

# COUNCIL



**MONDAY, 19 MAY 2025 - 4.00 PM**

**PRESENT:** Councillor B Barber (Chairman), Councillor S Clark (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor C Boden, Councillor G Booth, Councillor G Christy, Councillor J Clark, Councillor D Connor, Councillor S Count, Councillor D Cutler, Councillor L Foice-Beard, Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor K French, Councillor R Gerstner, Councillor G S Gill, Councillor A Hay, Councillor P Hicks, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor S Imafidon, Councillor Mrs D Laws, Councillor C Marks, Councillor N Meekins, Councillor A Miscandlon, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor Dr H Nawaz, Councillor D Patrick, Councillor M Purser, Councillor B Rackley, Councillor D Roy, Councillor C Seaton, Councillor E Sennitt Clough, Councillor M Summers, Councillor T Taylor, Councillor S Tierney, Councillor S Wallwork and Councillor A Woollard.

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor J Carney, Councillor Mrs M Davis, Councillor S Harris, Councillor M Humphrey, Councillor J Mockett and Councillor D Oliver.

**C1/25**      **TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN FOR THE PERIOD TO THE NEXT ANNUAL MEETING AND TO RESOLVE THAT AN ALLOWANCE OF £4,120 PLUS TRAVELLING EXPENSES BE PAID TO THE PERSON ELECTED.**

It was proposed by Councillor Hoy, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and resolved that Councillor Brenda Barber be elected as Chairman of the Council for the period to the next Annual meeting and that she be paid an allowance of £4,120 plus travelling expenses.

Councillor Barber received the Chain of Office, signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and addressed the Council as follows:

In the time since I became a Councillor for FDC I have seen how special this place is and the people within it are what make it special. This is a well-run, efficient Council whose first purpose is to serve the public. This is true of everyone from the Chief Executive and Leader down to all the officers, staff and elected members. I am very proud to have been chosen as the new Chairman and I will do everything I can to live up to the trust you have all placed in me.

Councillor Barber stated that she would like to formally acknowledge and thank the previous Chairman, Councillor Nick Meekins, for undertaking the role from May 2023 to date and presented him with his Past Chairman's badge.

Councillor Meekins congratulated Councillor Barber and made the following announcement.

Firstly, I must thank you for giving me the opportunity to be Chairman and represent Fenland District Council at a host of civic events, in 2023/24 I attended 54 events and in 2024/25 attended 80. I hosted Civic Receptions at Gorefield and Carol Services at St Peter's church in Wisbech. I also hosted two coffee mornings in the Chamber, the first raised money for MAGPAS and the second for Damsons, a dementia charity based at Peckover House in Wisbech. Before both Christmases I visited the staff at the Boathouse, the Base and here in Fenland Hall to thank them for their hard work.

2023 was a mixed year for me personally – my wife, Sara and I brought Parkrun to Wisbech and it now regularly attracts around 150 people doing the 5K course and with the volunteers and spectators there must be nearly 200 people enjoying the park on a Saturday morning. Many of you

will know that my mother spent most of 2023 in either hospital or a care home with dementia, it was tough time for the family, she died shortly before Christmas 2023. But it wasn't always doom and gloom for the Meekins family in 2023, my daughter Emily gave birth to George, my first grandchild in September and my other daughter Alice got engaged to Dan in December. They married in Oslo last August, doing part of the father of the bride's speech in Bulgarian was a surreal experience, she is now expecting my second grandchild.

Now to the thank you's. To the ladies of Member Services I am most grateful, especially to Jo who sorted out my civic calendar so well. To Paul, Carol and Amy for their support and advice on Full Council days. Most important of all is my special thanks to Sara who has accompanied me on most of the events I've attended and helped me immensely through the ups and downs of the past couple of years.

**C2/25**      **TO ELECT A VICE CHAIRMAN FOR THE PERIOD TO THE NEXT ANNUAL MEETING AND TO RESOLVE THAT AN ALLOWANCE OF £1,000 PLUS TRAVELLING EXPENSES BE PAID TO THE PERSON ELECTED.**

It was proposed by Councillor Foice Beard, seconded by Councillor Meekins and resolved that Councillor Sam Clark be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Council for the period 2025/26 and that she be paid an allowance of £1,000 plus travelling expenses.

Councillor Clark signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office and addressed the Council by thanking members for giving her the opportunity to hold the position of Vice-Chairman and stated that she will support the Chairman and represent Fenland in the role.

