

COUNCIL



19 DECEMBER 2013 - 4:00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor G G R Booth, Councillor D Broker, 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 Mrs C R Cox, Councillor M J Curtis, Councillor J R Farmer, Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor S Garratt, Councillor D Hodgson, Councillor M J Humphrey, 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 D R Patrick, 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 I Archer, Councillor P Hatton, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor P Jolley

38/13 TO SIGN AND CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 7 NOVEMBER 2013.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of 7 November 2013 were agreed and signed subject to the following amendment:

- **Minutes 36/13** to read that the question had been asked as to what improvement had been seen regarding the Refuse and Recycling Performance in relation to trade waste, to which Councillor Murphy had replied that these figures were increasing.

39/13 CIVIC ENGAGEMENTS UPDATE - FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Councillor Mayor informed Members of the number of civic activities undertaken by himself and the Vice Chairman in the week preceding full Council.

40/13 TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL AND/OR THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE.

Confidential Agenda Item no.12 - The Chairman asked Members to note that the Agenda Item no. 12 was a confidential item, as a result under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, asked for agreement that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for that item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, to which Members agreed.

Chairman's Annual Carol Service - The Chairman thanked all who attended the Chairman's annual Carol Service on Sunday 8 December at St Mary's Church, Whittlesey. The event was extremely well attended and got the season off to a good start.

Christmas Visits - The Chairman thanked all staff who had attended his Christmas visits; these were well attended and as a result the Chairman managed to see staff from across lots of different

venues to wish them season greetings.

Memorial to the late Councillor Mac Cotterell MBE - Councillor Seaton stated that it had been agreed at the previous Council meeting that a fitting tribute be made for Councillor Cotterell and after meeting with Madge Cotterell it has been decided that:

- The current Boathouse Gallery will now be known as the Mac Cotterell Gallery;
- A tribute photograph/plaque of Councillor Cotterell, incorporating his details and achievements, to be hung on the left wall as you enter the Gallery;
- The Port link road will be named Cotterell Way.

There will be an official opening of the Mac Cotterell Gallery with Madge Cotterell as guest of honour; invites will be sent out after Christmas

The Chairman thanked the Corporate Management Team for providing the mince pies and sherry for all those attending Full Council.

41/13 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 the Leader:

- Regarding the publication of the Peer Review Members received recently, what would be the next steps taken in relation to the report as it contained a lot of detail. Councillor Melton responded stating that the Peer Review Group would be returning in the New Year to attend a seminar to analyse the report; Councillor Booth asked if Members would have the opportunity to take points forward to which Councillor Melton explained it would be fully debated and scrutinised. Councillor Booth stated the document was extremely detailed but had some reservations of its comprehensiveness regarding the completeness of information given to Members and felt it had missed the mark on a few areas ie committee structure and how it does not suit those that work and struggle to attend meetings; this was not reflected in the report. Councillor Melton stated that Councillor Booth would have the opportunity to raise this at the seminar but as far as the LGA was concerned, the idea was to summarise the report as much as possible into a smaller document;
- The Autumn Statement was announced yesterday with regard to funding for the next two years; what effect does this have on the Council. Councillor Melton stated he could reassure Members that there was nothing unexpected and the budget set last year would continue as it has made little difference to Fenland;
- He had noticed there was now a new Member on Cabinet and asked Councillor Melton to comment on their respective responsibilities as he had received no notification regarding this position. Councillor Melton responded stating that he was waiting on possible changes to the committee structure as a result of the election but that Councillor Cornwall now has the responsibility of Health and Wellbeing and Vulnerable People. There will be an update of responsibilities, which is in draft form as he was currently working with the Deputy to populate the document.

42/13 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 Mrs Bucknor asked the following:

- She had received several phone calls from residents asking if they were expected to pay for ipads for Members to which she had told them that she would imagine the money would be from Cabinet Members' money; was this the case? Councillor Melton stated he did not know but what Cabinet have agreed was to look at the whole issue, and the Cabinet report does make it clear, that there are many alternatives of which all options will be looked at. The results will go before Cabinet and be fully scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel;
- With regard to the potential flooding in Wisbech two weeks ago she stated she had written to Councillor Melton on 5 December, to which she had not received a reply, and to Inspector Sissons and raised the issue at Wisbech Town Council regarding the lack of information for local people. Many Wisbech people had received an amber alert and no further information and therefore rang both herself and Councillor Bucknor for more information. There is a need to find a simple way of finding out the latest information, especially as many Wisbech residents do not have computers and would therefore like to see how Fenland could improve the current methods. Councillor Melton stated this was already being looked into. Councillor Mayor added that there would be a meeting in the New Year with all partners to discuss the problems that Councillor Mrs Bucknor had outlined. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that one simple number published would be the easiest answer. Councillor Mrs Mayor stated that Whittlesey residents were used to flood warnings and now had flood wardens who work with the Environment Agency; if Wisbech did the same then the Agency would work with them too;
- This issue has been raised before regarding the lack of access to the hospitals for residents of Wisbech. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital is considering moving the cancer ward to Norwich and therefore those from Wisbech will have to travel to Addenbrookes. There is a need to know if this is a serious concern, Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated she had been promised statistics but had received nothing. If this ward moves to Cambridge it will be catastrophic for Wisbech as it already costs a lot to take people to the hospital as most have to travel. The fundamental heart of this problem is the lack of transport facilities for Wisbech and she would therefore like to see what is being proposed as this was a serious problem. Councillor Melton responded stating this was not within Fenland's remit; we are just consultees in the process. Fenland is concerned about this issue and it is not just Wisbech this affects. Cambridgeshire County Council is under very severe financial constraints, unimaginable ones and at this stage cannot give any commitment; there is a need to lobby those who provide the bus plans. Councillor Butcher stated this was a concern for all towns and villages; it is currently being worked on but is not easy and expensive.

