

COUNCIL



27 FEBRUARY 2014 - 4:00PM

PRESENT: Councillor Archer, Booth, Broker, Bucknor, Mrs Bucknor, Chambers, Clark, Connor, Cornwell, Curtis, Farmer, Mrs French, Garratt, Hodgson, Miss Hoy (until 5.30pm), Humphrey, Jolley, Keane, King, Mayor, Mrs Mayor, Melton, Miscandlon, Murphy, Mrs Newell, Oliver, Owen, Patrick, Quince, Seaton, Skoulding, Stebbing, Sutton, Swan, Tanfield (until 5.15pm) and Tunley .

APOLOGIES: Councillors Butcher, Mrs Cox, Hatton and Yeulett

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Michelle Tanfield to her first meeting of full Council as the elected ward representative for Elm and Christchurch.

48/13 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 19 December 2013 were agreed and signed subject to the following amendments:

- Councillors Swan, Connor and Owen to be added to the apologies for that meeting;
- Minute number 45/13, Councillor Booth stated that use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers had been discussed at the Corporate Governance Committee, where he had asked if these powers could be used to improve recovery, officers had confirmed that the use of these powers had not been necessary, and would not have improved recovery.

49/13 CIVIC ENGAGEMENTS UPDATE - FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Councillor Mayor updated members on the civic engagement undertaken by himself and the Vice Chairman since the last full Council meeting.

50/13 TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL AND/OR THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE.

Memorial to the late Councillor Mac Cotterell MBE

The Chairman reminded members that it is the official naming ceremony of the Mac Cotterell Gallery at the Boat House in Wisbech on Thursday 6 March. The official unveiling of the plaque will take place at 1.00pm followed by a buffet lunch at 1.30pm.

Flying the Flag for the Commonwealth

The Chairman reminded members that they are all welcome to attend the first civic event in relation to flying the flag for the commonwealth which is taking place here at Fenland Hall on Monday 10 March at 9.45am and will be followed by light refreshments.

Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards

Paul Medd, Chief Executive, stated that he is pleased to advise members that the Council has been shortlisted, for a prestigious Local Government Chronicle (LGC) 'Efficiency' Award. Over 200 organisations entered the awards and Fenland is one out of only 8 Councils, and most notably the only District Council to be shortlisted in this category.

The 'Efficiency' award recognises the Councils innovative approach in making challenging efficiency savings across the authority, whilst still protecting important frontline services for local people.

Since 2010, we have achieved approximately £6m in efficiency savings, which represents a reduction in our funding of over 30%. I believe that we have achieved this through Councillors, managers and staff working together as one team to modernise working practices, investing in new technology, and reviewing working patterns to increase productivity. Our programme of modernisation has resulted in continues high levels of customer satisfaction, staff satisfaction and performance, whilst making the Council financially sustainable for the future.

A good example of this approach was FDC collaborating with Cambridgeshire County Council to create the Chatteris Hub. The Hub now provides combined County Council and District Council services under one roof, and has delivered significant savings. FDC has successfully pursued a shared service with Anglia Revenues Partnership and is continuing to explore other possible shared services arrangements where a strong business case exists.

The future funding situation continues to be challenging, however the Council remains in a strong position financially. This will enable the Council to focus upon its key priorities and make further improvements to service delivery.

51/13 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:

- With regards to item 9, will you allow a free vote within your group. Councillor Melton confirmed that the group have not discussed item 9 and therefore will have a free vote;
- Has the Council stopped consulting on major matters, item 9 today will look at the changes to the names of the leisure centres, and recently there were changes to the Concurrent Functions Grant, he asked why we have stopped asking members of the Council for their opinion on these important matters. Councillor Melton stated that he will address the Concurrent Grants issue as part of the debate today.

52/13 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 Melton stated that he is pleased to inform members that after several years of intense negotiations, the process has now been concluded and with regards to Application F/YR11/0930/F - Sainsbury's, Planning Permission has been issued today.

Council officers have worked closely with the applicants and respective legal advisors to ensure that the planning decision and associated section 106 agreement is robust and that all matters arising from the planning application process have been fully addressed.

The process has dealt with a number of complex issues all of which have been thoroughly scrutinised by the Council's legal advisors.

Today represents a further key milestone in the delivery of an important development for Whittlesey and Fenland.

- Councillor Mrs French asked if members could have an update following a recent article in the local newspaper where volunteers were spray painting dog mess in local parks to highlight the problem of dog fouling in Fenland, and asked what the cost of this was to the Council. Councillor Murphy stated that there are a large number of complaints to this Council regarding problems with dog fouling. The positive thing about the spray painting is

that it caused a lot talking about the issue. The Streetpride volunteers carried out the spray painting in the 4 towns, with plans in place to carry this out in the villages too, highlighting 19 in Wisbech, 100 in Whittlesey, 130 in March and 277 in Chatteris. We are trying to show the dog walkers themselves what mess they are making by highlighting the issue, the spray will dissolve in about 2 weeks. The spraying was carried out by Streetpride volunteers and the 4 cans of spray paint were £4.99 each, so in total has cost this Council just £19.96. We started with the towns as this is where the highest number of complaints has been received. Up to February there had been 219 complaints regarding the 4 towns and just 40 complaints with regards to the 14 villages. Residents are telling us that there is a problem and we are doing something about it;