**C3/25**      **PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings of 24 February and 14 March 2025 were confirmed and signed.

**C4/25**      **TO RECEIVE ANY ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL AND/OR THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE.**

There were no announcements from the Chairman or Chief Executive.

**C5/25**      **MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL 2025/26**

The suggested meeting dates for the Annual Meeting and for the ordinary meetings of the Council for 2025/26 were proposed as follows:

- Monday 21 July 2025
- Monday 15 September 2025
- Monday 15 December 2025
- Monday 23 February 2026
- Monday 13 May 2026

**Proposed by Councillor Barber, seconded by Councillor Boden and AGREED the proposed dates for the Annual Meeting and ordinary meetings of the Council for 2025/26.**

**C6/25**      **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 Barber reported that there had been no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 8.6. Under Procedure Rule 8.4, Councillor Booth, as Leader of the Opposition, asked the following questions:

- Councillor Booth asked for an update on Local Government Reorganisation after the letter to Central Government had been sent and has there been any further discussions with other local councils in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and any progress made with regards to putting a proposal forward to Government? Councillor Boden advised that an enormous amount of work has been undertaken in a very cooperative way between all the Leaders of the Councils in Cambridgeshire and in Peterborough City as well as the Chief Executives and other officers of those councils, with a great deal of data now being collated to make assessments of the alternative possible make up that there may be for two or three unitary authorities covering the footprint of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. He explained that the data collected will be applied to those alternatives to inform an initial decision by leaders as to which probably two options will be taken forward for further analysis so that a decision may be made before the response deadline of the 28 November. Councillor Boden stated that there is no requirement for everyone to be saying the same thing, and that it is extremely helpful for everyone to be using the same data set to inform and explain the positions that are reached and even if they are putting forward slightly different proposals then they should still be able to put forward one proposal and one document between all seven local authorities so that it demonstrates that there has been collaboration and that the options are clear. He explained that it may still be too early to state what those options are as technically there are six different options and theoretically other options could still come forward, but it is anticipated that those six options will be reduced to two within the next couple of months. Councillor Boden explained that his intention will be to have a meeting of Full Council in order for that process to be explained and to get the agreement or otherwise of Full Council with regards to the approach that Fenland will take in those discussions which will take place in July as to how this Council moves forward with a smaller number of options to explore in detail. He made the point that a lot of money is also being spent, particularly by the County Council, in supporting the process but there is no guarantee whatsoever that the Secretary of State, Angela Rayner, or Jim McMahon, the Government Minister, will not respond and state that they do not like the suggestions that are made and put forward their own proposal. Councillor Boden explained that the first indications in the process are not hopeful, with the first local authority in this round of reorganisation to be considered is Surrey County Council and then there are five other County Councils together with nearby unitary authorities which will be considered under phase 1 and Fenland is being considered under phase 2 which is 21 County Councils together with associated unitary authorities such as Peterborough City Council. He explained that Surrey County Council put forward a solution that they indicated that they wanted a single unitary authority and that the eleven District Councils in Surrey agreed to provide an alternative solution with three unitary authorities but a couple of weeks ago Jim McMahon announced that he is considering two. Councillor Boden expressed the view that he is not enthused or confident following the significant amount of work which has taken place that a resolution will be made and which the Government will accept. He added that this Council needs to do its best for the people of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and he has to do the best for the residents of Fenland, with him working really hard in accordance with Government instructions to produce the recommended geography for the assumed two unitary authorities. He added that a special meeting of Full Council will be convened at the right time which will be of interest to all members where much more suggested detail will be available with his suggestion of how to move forward and a debate can take place.
- Councillor Booth thanked Councillor Boden for his comprehensive update, and he expressed the view that the reason authorities in Surrey did not reach the option that they had wanted was because they were not speaking with one voice. He expressed the opinion that the more unified approach that is presented means that you are likely to reach that conclusion. Councillor Booth added that he would encourage the closer working which seems to be taking place already.
- Councillor Booth referred to the new Inspire projects and stated that as members of the Cabinet have now changed there appears to be a change in the responsibilities members have under the project. He questioned as to who will have the final say and asked whether it will be going to the new project board who are yet to meet? Councillor Boden stated that the