Councillor Mrs French thanked Councillor Pop Jolley for the recent very successful March Christmas Market that was attended by 8,000 people; she extended her thanks to Phil Hughes, Mike Chapman and all officers that were involved.

Councillor Booth asked the following:

- Page 19 of the report stated "Wisbech Dilapidated Buildings" and should read "Fenland Dilapidated Buildings" as this had been agreed at the previous meeting. Councillor King stated he would ask for it to be amended for the future but that it did reflect where Fenland's initial focus had been but now an audit has been completed of all towns therefore the title no longer reflects the reality;
- Page 30 of the report regarding the Street Scene Team Update; it appears Whittlesey receives a higher level of service than the other areas and compared to Wisbech does not appear to be proportionate. There have been comments from residents where they state that the villages do not receive as much street cleaning as other areas and this evidence appears to show that Whittlesey receives a lot of attention. Councillor Murphy stated that Whittlesey does encompass all the surrounding villages, Eastrea, Coates etc, is therefore a larger area and probably busier but all incidents are dealt with as they are received.

Councillor Booth asked if it were true that all areas are treated equally within a six week cycle to which Councillor Murphy stated they were;

- Regarding the report on the pilot of ipads; why was it just Cabinet Members being considered, would Councillor Melton not want a fair representation of all Members for potential savings, Cabinet Members receive more papers than back benchers and therefore the saving would be larger, to be fair this pilot should include a cross section of Members. Councillor Melton stated this would be fairer and would be built into the pilot.

Councillor Sutton stated it was strange that Fenland had lost an ex Councillor but that no respect had been shown to which Councillor Mayor stated he presumed he was referring to Mick Speechley and a tribute had been paid at the Civic Service but that he was right that all Members should have the chance to pay their respects at council too and therefore asked for a minutes silence for Mick Speechley who has served 27 years as a Councillor. Councillor Mayor apologised and added that a letter of condolence had been sent to his wife Iris and his daughter and that the funeral will be held on Monday 30 December, 11am at St Andrew's Church in Whittlesey.

Councillor Bucknor asked if papers could be sent out in a pdf format for those that had ipads to which Councillor Melton asked all Members to contact IT if they required this service, as it is already being provided.

Councillor Farmer asked the following:

- Why the port in Wisbech appeared to be trying to run the business down as there was a general view that there was a plan to close the port and build on it; he asked for assurances that this was not the case. Councillor Seaton responded stating he could assure Councillor Farmer this was not the case but that business had decreased over the years due to a general increase in the size of commercial ships, some of which could not be accommodated at Wisbech due to draught and length constraints. Fenland continues to fulfil its obligations as the port authority;
- With regard to the size of shipping, had there been any thought of the possibility of extending the turn around facility (swinging berth). Councillor Seaton stated there have been discussions regarding this but the cost would be significant, for which a valid business case would have to be demonstrated by the port operator along with appropriate capital investment. Fenland's current capital funding is unfortunately severely limited. Like all businesses, Fenland is happy to look at other opportunities and income, including shipping leisure facilities, boat repairs (including local trawlers) and links to the off shore wind farms;
- He had been the recipient of various correspondences, as had all councillors to which Councillor Mayor stopped Councillor Farmer, stating he was not prepared to take questions regarding that matter due to the sensitive nature of the issue. Councillor Farmer explained that he had not received any correspondence regarding this issue from Fenland District Council to which Councillor Melton stated this was not true, he had kept Members fully up to date with a stream of advice and a full briefing from Legal. Councillor Farmer contested that he had not received this and it was agreed that ICT would look into this to ensure that Councillor Farmer receives all of this information and any future communications.

43/13 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT – 2014 SCHEME

Councillor Humphrey presented the report on the Council Tax Support - 2014 Scheme.

Councillor Booth stated there had been some debate last year regarding this and that the table on page 54 which included comments and how Fenland has mitigated these; some say "noted" and these deserved a fuller comment, especially point 4 where it stated "The Council should be more

efficient instead". Also, regarding the potential decrease in people claiming benefit by 2%; what has Fenland done in relation to that this year as it effects the total calculations. Councillor Humphrey responded stating this had been taken into account because of the reduction in claims. Councillor Booth stated that when Fenland was provided with the information from DWP, they expected a 2% reduction and now nearly 100,000 people are in employment, if less people were claiming would it mean Fenland could reduce the amount people would have to pay; can this process be improved. Councillor Humphrey stated he would need to come back to Councillor Booth with the answer.