- Councillor Mrs French stated that this year marks the 100th anniversary of the start of the first world war, and asked if any thought been made to ensure that repairs and maintenance are carried out to the War Memorials in Fenland. Councillor Melton thanked Councillor Mrs French for her comment, stating that it is a point well made. This is a 4 year memorial event marking World War 1 and this Council will ensure that funds are available as and when they are necessary to carry out any appropriate work;
- Councillor Mrs French stated that an issue was raised with Councillor Jolley with regards to members of the public being concerned about safety at the George Campbell Leisure Centre. Fire doors were locked and staff were not able to locate the keys, other fire doors were blocked by a bouncy castle. She asked if the staff at the Leisure Centre have adequate safety training. Councillor Jolley stated that he and Councillor Skoulding visited the leisure centre themselves, and spoke to Phil Hughes. Phil Hughes had spoken to the fire officers who were satisfied that the locked door was not a fire door, the fire officers raised no issues following that visit. He confirmed that all staff are safety trained, but would ensure that checks are made. Councillor Mrs French stated that the member of the public confirmed that the castle had been moved in the afternoon. Councillor Jolley stated that the castle was moved when there were members of the public there, adding that he is satisfied that the matter has been dealt with;
- Councillor Patrick asked if the Wisbech members were consulted before the re-naming of the leisure centres was carried out. Councillor Oliver confirmed that he was consulted on the new merchandising of the leisure centre not the re-naming;
- Councillor Patrick stated that he has some concerns with regards to planning determined by the County Council, and asked if there anything that can be done about this. Councillor Melton offered to investigate with County colleagues and get back to Councillor Patrick. Councillor Curtis stated that if Councillor Patrick emails the details to him, he will follow it up, which Councillor Patrick accepted;
- Councillor Bucknor asked that with regards to Promoting Fenland's Cemeteries, can Councillor Murphy clarify that the Council will be charging for cleaning headstones, and how often will the cleaning take place, will it be an annual service. Councillor Murphy confirmed that the charges will be one off to clean the headstones;
- Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked if the Council will be asking residents to contribute to the marketing plan for the cemeteries. She stated that people do not want to use the chapel at the Wisbech Cemetery as it is very unpleasant, and in need of repair. Councillor Murphy stated that the Council are in the early stages of looking at this marketing plan, but confirmed that there will be a consultation period. He reassured Councillor Mrs Bucknor that issues regarding the Chapel are being looked into;
- Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked for clarification that the Council are looking into the issues at the Mount Pleasant Chapel in Wisbech. Councillor Murphy confirmed this;
- Councillor Archer stated that with reference to a letter published in the local newspaper, Councillor Archer confirmed that although it has his name on, he had not contacted the newspaper. He asked that with reference to the CCTV control room modernisations why Manea, the second biggest village in Fenland, does not have the comfort of having a CCTV system in operation. Councillor Oliver confirmed that the Council are looking all the time at how we can cover the rural areas of Fenland, and hope to have a solution to this issue soon;

- Councillor Archer asked if there was a timescale to finding a solution to this. Councillor Oliver confirmed that there are currently no timescales. He stated that there are some deployable cameras that can be moved to areas not covered by CCTV, but experiencing anti-social behaviour problems or criminal damage. The police and the Community Safety Team would look at submitting a bid to place a camera, but there would need to be data in place to back up the need;
- Councillor Booth stated that this has been discussed previously, but that the cost is prohibitive, the cameras have not been moved for some time for this reason. Councillor Oliver stated that the cost is high, but if there is enough data to back up a bid to move the cameras then they will be moved, he added that we are looking at technology and improvements that can be made to the system;
- Councillor Booth congratulated Councillor Garratt and the Youth District Council for their support with regards to the Road Safety Campaign, and stated that he is pleased that the Youth District Council have agreed to continue to support this campaign for a second year. Councillor Garratt thanked Councillor Booth and agreed to feedback to the Youth District Council at their next meeting;
- Councillor Booth stated that the out of hours service and information offered on the Council's website for loose and aggressive dogs was raised at a recent parish council meeting. The website does not say what you should do out of hours, but effectively if you hold on the telephone line and listen to various messages eventually the help you receive is very good. He suggested that the information on the website is updated.

53/13

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC UNDER PUBLIC SPEAKING RULES

Councillor Mayor stated that he has received requests to ask questions from two members of the public, the questions relate to the same issue therefore the questions will be put to the Leisure Portfolio Holder, Councillor Jolley.

Councillor Mayor introduced Mrs Gunn and, informing her that she had 3 minutes in which to put her question, invited her to speak.

Mrs Gunn, who is the daughter of the late George Campbell, thanked members for allowing her to speak today. She stated that whilst the family accept the apology they have received from the Council, they are keen to ensure that no other family have to go through the distress that they have. They note that the original names of the leisure centres will be reinstated with plaques, but suggested the deeds of the leisure centre buildings and sites include a clause that states that the plaque remains in place.

Mrs Gunn stated that we, the family and friends of the late George Campbell, would like to understand:

- i) the process and timetable that was followed in respect of the decision to rename Fenland's Leisure Centres.
- ii) how widely was the new name and new logo tested before it was agreed.

Councillor Mayor introduced Mr Rawson and, informing him that he had 3 minutes in which to put his question, invited him to speak.