Inspire projects have been split between more than one Cabinet member due to the size of the ambition which is involved and as a result he has asked two members of Cabinet to take responsibility for the Inspire projects specifically and whilst they are going to be leading on those, it will be the role of Cabinet as a whole to take collective decisions and where appropriate and necessary for questions and matters to come back before Full Council, especially at budget time. He added that the items will need to appear in the Council's capital and revenue budgets particularly the capital side in order that it can ensure that what is actually put forward is affordable and it will ultimately be Full Council who will decide when decisions are being made about the budget for future years and what is and what is not included. Councillor Boden explained that it is much too early to identify specific timescales for specific projects as that is being considered at the present time and the Council will be prudent in what it does whilst also being ambitious. He explained that with regards to the new Project Advisory Group it is meant for any specific project which is decided will be useful for Cabinet's direction to be scrutinised by members and currently there is nothing proposed. Councillor Boden added that he would hope that there will not be the need to utilise that group, however, if there does become a reason to call a meeting, he will ask for the committee to be constituted in order that the committee can participate in a decision-making process.

**C7/25**      **TO RECEIVE REPORTS FROM AND ASK QUESTIONS OF CABINET MEMBERS WITH PORTFOLIO HOLDER RESPONSIBILITIES, IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULES 8.1 AND 8.2.**

Members asked questions of Portfolio Holders in accordance with Procedure Rules 8.1 and 8.2 as follows:

- Councillor Gerstner referred to the Whittlesey Relief Road Strategic Outline Business Case (SOBC) and stated that given the low benefit to cost ratio (BCR) and that further funding of £22,000 is required for the next stage, he would like clarification as to how funding will be obtained even though there is a strong case for the relief road. He questioned that, given that the Royal Haskoning report from March 2021 is now four years old, whether it is still relevant? Councillor Boden stated that this is a very important issue not only for the residents of Whittlesey but for the whole of Fenland because of the implications of what will happen if no action is taken, with the implication to the centre of Whittlesey being that it will end up being totally gridlocked by traffic, meaning that Whittlesey will not be able to take its fair share of economic and housing growth as the road system will not be sufficient to be able to take the traffic, which was very clearly enunciated in the SOBC, and is the subject of a motion in today's agenda. He explained that the BCR which Councillor Gerstner referred to was not high, however, it is not the same as it used to be and in previous years BCR was a specific number and if you went above a certain number then you would obtain a project going forward and if you were below that number then you would not. Councillor Boden explained that now it is a much more nuanced approach, and it is not just the BCR which is relevant, but it includes all the associated elements too, with there being several items mentioned in the report which are associated with the project. He stated that the recommendations in the SOBC include that a further £220,000 is spent in order to explore the further possibilities to produce scheme which will increase the likelihood of being able to move forward to an outline business case. Councillor Boden explained that, at the earlier Cabinet meeting, it was agreed that officers can now proceed and approach various sources to see if that funding is available and Cabinet agreed that the most obvious place to go is the Combined Authority and that will be the first place that officers will approach to seek that funding. He expressed the view that he is not confident that it will come immediately but he knows that Councillor Gerstner will recognize that members have battled for many years on this subject and that battle will continue until a satisfactory resolution is found. Councillor Boden stated that reference has been made to the Royal Haskoning report which was an inception report, and he explained that if there is a major infrastructure project such as this, there are seven stages which need to be overcome which start at stage

zero to six with stage zero being the inception report which was what Whittlesey Town Council funded. He explained that the positive report provided the opportunity for the SOBC and it will now be suggested that the further money is spent in order to see how that case may be amended in order to justify moving to the outline business case.

- Councillor Booth thanked Councillor Mrs Laws for the update concerning the Local Plan but stated that what is disappointing is that there still is no timetable for when things are going to take place. He made the point that the Local Plan should have been completed by February 2022 and it is now three years from this and it is not going to be completed for at least a couple of years so it would be good to get some timetables that can be worked towards and get it delivered, bearing in mind Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Councillor Mrs Laws responded that she understands but it has been out of the Council's control for several reasons but the situation is complicated with the LGR and with very new regulations coming forth from Central Government relating to Local Plan delivery expectations. She stated that officers are now working on this as well as waiting for some further clarification nationally but she is not in a position to provide a definitive answer to the next steps but intends to do so at the earliest opportunity and will update members in due course. Councillor Booth stated that with the changes to the proposals from Government there is a new number allocated to Fenland for the number of houses, approximately a further 50 dwellings per year, and asked does this mean that the Council has to go out to public consultation again or is this something that requires clarification? Councillor Mrs Laws responded that it requires further clarification and she acknowledges that it is disappointing for members as she knows how important the plan is but does not want to provide incorrect information.
- Councillor Gerstner stated that it has been a while since members have received any update about parking enforcement and asked, considering there is now a new administration at County Council, has there been any contact with them at all? Councillor Mrs French responded that no progress has been made but it will be discussed at the June Cabinet meeting.