It was DECIDED that the Council Tax Support Scheme be APPROVED.

44/13 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY MID-YEAR REVIEW 2013/14

Councillor Humphrey presented the report on the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy Mid Year Review 2013/14.

It was DECIDED that:

- **The report be NOTED;**
- **The increase in the CFR prudential indicator be APPROVED.**

45/13 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT (RIPA) – UPDATE

Councillor Humphrey presented the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) Update Report.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated she was surprised to hear that Fenland had not conducted any covert investigations as she had been told, after raising an issue with the appropriate officer, that it was being investigated. They were then told they could not be advised of the current situation due to confidentiality, this went on for a year before Councillor Mrs Bucknor complained to Steve Barclay; which resulted in the issue being resolved within seven days. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated she had it in writing that investigations were happening. Councillor Humphrey responded stating he could only reiterate what was in the report. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated she could forward emails to Councillor Humphrey and the Chief Executive for their information. Councillor Humphrey responded stating that it is possible that the investigation did not fall under this Act to which Councillor Mayor explained that not all cases are applicable to be investigated under this Act. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated she would still forward the emails for clarification.

Councillor Booth asked if these powers could be used to improve recovery; the less used the better.

It was DECIDED that report as received by the Corporate Governance Committee at its meeting on 3 December 2013 be NOTED.

46/13 MEETING THE CHALLENGE - SERVICE TRANSFORMATION AND EFFICIENCIES

Councillor Seaton presented the Meeting the Challenge - Service Transformation and Efficiencies report and informed Members that the Board of ARP had met yesterday and approved Fenland joining the partnership.

Councillor Yeulett welcomed this report and asked if the agreements would be time limited, would there be a review in the future and when would Fenland sign up to which Councillor Seaton responded stating that he did not have the timings but would get a written answer to Councillor

Yeulett as soon as possible.

Councillor Booth stated the report indicated that there had been no cuts to frontline services however when he had first been elected it was stated there had been some minimal cuts. He believed the report was misleading as it claimed there were no frontline loss of service when there has been some minimal loss; he therefore asked what level of cuts have referred to frontline services. Councillor Melton responded stating that it depended on what was classed as frontline services; the grass has been cut, bins emptied, parks neat and flowered; this is what the public see and enjoy. Fenland is in the high 90% for customer satisfaction and it has been made clear that frontline services will still be protected. Councillor Booth stated he realised this but that some services had been removed; eg the neighbourhood community teams, although these are not seen they are a frontline service which does impact what the public see. Councillor Melton stated that Fenland has had to make hard choices and these have had to be prioritised; this has not just affected the villages, in Chatteris the One Stop Shop has been closed in order to make Fenland more efficient. Members have to realise that over the next few years there will have to be some very tough decisions made as it has been made very clear that the money will not be there. Fenland will continue to prioritise and it is up to Members to decide the priorities and for electors to decide if Members have made the right decisions. Councillor Booth stated that this report suggests there have been no cuts made and therefore does not reflect what has happened.

Councillor Humphrey stated that it was clear from the report that there were some massive savings to be made which cannot be put to one side and this report has been recommended because of the potential savings for Fenland.

Councillor Seaton responded to Councillor Booth stating that it was the wording and the way the report was written that he was arguing and this would be addressed in the future.

Councillor Booth stated he had attended a briefing with Rob Bridge regarding what impact this would have on the contact centre, as a lot of enquiries would be made to them. Councillor Melton stated that a full risk assessment would be made on that issue as it is not yet known and this assessment would be open to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor Farmer stated that Wisbech Town Council receive phone calls from those living in Wisbech who require Fenland District Council because the Town Council has a Wisbech number. He suggested that each town should have a telephone number from their own town so not as to confuse people when they are looking for services to which Councillor Melton stated this had been noted.

It was DECIDED that:

- **The Council's approach to the Service Transformation and delivering considerable savings as part of the Council's MTFs be NOTED;**
- **It be NOTED that Cabinet have APPROVED the following steps:**
 - **The Council looks at entering into a partnership arrangement for the Council's payroll function;**
 - **The Council soft market tests the ICT function in order to assess further potential savings;**
- **The Council joins Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) for Revenues & Benefits be APPROVED;**
- **The Council receives a further report on democratic and governance arrangements for ARP to join the Joint Committee in February and the appropriate delegations to**

ARP to deliver the Revenues and Benefits function be APPROVED.

(Councillor Curtis declared a non-Pecuniary interest in this item, by virtue of him being Leader of Cambridgeshire County Council, and retired from the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting thereon.)

47/13 CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX TO ACCOMPANY AGENDA ITEM 11 - MEETING THE CHALLENGE - SERVICE TRANSFORMATION AND EFFICIENCIES

Councillor Booth made an observation regarding the confidential appendix to the report.

The content of the report was NOTED.

5:25pm

Chairman