Mr Rawson reiterated Mrs Gunn's statement adding that Mrs Gunn and her family have received an apology, however the Hudson Trust have yet to receive an apology. He stated that there is already a plaque inside the building, but this is not enough, when new visitors come to the building they are looking for the Hudson Centre.

Mr Rawson asked when the Hudson sign will go up.

Councillor Jolley stated, in response to the questions asked, that he takes full responsibility for the decision taken, and apologised for any upset caused to the family members.

In response to the questions asked by Mrs Gunn, Councillor Jolley stated that in August 2013 key Cabinet members approved the budget and plans for the re-branding changes to the facilities - including new signage and other improvements. I am sorry that we did not consult over the brand changes with the family members concerned, this was a mistake and I regret that this happened. It is certainly a lesson learned and I am pleased to tell you that the names of Mr Hudson and Mr Campbell will continue to be displayed on the buildings.

With regards to users, the improvements put in place have been very well received. In terms of consultation prior to the changes, this was a business decision that would not normally involve a consultation prior to implementation. However as a result of the feedback we have received, we intend to give increased prominence to the history and name of the building, through both additional external signage and an information board within the reception area. With regards to the future, we understand the significant local support for the names of such buildings and do not intend to propose changes in the future.

In response to the question asked by Mr Rawson, Councillor Jolley confirmed that an email has been sent to the Hudson Trust by way of an apology. He stated that it is intended that the sign will be in place on the Hudson Centre in the next few weeks, and added that we will ensure that Mr Rawson is informed of the date once it has been confirmed, and invited to attend. Councillor Jolley confirmed that the Council will be extending the same invitation to residents of the nearby Edina Court and has also asked the Chair of the Hudson Trustees if he would like to attend.

Councillor Sutton stated 'fair play' to Councillor Jolley for standing up and saying that that he is sorry.

Councillor Mayor thanked Mrs Gunn and Mr Rawson for your questions today and for attending the meeting.

54/13 MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR MRS VIRGINIA BUCKNOR

Councillor Mrs Bucknor presented her motion as follows:

"Many people find the name change of the Hudson Leisure Centre to New Vision Fitness unacceptable. We all understand the need for rebranding and to modernise and attract visitors. However, this building would not have existed without the generosity of Alan Hudson and we ask that in compromise the building is called the Hudson New Vision Fitness".

Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated the following reasons for the motion:

- Members are here to represent the people of Fenland not to dictate to them, yet every member I have spoken to said they knew nothing of the plans to change the names of the leisure centres. This is not just my view but the view of the hundreds of people who signed the petition to restore the Hudson name to a position of prominence as well as the many people who shared this view on social media and the people that are here today.
- Wisbech is a historic town even mentioned in the Doomsday Book. We are all aware of past famous Wisbechians: Thomas Clarkson, Octavia Hill, Lilian Ream and the Peckover Family. A town is made up of the people who make their town special.
- Can I remind this council that we are supposed to be "100% people driven" but that your decision makes a mockery of this statement.
- I remind you we unanimously supported the proposal to name a Wisbech Street "Cotterell Way" in recognition of his contribution to the community, and yet with no consultation whatsoever you decided to go ahead and remove Hudson's name from Wisbech history. Hudson made part of this history when he donated land and money to help build the

swimming pool in Wisbech. He is the very reason it exists, he also donated his house next door, Edina Court, then a further £250,000 towards additional buildings in the grounds of his home, a room in the museum, the Wisbech St Mary Playing Fields, a palliative care unit, £10,000 towards a room for cancer patients in Wisbech's Trafford Ward. Even last year, his Trust contributed to our new Wisbech Information Centre.

- Go to the New Vision Fitness Website and try to find a mention of Fenland District Council, I could not find it anywhere even though Fenlanders pay for it, I have been assured by Councillor Jolley that it is not in preparation for sell off or farmed out to a management company, but he could be removed tomorrow and new thinking could take over.
- The portfolio holder in Cabinet for Wisbech Affairs is Councillor Oliver, yet he advised Wisbech Town Council he knew nothing about this change. Another Cabinet member here today said "what does it matter - What's in a name?" I was appalled by this cavalier comment. I wonder if his view is shared by the rest of the Cabinet and is this why no one was consulted.
- It appears that Councillor Jolley is taking a 'hit' for the team saying it was his decision alone. Really? The Leader did not know? Was a rubber stamp not produced anywhere? If that is the case the sooner we get rid of this divisive cabinet system, the better.
- Councillor Jolley has been doing his best to correct this error, but just bit by bit, because of the barrage of complaints this council has received. There have been some concessions since this outcry, first he proposed a plaque inside, then outside. Literature has been distributed airbrushing the names; I am now told that future literature will include their names. Well what a fiasco. Councillor Jolley proudly confirmed to me two weeks ago that there was money specifically put aside for all the replacement signage across Fenland, and nobody knew or agreed to it, it certainly was not mentioned at Overview and Scrutiny - was this deliberately omitted from us? So just how much has this cost because I was assured at Overview and Scrutiny the maximum spend would be £50,000. Did this include road signage?
- Some Councillors seem to think a plaque meets residents' concerns, it does not. Let's be quite clear, Wisbech people, will accept, as a bare minimum, and a reluctant compromise - Hudson New Vision Fitness, but please not just a plaque on a wall that can be taken down at any whim of this council or a future council.
- I ask that we give unanimous support to this motion naming the Hudson New Vision Fitness Centre, but also that we agree to the George Campbell New Vision Fitness Centre. I will be asking for a recorded vote.