## **C8/25**

### **MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR SENNITT CLOUGH**

The Chairman drew members attention to a proposed alteration to the motion which had been tabled, which in accordance with procedure rule 12.7a members agreed.

Councillor Sennitt Clough presented her motion regarding the Fenland Flag, Councillor Boden seconded the motion, and it was opened for debate.

Members made the following comments:

- Councillor Boden stated that initially he was not particularly in favour of having time spent on selecting a flag for the Fens, however, he is aware that there are a number of people who are interested and concerned about it and it has become a big issue for them. He explained that the Flag Institute has been contacted by Councillor Sennitt Clough in her position as the Chairman of the Culture, Arts and Heritage Committee and it is clear that the Council's central geographical position within the Fens means that if the call for a Flag for the Fens is to be met then the Council are the ones who have to meet it. Councillor Boden added that he does understand why people want the identity of the Fens to be reflected in a flag and that it is very much a cultural issue as well as being an arts issue too, with the possibility of an enormous amount of enthusiasm and interest generated by what could be quite an exciting competition. He explained that he did have concerns with regards to any associated costs and the amount of officer time that would be impacted because of this and following discussions with Councillor Sennitt Clough it has been decided that this project will not go ahead unless it is at no external cost to the Council and that officer time is kept to a minimum. Councillor Boden explained that apart from the publicity that is involved and the IT set up which is going to be required this will be done at minimal cost to the Council in terms of officer time. He stated that regardless of that fact it can and should actually generate a significant amount of interest as

the Fens and the people of the Fens have a great deal to be proud of as well as a lot to identify. Councillor Boden expressed the view that he is looking forward to schools engaging with the competition, for many people putting forward their own ideas and receiving some very imaginative designs coming forward. He added that he is pleased that he will not form part of the judging panel because there are other people who will be able to make a judgement with the entries and, in his view, it is important that those individuals are spread from outside Fenland and not just from Fenland itself. Councillor Boden made the point that it is not a major issue or something that has to be done but it is responding to a significant amount of public demand and according to the Flag Institute it is the Council who are required to take the lead. He stated that many of the children's entries for the competition may well be in a simplistic form and, therefore, it needs to be made very clear that it is the idea behind the flag rather than the exact painting or creation of it which will be important when being judged as well as the vexillological appropriateness of the applications concerned. Councillor Boden expressed the view that he looks forward to the initiative which will capture the imagination of people and whilst it is up to individuals as to what flags they choose to fly, having a Flag for the Fens will mean that the uncertainty which some people feel and the difficulty of having anything formally recognised by the Flag Institute will be overcome. He added that he welcomes the competition and Councillor Sennitt Clough will be the member who will oversee the project and he reiterated that this will not be an initiative at cost to the council or at significant officer cost and will be undertaken voluntarily by appropriately qualified external persons and under the leadership of Councillor Sennitt Clough.

- Councillor Patrick stated that the current Flag of the Fens, albeit unofficial, that was not endorsed when a previous motion came before Full Council, has gained the support of Peterborough City Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, South Holland District Council, Gedney Hill Parish Council, Outwell Parish Council, Steven Barclay MP, Charlotte Cane MP, Sir John Hayes MP and Andrew Pakes MP. He questioned that if a particular flag wins the competition then will it replace the Flag of the Fens and what will happen when the new unitary authority is formed in a few years and all the other councils have supported it do not support the winning flag design. Councillor Patrick expressed the opinion that if the Flag of the Fens wins then it must be premeditated and renders a competition useless, therefore, he cannot support the motion.
- Councillor Tierney expressed the view that there is no current Flag of the Fens and there is not a flag simply because a council declares it, it is a cumulative process and it has to go through certain structures. He stated that personally he does not support the idea of a flag for the Fens, he feels it is a waste of time, money and there are better things to do. Councillor Tierney questioned whether there will then be a flag for Wisbech, a flag for Medworth or one for Alexander Road, asking how far does this go but realises that he is representing the people of the area, with a lot of them feeling differently to him and if there has to be a process it should be through a fair competition and it should not be that someone decides this is the flag and starts pushing it around to people. He added that he appreciates Councillor Sennitt Clough's leadership on this issue and believes a proper competition is the way forward and if the other flag that claims to be the Flag of the Fens enters the competition and wins that is fine.
- Councillor Purser stated that he endorsed this and still does, he is a proud Cambridgeshire and Fen man and to put up a flag for the Fens shows that people are proud of the region, which he feels is important. He stated that he still wears the Cambridgeshire badge to show people that he comes from here and feels this would give people a sense of belonging and a sense of pride.
- Councillor Roy stated he initially proposed a motion on this issue and feels this is a vote for the people and about how members represent those that have elected them to be here. He referred to Councillor Tierney mentioning a public consultation and thinks they will be open to a lot of scrutiny with the competition, it could be seen that it is already a predetermined flag that is going to be voted for should that flag win and Council needs to be mindful of this.
- Councillor Booth expressed the view that this is a nonsense motion, there is a Flag of the Fens, people are using it and it has been reported that the person who designed it

