrived last week and was now in use within March. Councillor Yeulett, on behalf of the March Town Council, thanked Councillor Murphy and Richard Cassidy for the prompt response regarding street cleansing.

Councillor Booth asked Councillor Seaton if there was an update on the Cromwell Park Development site in Wisbech and when it was likely to start. Councillor Seaton stated he had been informed that there is now movement on this site, with soil samples having been taken. There is a commitment to developing the site, including a cinema, which may be slightly smaller than planned, with work starting by November but this is dependent upon contractual agreements. Councillor Seaton stated he would update those interested as and when he received further information.

Councillor Mrs French asked Councillor Murphy if Fenland had any control over the recycling centre in March to which he responded stating that this centre was operated by contractors working for Cambridgeshire County Council and therefore Fenland had no control over the site.

Councillor Booth asked if there would be a review of the Capital Grant process as it could be very bureaucratic. Councillor Melton stated this was news to him and was sorry to hear that and that both himself and Councillor Seaton had approved the draft capital grant but if he, or anyone else is experiencing problems then please bring this to their attention because the money is there and is to provide community facilities outside of the four market towns. Councillor Butcher added that he had not encountered any bureaucracy but there were certain details needed to ensure this was carried out properly.

C9/13 MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND PANELS

Councillor Melton presented the Membership of Committees and Panels report and informed Members that he would not be announcing any personnel details but where appropriate a full political balance will take place within the committees from now on. This administration is truly endorsed by the electors showing that the people of Fenland are happy with the way Fenland is run and that the Conservative group are firmly in control.

Councillor Booth stated it was Councillor Melton's gift to return all seats to Conservative but did

this include Conduct Committee to which Councillor Melton explained that it would be where appropriate and that he would consult with him shortly.

It was AGREED that the schedule of appointments and political allocations as set out in the report be ADOPTED.

5:10pm

Chairman