Councillor Booth seconded Councillor Mrs Bucknor's motion, stating that this also needs to include the Manor New Vision Fitness Centre.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Mrs Bucknor for her motion and announced that the motion was now open for debate.

Councillor Miss Hoy presented an amendment to the motion, stating that it is very similar to Councillor Mrs Bucknor's motion, but that a compromise is not acceptable, New Vision Fitness should not be included in the names of the buildings, the leisure centres should return to their original names, The Hudson Centre, The George Campbell Centre and the Manor Centre.

Councillor Sutton seconded the amendment to the motion.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Miss Hoy for her amended motion, and announced that the amended motion was now open for debate.

Councillor Mrs Mayor stated that she was generally happy with the amended motion proposed by Councillor Miss Hoy, but that she would have offered some alternative wording to confirm that the name of the centre is displayed on the outside of the building and the New Vision branding is displayed inside the building.

Councillor Miss Hoy confirmed that she was happy to withdraw her amendment to the motion in lieu of Councillor Mrs Mayor's comments. Councillor Sutton, seconder, also agreed.

Councillor Mrs French seconded the amendment to the motion put forward by Councillor Mrs Mayor.

The Chairman confirmed that following the withdrawal of Councillor Hoy's amended motion, Councillor Mrs Mayor's amendment was therefore the motion under debate.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that she fully supports this amendment, this has been a costly mistake and none of this should have happened. What is being proposed here today is that the new signage is going to be removed, so we will be back to where we were, all at a cost to this Council. We appreciate marketing, but not airbrushing out the names and history of the buildings. She added that the literature will need to be changed also to reflect the names of the centres or this will cause confusion for new customers.

Councillor Hodgson stated that he is in support of this amendment.

Councillor Booth asked for clarification with regards to the new signage and for assurance that the new signage will be visible from a distance. Councillor Jolley confirmed that the project is in the hands of the designers in Wisbech at the moment.

Councillor Jolley said he would listen to the comments made this afternoon, and confirmed that the leisure centres needed to return to their original names, but stated that we still need to continue to promote New Vision Fitness on the centres, as since its introduction we have had more than 200 new members. It is the fitness suites that make the money in the centres and we need to be mindful of this. He confirmed that a sell-off has never been mentioned and that the new branding was simply put in place to increase income.

Councillor Curtis stated that everything that needs to be said has been said this afternoon, and we need to learn lessons from this.

Councillor Farmer agreed that all that needs to be said has been said.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that she would like a response from Councillor Jolley with regards to how we can ensure that this does not happen in the future. Councillor Jolley agreed that something needs to be put in place, stating that he would have a discussion with the Leader to find out what we can do.

Councillor Humphrey stated that for clarity what we are proposing is to provide the New Vision Fitness leisure services within the George Campbell Centre, The Hudson Centre and the Manor Centre.

Councillor Jolley confirmed that this is correct and that we can complement the New Vision signs with the building names.

Councillor Seaton stated that Councillor Jolley has stood up today and apologised unreservedly, but there is a responsibility to the whole of the Cabinet, we made a mistake. I support Councillor Jolley's apology here today, and add my apology too. He added that the New Vision Fitness branding is simply a marketing tool and agreed that the leisure centres should revert to their original names.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that by leaving or complimenting with the New Vision signs on the outside of the building we negate the motion.

Councillor Mrs Mayor stated for clarity that the New Vision signage will remain on the outside of the building, and the names of the leisure centres will be reinstated.

Councillor Quince stated that Councillor Jolley has admitted his mistake and given a heartfelt apology here today; he is doing a decent job and willing to admit when something has gone wrong. He added that he had known George Campbell and that he was a fine man and that he agreed with Councillor Mrs Mayor's amendment to reinstate the original names of the leisure centres.

Councillor Miss Hoy stated that she had been prepared to withdraw her amendment as Councillor Mrs Mayor proposed a very similar amendment, however it seems now to include New Vision on the outside of the building and that is not what was agreed.

Councillor Humphrey stated that the New Vision branding has replaced the FDC branding, but the names of the centres should also be reinstated.

Councillor Mayor stated the fascia's can show the name of the centre and the FDC branding to be replaced by the New Vision branding.

Councillor Farmer stated that Councillor Miss Hoy was proposing what Wisbech Town Council felt, and that is that there is no compromise. The names of the centres are reinstated on the outside of the building and inside you can brand any way that you want to.

Councillor Mrs French stated that Councillor Hoy has withdrawn her amendment.

Councillor Archer stated that Councillor Hoy had withdrawn her amendment as she thought it was effectively the same amendment, but it has transpired that it was not.

Councillor Booth stated that this is a confusing debate and was concerned what the public would be thinking. It is quite simple, we name the centres as they were previously and use the New Vision branding inside the building only.

Councillor Patrick agreed, stating that we rename the building, and do what you have to do to rebrand inside.

Councillor Bucknor agreed stating that we do not want any of the New Vision branding on the outside of the building.