approached the Flag Institute and they have already said there is community support for the flag. He feels that the only piece missing being elected representatives supporting it and the only place not supporting it is this Chamber and the only reason for that is, in his opinion, because an opposition councillor put it forward. Councillor Booth stated he does not support the motion as he thinks there is a Flag of the Fens already being widely used and is endorsed by the community.

- Councillor Sennitt Clough in summing up quoted from the Flag Institute “where no historical design exists for a community the Flag Institute’s preference for the development of a design is through a public competition. This maximises public involvement in the process and mandate for the subsequent adoption. Where a community is unable or unwilling to run such a competition, the Flag Institute will consider individual proposals provided they have formal support from suitably representative bodies for the community in question.” She made the point that in this case, the Council is willing to run a competition and this is the Flag Institute’s preference because it maximises public involvement in the process and members are elected representatives here to represent those people who elected us.

**The motion was approved.**

## **C9/25      MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR BODEN**

Councillor Boden presented a motion on a planning application for expansion of operations at Saxon Pit at Whittlesey, seconded by Councillor Booth and opened for debate.

Members made the following comments:

- Councillor Booth stated that he fully endorses the motion and there is a need to take as much action as can be taken to protect the residents of Whittlesey. He referred to the air quality monitoring asking that now the equipment is in place what are the results?
- Councillor Gerstner expressed the opinion that everyone is in agreement on this, with the application being a bad application for Whittlesey and the surrounding area and in the past 7 years there has been dust, noise, pollution and water discharge that is not legally allowed as one of the applicants does not have a permit to do so and the Environment Agency have not been fully transparent. He stated that Councillor Boden has done a good job in leading this. Councillor Gerstner stated that the original application for this site did have the amount that they are now looking to achieve but two years ago when they came to County Council for that planning application the applicant scaled back the application due to, in his view, pressure from local residents and the amount of push back so the applicant applied for much less in terms of waste, disposal, incinerated bottom ash and the amount of traffic movements. He made the point that now two years later there is a revised plan which now resembles the original plan and he believes it is totally wrong the amount of traffic, with a relief road already been talked about, and doubling the amount of HGVs, with Whittlesey having the second highest HGV movements in Fenland, it is not just clean HGVs with the average HGV losing 20 kilos of rubber from its tyres over its lifetime and the noise of the lorries coming in and out, with him witnessing two lorries flaunting the rule of no right turn coming into Whittlesey by turning left and going up to the roundabout coming back through Whittlesey but the applicant cannot be blamed for this as he has put measures in place. Councillor Gerstner expressed the view that it is the mitigated and cumulative effects for the residents and their welfare and he fully supports the motion.
- Councillor Nawaz stated that he supports the motion and of particular concern to the residents, who members have a duty to represent, is that this has been going on for long enough over a matter of years and years and he has been party to some of the discussions, seeing a geological chemistry report which indicated a number of toxic substances and not long ago there was a incident where there was a mass death of marine life but apart from the direct toxicity to marine life he thinks there is pollution in the air along with noise, dust and particulate matter emanating from the rubber of the wheels of the lorries as well as the carbon monoxide, sulphur and nitric gases. He acknowledges that there needs to be an

industry and there also needs to be residents living side by side, with there needing to be a symbiotic relationship whereby both can benefit from each other but that balance shifted long ago away from the residents and he feels the residents precede these current works by many years. Councillor Nawaz expressed the view that in the first instance it should be that this Council resolves to oppose this application and secondly, should it be approved and the other side of local government decide that residents opinion can be overruled, Fenland District Council officers should be able to monitor the side effects and hopefully even be able to take certain measures to ameliorate those toxic gases, noise and pollution.

- Councillor Taylor stated that he will support the motion but asked if Councillor Boden would like him to speak to farmers in the area to see if any of their tox reports on their produce have come back any different over the past few years and instead of trying to deal with the Environment Agency how in depth is Middle Level and the Drainage Boards being involved to see if they have got any fungal differences in their waterways?
- Councillor Roy stated that he will be supporting the motion, it appears after the incinerator there is another company here that does not care about the health and well-being of the residents and that Fenland is becoming a bit of a dumping ground for all kinds of toxic waste
- Councillor Tierney stated that he will be supporting the motion, he is fed up with Fenland being a dumping ground for every bad policy connected to waste, which needs to be challenged. He feels on issues, such as this, members do all need to stand together and he thinks it is helpful that Councillor Booth seconded the motion, the County Council is currently controlled by Liberal Democrats and whilst planning should never be political people are only human and it is very useful to have a united voice on this issue.
- Councillor Mrs Laws stated that she attended Whittlesey Town Council Planning Committee and it was a total unanimous decision, they are consultees and were opposed to this application having listened to the residents of Whittlesey and the surrounding areas.
- Councillor Boden in summing up referred to Councillors Gerstner and Nawaz being correct to identify that one of the issues here is the significant increase in the number of HGV movements and Councillor Nawaz was correct to say that this is not just the inconvenience and the noise but the particulate matter which is emitted by these HGVs, specifically from their tyres rather than their exhausts, with exhaust levels being better regulated now but no improvement in the matter that comes from the tyres. He feels that this means, as far as the particulate matter is concerned, which is a proven danger to health, that the greatest danger lies close to the main road getting access to the site and that is why this Council has its most accurate monitors near to the main roads so it can be seen which pollution may emanate from there. Councillor Boden referred to Councillor Booth asking about the readings, with the equipment having been in place for many years which was supplemented recently as a result of a motion passed at Council by another type of monitor which does not provide the accuracy that is required for evidential purposes but does allow for information to be available in almost real time for members of the public to be able to see, with the accurate monitors taking over a year to produce a reported on their readings and the new monitors which have been put in Hallcroft Road give the opportunity to see on a day-to-day and hour by hour basis whether there is a pollution event taking place and if so how it is monitored and perceived in numerical terms. He continued that this particular monitor has been put in several months ago for repair and recalibration and the provider of the monitor has taken an inordinate amount of time in getting this done, with officers pushing extremely hard but he does understand the monitor is now available to be reinstalled imminently but it does not provide the Council with evidential information. Councillor Boden referred to Councillor Taylor's suggestion that farmers be approached for their tox reports but stated that one of the big problems is that it is almost impossible to isolate the cause of much pollution so when it is found there is a pollution spike identifying which source is responsible can be extremely difficult and sometimes it is counterintuitive, providing an example and that in summer some of the dust can be agricultural dust. He continued that on occasion the dust leaving Saxon Pit has been witnessed going towards residential areas as it can be thick at times so it is vitally important to monitor what is going on and to oppose what is proposed where there is a significant increase in potential pollution and if it cannot be

stopped from happening at least to make sure there is better monitoring and better controls in place to protect the interests of the residents of Fenland.

**The motion was approved.**

*(Councillor Hoy declared that as she would be taking up a position on the Planning Committee for the County Council which would be determining an application on Saxon Pit in due course and took no part in the discussion and voting thereon)*

#### **C10/25      NEW PROCUREMENT STRATEGY**

Members considered a new Procurement Strategy to align to the Council's Business Plan.

Councillor Boden, in presenting the report, stated that this new Procurement Strategy does not contain any new principles but what it does do is to align those principles more clearly and more closely to the Council's Business Plan, particularly in relation to some very significant procurement issues which are coming up in the near future in relation to the Fenland Inspire projects. He continued that it was felt appropriate to keep the governance as watertight as it can that a revised Procurement Strategy be produced. Councillor Boden expressed the opinion that procurement is a very troublesome area sometimes for local councils and if procurement is wrong, not only on occasion can it create a significant loss to the taxpayer, but sometimes it can hide things far worse than this and, therefore, it is important that there is a fully up-to-date strategy which is adjusted to reflect the change there is going in this Council over the course of the next couple of years in terms of some significant procurement items.

**Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and AGREED to implement the draft Procurement Strategy with effect from 19 May 2025.**

#### **C11/25      COMMITTEE BALANCE, POLITICAL BALANCE AND ALLOCATION OF SEATS**

Members considered the Committee Balance, Political Balance and Allocation of Seats report and the Chairman drew members attention to the addendum which had been circulated to them.

Councillor Boden, in presenting the report, thanked officers for doing the political proportionality calculation which is the same as last year and he also thanked Councillor Booth for providing the required information. He referred members to the tabled Appendix C which shows the names of the individuals who are being proposed for the various committees of the Council.

**Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Booth and AGREED:**

- **to approve the Committees and Panels set out at Appendix A for the 2025/26 municipal year;**
- **the terms of reference set out at Part 3 of the Council's Constitution in relation to the committees and panels referred to at paragraph 3.1 with the amendments detailed at Appendix B;**
- **the politically proportionate allocation of seats to Committees and Panels as set out in Appendix C;**
- **the allocation of seats and position of Chairman and Vice Chairman also as set out in Appendix C;**
- **the appointments to seats allocated in accordance with paragraph 3.4 (Appendix C) including any co-opted or non-members;**
- **the list of Outside Bodies as set out at Appendix D for 2025/26;**
- **the politically proportionate allocation of seats to Outside Bodies all as set out in Appendix D; and**
- **to note that the distribution of seats amongst Outside Bodies, to achieve overall political proportionality based on the allocations approved at paragraph 3.7 and**

the subsequent appointments to those seats will be discussed between Group Leaders and presented for approval at the next meeting of Cabinet on 16 June 2025.

**C12/25**      **CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY APPOINTMENTS**

Members considered the Combined Authority Membership Appointments report, and the Chairman drew members attention to an addendum to the report which had been circulated and provides an update as to the overall political proportionality across the constituent area as well as revised nominations to the seats allocated to Fenland District Council.

Councillor Boden, in presenting the report, stated that it has taken 10 hours of his time dealing with political proportionality and the numbers circulated to members are not the same as in the original report as there has been some significant amount of discussion which has taken place at the Combined Authority, however, the entitlement to membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to the Audit and Governance Committee of the CPCA have remained the same and it is other councils which have had some changes.

**Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Sennitt Clough and AGREED to:**

- **appoint the Leader of the Council to act as the Council's appointee to the Combined Authority with Councillor Hoy to act as his substitute;**
- **appoint Councillors Sennitt Clough and Hay as members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the CPCA, with Councillors Foice-Beard and Mockett to be substitutes;**
- **appoint Councillor Christy to the Audit and Governance Committee of the CPCA, with Councillor Wallwork as the substitute;**
- **note the Leader's nominated appointments to the Thematic Committees as highlighted in Appendix 3; and**
- **delegate authority to the Chief Executive to make any amendments to the appointments to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Audit and Governance Committee in consultation with the Political Group Leaders as required between now and the next annual meeting of Council.**

**C13/25**      **RESOLUTION TO EXTEND 6-MONTH RULE**

Members considered the passing of a resolution under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 authorising Councillor Harris' continued absence from meetings for the period of 3 months from 19 May 2025 due to recent bereavements presented by Councillor Boden.

Members made comments as follows:

- Councillor Nawaz passed his condolences to Councillor Harris.

**Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and AGREED to approve Councillor Harris' non-attendance at meetings for a period of 3 months commencing on 19 May 2025 and ceasing on 19 August 2025, unless a further resolution is passed, in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972.**

**C14/25**      **FRAUD SERVICES S.113 AGREEMENT (WITH CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX)**

Members considered a Section 113 Agreement with Maldon District Council to provide fraud services for the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) presented by Councillor Mrs French as Portfolio Holder for ARP.

Councillor Mrs French highlighted to members that Maldon District Council are only providing services in relation to fraud matters and all other matters will continue to be provided by ARP.

**Proposed by Councillor Mrs French, seconded by Councillor Boden and AGREED to approve a Section 113 agreement to enable ARP Officers to provide Fraud Services to Maldon District Council.**

*(The appendix to this report contained exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended))*

5.19 pm

Chairman