Councillor Mrs Newell stated that the New Vision Branding is where the increased income is coming from, and that is why she believes the New Vision branding should be on show alongside the names of the leisure centres.

Councillor Mayor stated that he recognised that members were not able to fully agree on the wording of Councillor Mrs Mayor's amendment, and proposed the following wording:

- The names of the leisure centres should be re-established. The original names should be displayed on the outside of leisure centre buildings, namely The George Campbell Centre, The Manor Centre, The Hudson Centre and The Chatteris Centre, in place of the words "New Vision Fitness". The New Vision wording should be utilised inside the leisure centres.

Councillor Curtis seconded the amended motion as clarified by Councillor Mayor.

The amended motion as clarified by the Chairman was AGREED unanimously.

The vote was recorded as requested by Councillors Mrs Bucknor, Bucknor, Booth, Patrick, Skoulding and Archer, members voted on this item as follows:

In favour of the proposal - Councillors Archer, Booth, Broker, Bucknor, Mrs Bucknor, Chambers, Clark, Connor, Cornwell, Curtis, Farmer, Mrs French, Garratt, Hodgson, Miss Hoy, Humphrey, Jolley, Keane, King, Mrs Mayor, Melton, Miscandlon, Murphy, Mrs Newell, Oliver, Owen, Patrick, Quince, Seaton, Skoulding, Stebbing, Sutton, Swan, Tanfield and Tunley.

Against the proposal - None.

Abstentions - None.

(Councillor Seaton declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item by virtue of the fact that his mother lives in Edina Court)

55/13 **CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS - RECORDING OF VOTES IN RELATION TO DECISIONS ON BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX**

The Leader, Councillor Melton presented the Constitutional Amendments Report informing members that this report provides amendments to the Council's Constitution further to the implementation of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2014 and the revised requirements for recording of votes in relation to decisions on budget and council tax.

Councillor Seaton seconded the proposal.

Members AGREED that the Council notes the amendment to the Constitution as required by law and authorises the Monitoring Officer to make such typographical amendments as are necessary to produce revised clean text copies of the Constitution.

56/13 **FINAL CORPORATE PLAN 2014-17**

Members considered the report on the Final Corporate Plan 2014-17 presented by The Leader, Councillor Melton.

Councillor Connor seconded the proposal.

Members APPROVED Fenland's Corporate Plan 2014-17.

57/13 **GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2014/15 AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2014/17**

Members considered the General Fund Budget 2014/15 and Capital Programme presented by Councillor Humphrey, who informed them of some key points:

- 2013/14 savings have been delivered and we are estimating that we will be in line with our original budget at the end of the year;
- Following the provisional announcement before Christmas we have now received final notification of the Council's final settlement. This confirms that for 2014/15 we will receive 13.72% less grant and in 2015/16 15.84% less;
- For 2014/15 this means we need to deliver £1.135m of savings and I am pleased to say that £913,000 has already been delivered and the remaining £222,000 is identified. These have not all been easy and have meant that we as a Cabinet and Council have had to make tough decisions;
- These savings also incorporate the service transformation savings that were agreed by Council in December;

- When I presented the draft budget to Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Panel we were proposing a 1.9% increase in council tax. However, today we are proposing to freeze council tax for 2014/15. Although we have tough austerity measure on us as a Council, we also need to consider the financial challenges facing our residents;
- This therefore means we will protect residents in Fenland from an increase and will receive the council tax freeze grant of 1% from central Government. This leaves a shortfall of £50,000 which we are proposing is funded from the general fund reserve for 2014/15 and then forms part of the future savings requirement in 2015/16;
- The budget does not come without risks with volatility of business rates income, council tax support costs increasing, the savings required and potential budget pressures that may emerge during the year. However I am pleased to say that for 2014/15 we have a robust and balanced budget and we are also making strides towards the 2015/16 estimated savings target as well;
- from 2016/17 to 2017/18 it is expected further savings will be required, however these will be subject to the next spending review after the general election and so could be subject to change and be treated with caution;
- I will continue to brief members on these and the impact once we have clarity;
- I offer my thanks to the officers who have been working on this.

Councillor Melton seconded the proposal.

Councillor Booth stated that Councillor Melton had promised that he would be making a statement with regards to Concurrent Grants. Councillor Melton stated that he is not proposing any changes, we have to approve the budget here today, and that is the law. I have taken on board the comments that have been made, and I do not believe that we have come out well, there needs to be a full and comprehensive review, to come to a resolution that is fair. He added that he will be inviting all members of the rural villages to come along to contribute towards drawing up a solution that will be put before Council in May. He confirmed that there is £350,000 in that budget at this time, of which £100,000 has been committed to Christchurch Parish Council, all parish councils are now invited to bid for smaller projects from the Rural Capital Grants Fund, there is £10,000 a year that can also be used for bids. He stated that he believes in the rural communities and that is why he set up the grants in the first place, and that the sale of assets belongs to everyone in Fenland, adding that he recognises that rural parishes often feel that they are the poor relations, and that he intends to address this.

Councillor Booth thanked Councillor Melton stating that this is very welcome news. The whole of the Concurrent Grants situation has been badly handled. I welcome the moves you have outlined here today and look forward to the meetings.

Councillor Booth stated that this also raises a question with regards to the council tax freeze, although I welcome your suggestions, I hope that we listen to the parishes this time and look at the impact on the services they provide, we really have to listen. What has been announced with regards to the revenue budget is very welcome. Councillor Melton stated that it has been announced in this way so that it can be minuted and we can be held to account. This does not mean that you can bid for anything, and it is just that, a bid. There is only so much money in the pot. It is important to remember that parishes have access to other funds that the towns do not. We will be asking what the parishes are prepared to put in, and looking at match funding, and as I recognise that parish councils do not necessarily have the expertise I will offer some officer time to assist them.

Councillor Humphrey stated that the budget put before members today is here for approval and cannot be unpicked; the arrangements for the Concurrent Grants for this year are in place. Councillor Melton agreed that the budget cannot be unpicked for this year. Councillor Booth agreed that this is understood, and asked for clarification that we are saying that this will be reviewed. Councillor Melton agreed.

Councillor Curtis stated that he supports the council tax freeze for Fenland; the reality is that the situation in Cambridge is very different and the services are very different, the council tax base there has a big impact on people with needs. The debate there is about council tax and service provision, so is a different argument. It is about looking at the financial circumstances of different councils, our council tax base is not too bad and our levels of reserves are good, and can therefore justify this freeze. Councillor Melton agreed and thanked Councillor Curtis for his comments stating that he understood the difficulties at Cambridgeshire County Council and confirmed that he would have been voting for the 1.99% increase there.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor confirmed that she is happy to endorse, but is concerned with regards to villages as needs must be identified so that the resources go to where there is a need. There is a concern that if a clerk or chairman do not present their case well enough, that even if they have the most need, they will not be successful. Councillor Melton confirmed that will be part of the discussion, to look at the whole picture.

Councillor Archer stated that until this budget, Parish Councils had previously received the Concurrent Grant, and confirmed that he will look forward to further discussion with regards to this. Councillor Melton stated that the present system is not fit for purpose; the new system will be absolutely transparent.

Councillor Sutton congratulated the Leader, stating that it has been mentioned that we are out of date as other authorities have already moved away from this system. He added that we should be proud to have this support for rural areas moving forward.

Members AGREED unanimously that:

- **the General Fund revenue budget for 2014/15 as set out in paragraph 5 and Appendix A be approved;**
- **the Capital Programme and provisional funding statement as set out in Appendix C be approved;**
- **the Medium Term Financial Strategy as outlined in this report be adopted;**
- **the Treasury Management, Medium Revenue Provision, Investment Strategy, Prudential and Treasury Indicators and the revised Treasury Management Policy Statement as set out in paragraph 10 and Appendix D be approved;**
- **the expenses detailed in paragraph 7 be treated as general expenses for 2014/15;**
- **the Port Health levy for 2014/15 be set out as shown in paragraph 8;**
- **the Band D Council Tax level for Fenland District Council Services for 2014/15 be set at £245.61, no increase on the current year.**

The Local Authorities (Standing Orders)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2014 impose an obligation on Local Authorities (after 25 February 2014) to record all votes on decisions on budget and council tax, with this in mind members voted on this item as follows:

In favour of the proposal - Councillors Archer, Booth, Broker, Bucknor, Mrs Bucknor, Chambers, Clark, Connor, Cornwell, Curtis, Farmer, Mrs French, Garratt, Hodgson, Humphrey, Jolley, Keane, King, Mrs Mayor, Melton, Miscandlon, Murphy, Mrs Newell, Oliver, Owen, Patrick, Quince, Seaton, Skoulding, Stebbing, Sutton, Swan and Tunley.

Against the proposal - None.

Abstentions - None.

Members considered the Council Tax Resolution 2014/15 presented by Councillor Humphrey.

Councillor Melton seconded the proposal.

Members AGREED unanimously to pass the resolution as follows:

1. **It be noted that the Tax Base for the year 2014/15 has been calculated in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and associated regulations as follows:**
 - **27,011 being the amount calculated by the Council Tax Base for the year, in accordance with regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as amended).**
 - **(as detailed in Agenda Item 13 (1b)) being the amounts calculated by the Council, as the amounts of its Council Tax Base for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate, in accordance with regulation 6 of the Regulations.**
2. **The Council calculates that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2014/15 (excluding Parish Precepts) is £6,634,174.**
3. **That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2014/15 in accordance with sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government & Finance Act 1992 (as amended):**
 - **£55,959,202 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) (a) to (f) of the Act [Gross Expenditure including benefits & Town/Parish Precepts];**
 - **£48,452,556 being 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 & general grants & use of reserves];**
 - **£7,506,646 being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) exceeds the aggregate at 3(b), calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year [Net Expenditure, including Parish Precepts];**
 - **£277.91 being the amount at 3(c) divided by the Council Tax Base at 1(b), in accordance with Section 31B(1) of the Act [basic amount of its Council Tax for the year, including Parish precepts];**
 - **£872,472 being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 35(1) of the Act [Parish Precepts];**
 - **£245.61 being the amount at 3(d) less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) by the amount at (1(a)), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special item relates;**
 - **(as detailed in the table at Agenda Item 13 (3g)), being the amounts given by adding to the amount at 3(f) the amounts of the special items relating to dwellings in those parts of the Council's area mentioned above divided in each case by the amount at 1(b), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34 (3) of the Act, as the basic amounts of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate;**
 - **(as detailed in the table at Agenda Item 13 (3h)) being the amounts given by multiplying the amounts at 3(g) by the number which, in the proportion set out**

in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation band divided by the number which in that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands [Council Tax relating to the District council & Parish expenditure];

4. It be noted that for the year 2014/15 the major precepting authorities have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown in the table at Agenda Item 13 (4);
5. having calculated the aggregate in each case of the amounts at 3(h) and 4, the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act, 1992, hereby sets the following amounts as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2014/15 for each of the categories of dwellings as shown in the table at Agenda Item 13 (5);
6. authorise the publication of the amounts;
7. authorise the appropriate officer to demand the amounts in accordance with the Council Tax (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1992;
8. This Council hereby determines that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2014/15 is not excessive in accordance with Section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as mentioned by section 5 of the Localism Act 2011.

The Local Authorities (Standing Orders)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2014 impose an obligation on Local Authorities (after 25 February 2014) to record all votes on decisions on budget and council tax, with this in mind members voted on this item as follows:

In favour of the proposal - Councillors Archer, Booth, Broker, Bucknor, Mrs Bucknor, Chambers, Clark, Connor, Cornwell, Curtis, Farmer, Mrs French, Garratt, Hodgson, Humphrey, Jolley, Keane, King, Mrs Mayor, Melton, Miscandlon, Murphy, Mrs Newell, Oliver, Owen, Patrick, Quince, Seaton, Skoulding, Stebbing, Sutton, Swan and Tunley.

Against the proposal - None.

Abstentions - None.

59/13 CORPORATE ENFORCEMENT POLICY

Members considered the Corporate Enforcement Policy presented by Councillor Seaton.

Councillor Connor seconded the proposal.

Members AGREED to approve and adopt the revised Corporate Enforcement Policy.

60/13 ANGLIA REVENUE PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE AND DELEGATIONS

Councillor Melton presented the Anglia Revenue Partnership Governance and Delegations Report informing members that he and Councillor Humphrey are to be members of the Joint APR Committee and Councillor Seaton and Councillor Cornwell will be the named substitutes.

Councillor Humphrey seconded the proposal.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel went through the arrangements and supported the plans moving forward. There is a concern that all computer systems need to be working in parallel, and that this may be an issue. Councillor Humphrey confirmed that this would not be an issue and was one of the deciding factors when choosing ARP as they use the same systems.

Councillor Booth stated that they are the same systems but have modifications so will not match 100%. Councillor Humphrey reassured members that small issues will be resolved.

Councillor Curtis stated that this is a good step forward for Fenland District Council, and he hoped that we would be seeking other similar partnerships moving forward. He added that Fenland have a bit of catching up with regards to working this way as many other authorities have moved on further with this. Councillor Melton stated that this is the first stage and we are in advanced stages of talking to other authorities with regards to shared services. It is the only way to go now and over the next few months there will be discussions looking at more similar arrangements. He added that this Council will only enter into a partnership or shared service arrangement if it will not compromise or dilute the excellent services offered here.

Councillor Booth asked will the partnership updates be reported back to Council, Corporate Governance Committee or Overview and Scrutiny. Councillor Melton confirmed that updates will be reported to Overview and Scrutiny on an annual basis.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor expressed her concern that new Councillors are joining the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and that they have a lack of experience. Councillor Swan stated that new Councillors have to learn somewhere.

Members AGREED to:

- **Note that the Leader has nominated himself and Councillor Michael Humphrey to join members of the joint ARP Committee and Councillor Chris Seaton and Councillor Mike Cornwell be named substitutes;**
- **Note that the Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer is the Council's officer representative on the ARP Operational Improvement Board ;**
- **Note that the Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer, under their own delegations, will set the upper limit for write-off approvals by ARP;**
- **Note that the Constitution will be updated appropriately by the Monitoring Officer to reflect that the Council is part of ARP;**
- **Approve (subject to final ARP partner approval):**
 - **The formal resolutions set out in Appendix 1;**
 - **Confirm that the ARP Joint Committee request that the Operational Improvement Board (through the delegated officer) negotiate and enter into a section 113 agreement with Suffolk Coastal District Council and Waveney District Council.**

61/13 RATE RELIEF POLICY

Members considered the Rate Relief Policy presented by Councillor Humphrey.

Councillor Melton seconded the proposal.

Councillor Farmer pointed out that looking at annex b there are figures that do not add up. Councillor Humphrey confirmed that there are some typographical errors including those pointed out by Councillor Farmer that were identified at a late stage and that will be changed.

Councillor Farmer stated that with reference to the codes, since we had the discretionary rate relief we have disposed of the public toilets and suggested that this would be an opportune moment to add them. Councillor Humphrey confirmed that these are not changes to the policy but already in existence.

Councillor Bucknor stated that this is welcomed for small businesses but is concerned that those that have left their businesses to rot will get this benefit too. Councillor Humphrey confirmed that it is his understanding that businesses will only benefit when they have been brought back into use.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked if a shop left to rot for 30 years would they still be responsible for paying some rates. Councillor Humphrey stated that there must be some rates payable on empty properties as the rate relief entitlement will come in when the business is back in use, he agreed to check and clarify the situation.

Councillor Booth stated that he has noticed some typographical errors and asked which figures it includes. Councillor Humphrey agreed to ensure that all members have sight of the list that he has detailing the typographical errors.

Councillor Cornwell asked why caravans are not included in the rate relief policy as they are a business bringing people in to the area. Councillor Humphrey agreed and stated that he will investigate further.

Members AGREED to accept the recommendations of Cabinet that:

- **The Rate Relief Policy is revised to include the provisions indicated in section 2 above and that the new policy shown in Annex B is adopted with immediate effect.**

62/13 FENLAND INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

Members considered Fenland's Infrastructure Investment presented by Councillor Melton.

Councillor Seaton seconded the proposal.

Councillor Curtis stated that he is grateful to Fenland for taking this project seriously, this Council have done a good job securing some key deals. It has been interesting to hear people saying that this is not relevant to Fenland; the reality is that the issues relating to the A14 are a drain on this area. If we can get good people in and around Fenland we will survive and thrive. This project will open up the key arterial route into the County and in a few years we will have the King's Dyke Crossing in place. Access issues for Wisbech will be eased with plans for the M11. Superfast broadband will benefit this area also, and the combination of these factors can only be good for Fenland and Cambridgeshire as a whole. If all that you focus on is one little aspect of Fenland then that is not right, you need to look at the bigger picture.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that she has never supported this project and does not understand how Fenland can justify spending £800,000 on the data that 200 cars are or might be making use of it, and finds this challenging. She added that she did not understand how that by sorting the M11 issues Wisbech will benefit. Councillor Curtis confirmed that the plans are to take the M11 past Wisbech.

Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that she does not support the principal that there are 200 vehicles, and very little proof there are 200 vehicles, 'just a finger in the air' figure. She asked if we are going to be able to ask the other districts to support the A47 when it will have very little consequence to them. Councillor Melton stated that we are Fenland District Councillors, but all that concerns you is your ward, as a District Councillor, I am concerned about how the whole of the district can benefit from these proposals. A commitment to these proposals means that for the first time we are being taken seriously, and that is a fact. Councillor Curtis will be attending a Rail Summit in the House of Commons; we would not have been involved if it were not for our commitment to this project. If you want to see growth in this area you will support this proposal.

Councillor Archer agreed, stating that he was concerned but can see the bigger picture and supports the proposal.

Councillor Booth asked how strong the commitments are that we have King's Dyke Crossing, administration changes and we things do not always progress. This report does not give a formal vision that they will be delivered. There is mention about feasibility studies for a rail link, will this happen? Have we got a formal agreement in black and white? Councillor Melton confirmed that he made it clear from the first meeting that before I was prepared to put anything before members, these would be the conditions, if I found that any party was going back out on those conditions I would bring this back before you all. Councillor Curtis stated that there is nothing to stop the King's Dyke Crossing from going through, and the Wisbech to March rail link will happen we are determined to do everything to make sure it does, there is a commitment to ensure that we make it happen and Stephen Barclay is supporting us too.

Councillor King stated that he is a Wisbech member of Fenland District Council and in the Wisbech 2020 Vision a lack of infrastructure has been highlighted. Councillor Bucknor and Councillor Mrs Bucknor started WIN (Wisbech Infrastructure Now). He added that we all have to work in partnership with this, things do not just happen by themselves and we are demonstrating that we are working together for the good of Fenland. £800,000 is a lot of money, but spread over 25 years, this is a good deal for Fenland.

Councillor Connor agreed, stating that this is a 'no brainer' this will have huge benefits for Fenland, payments do not start until 2019/20 and we have 25 years to pay for this.

Councillor Owen stated that officers and members have been struggling to get us recognised, but we are in a position to drive forward with this proposal. If we do not commit we will not get it, it is as simple as that. We have got to make this commitment.

Councillor Farmer stated that the A14 is of vital importance to this area, we have to commit, it is crucial for the growth of this area.

Councillor Bucknor stated that we did start WIN, but I believe that it was Councillor Melton that said previously that we will not get this infrastructure in his lifetime, and Councillor Nick Clarke said we will not get it for 30 or 40 years. Councillor Melton stated that we are moving up, and because of the work that has gone into this project, and the pace that it is moving I believe that this will happen.

Councillor Archer agreed stating that people had been campaigning for years to get Manea Station back, and it happened, things change and we have to move with those changes.

Councillor Booth asked why there was not more transparency, and why is there no detail of the commitments made by other authorities. Councillor Melton confirmed that this information was confidential, and was shared with Councillor Mrs Bucknor and other members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel when they asked for it.

Members AGREED to approve the Fenland's Infrastructure Investment Report following consideration and approval by Overview and Scrutiny on 27 January 2014.

63/13 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT - 2014 SCHEME UPDATE

Members considered the Council Tax Support - 2014 Scheme Update presented by Councillor Humphrey.

Councillor Melton seconded the proposal.

Members AGREED the recommendation by Cabinet to approve:

- **Reference within the Council's CTS Scheme for 2014 is updated in accordance with the regulations referred to in section 1 of the report.**

64/13 SENIOR MANAGER PAY POLICY STATEMENT

Members considered the Senior manager Pay Policy Statement presented by Councillor Melton.

Councillor Seaton seconded the proposal.

Members AGREED to adopt the Senior Managers Pay Policy Statement 2014/15 at Appendix 1 as required by the Localism Act 2011.

6.45pm

Chairman