

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Annual General Meeting of the Council held on  
Thursday, 26 May 2011 at 2.00 p.m.

Councillors present: David Bard, Richard Barrett, Val Barrett, John Batchelor, Trisha Bear, Francis Burkitt, Tom Bygott, Nigel Cathcart, Jonathan Chatfield, Pippa Corney, Douglas de Lacey, Simon Edwards, Alison Elcox, Sue Ellington, Jose Hales, Roger Hall, Steve Harangozo, Lynda Harford, Sally Hatton, Tumi Hawkins, Liz Heazell, James Hockney, Mark Howell, Clayton Hudson, Caroline Hunt, Sebastian Kindersley, Janet Lockwood, Mervyn Loynes, Ray Manning, Mick Martin, Mike Mason, Raymond Matthews, David McCraith, Cicely Murfitt, Charles Nightingale, Tony Orgee, Ted Ridgway Watt, Deborah Roberts, Neil Scarr, Ben Shelton, Bridget Smith, Hazel Smith, Surinder Soond, Jim Stewart, Edd Stonham, Peter Topping, Robert Turner, Bunty Waters, David Whiteman-Downes, John Williams, Tim Wotherspoon and Nick Wright

Officers:	Holly Adams	Democratic Services Team Leader
	Jean Hunter	Chief Executive
	Fiona McMillan	Legal & Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brian Burling, Mark Hersom, Pauline Jarvis, Peter Johnson and Alex Riley.

### **PRESENTATION**

Chairman Charlie Nightingale presented cheques for £2,983.50 each to Alison Horsley, East Anglian Air Ambulance and Robert Altham, Volunteer County Co-ordinator for Cambridgeshire, Help for Heroes, the Chairman's nominated charities for the 2009/10 and 2010/11 civic years.

#### **1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE 2011/12 CIVIC YEAR**

On the nomination of Councillor Ray Manning, seconded by Councillor Sebastian Kindersley, and there being no further nominations, it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Tony Orgee be elected Chairman of the Council for the 2011/12 civic year.

Councillor Orgee signed the acceptance of office and thanked Council for entrusting him with the honour and responsibility of the Chairmanship. He led tributes to the former Chairman, Councillor Charlie Nightingale, and presented Councillor Nightingale with mementoes of his time in office, including a Past Chairman's badge. Councillor Nightingale thanked Council for its support, in particular Councillor Orgee as his Vice-Chairman. Councillors Manning and Kindersley spoke of Councillor Nightingale's enthusiasm for his role, his record number of civic engagements and his successful fundraising for charity.

#### **2. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE 2011/12 CIVIC YEAR**

Councillor Ray Manning, seconded by Councillor Simon Edwards, proposed Councillor David Bard. Councillor Sebastian Kindersley, seconded by Councillor Liz Heazell, proposed Councillor John Batchelor. A vote was held and, with 31 votes for Councillor Bard and 19 for Councillor Batchelor it was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Bard be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Council for the 2011/12 civic year.

### 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following interests were declared:

Councillor Robert Turner	Personal, non-prejudicial interest in item 10, Fulbourn: Compulsory Purchase Order, Windmill Estate Redevelopment, as a former Cambridgeshire County Councillor for Fulbourn and a former member of the Windmill Estate Project Steering Group. This item was withdrawn from the agenda without debate.
Councillor Tony Orgee	Personal, non-prejudicial interest 16, District Council Appointment to the Standards Committee 2011-2015, as the nominee. Councillor Orgee remained in the meeting room but handed over the Chairmanship to Vice-Chairman Councillor Bard for this item.

### 4. MINUTES

The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of 14 April 2011 as a correct record subject to the following amendments:

- Item 103(a), Notice of motion standing in the names of Councillors Sebastian Kindersley and Jonathan Chatfield:
  - "...input through the Northstowe Planning **Parish** Forum"
  - "...that plans for the full A14 upgrade must be reinstated **resolutions for the problems on the A14 must be found...**"
- Item 106, Job Evaluation Project: inclusion of Councillor Ben Shelton's name in the list of attendees.

### 5. REPORT OF THE RETURNING OFFICER

The Report of the Returning Officer was **RECEIVED** and the newly-elected councillors introduced themselves and were welcomed to the Council. The Chairman recognised the work of former Councillor Frances Amrani, and Council paid tribute to the elections team, Returning Officer and all others who had helped with the election, referendum and counting.

### 6. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Council stood for a moment of silence to honour the memory of Paul Bytheway, of the Revenues and Benefits Service, who passed away the previous week.

The Chairman introduced Council to Mike Hill who would be starting as Corporate Manager, Health and Environmental Services, on 16 June 2011 and welcomed Mr Hill to the meeting and to South Cambridgeshire. The Chairman also welcomed Mrs Kathy English, Independent Standards Committee Chairman, who would be presenting that Committee's annual report.

At the request of the Chairman, Council, with two votes against and two abstentions, **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Order 21.4, Recording of Business, to allow any attendees to record, blog or tweet from the Chamber.

The Leader introduced the new Cabinet, which was more closely aligned with the Council's organisational structure, and reported that the Electoral Arrangements Committee would be asked to report to Council in July 2011 following consideration of whether the Boundary Commission should be requested to undertake a review of the South Cambridgeshire-Cambridge City boundary.

**7. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC****7 (a) From Mike Brettle, Sustainable Parish Energy Partnership representative from Gamlingay**

The Chairman, speaking on Mr Brettle's behalf, asked, "Regarding the Council Meeting on 24th February 2011, para. 11(b): In what way exactly would a wind turbine be judged differently to another structure of a similar size such as a manufacturing plant, water tower, crane or communications mast etc. as regards visual impact or noise? Does the motion mean that a planning application for a wind turbine might be rejected whereas an application for some other development of equivalent size, noise etc. would be considered for approval?"

Councillor Nick Wright, Planning Portfolio Holder at the time the question was originally received, replied that the Council was very supportive of new businesses and other employment generating development, particularly in the current economic climate, and therefore would want to grant planning permission wherever possible for development which created jobs. He emphasised that this was not to say that planning permission would always be granted: all planning applications were determined on their individual merits and the Council must ensure that development proposals of whatever scale would not have an adverse impact on local amenity and would fit well with the Council's policies as well as with national policy. If there were instances where an adverse impact would arise from any of the uses mentioned in the question, and these impacts could not be mitigated by revising the scheme or through appropriate planning conditions, planning permission might have to be refused.

**8. PETITIONS**

None received.

**9. FULBOURN: COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER, WINDMILL ESTATE REDEVELOPMENT**

On the proposition of Councillor Mark Howell, Housing Portfolio Holder, seconded by Councillor Liz Heazell, Council **AGREED** to defer item 10, Fulbourn: Compulsory Purchase Order, Windmill Estate Redevelopment to a later meeting to enable negotiations to continue.

**10. ESTABLISHMENT, SIZE OF, AND TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR, COMMITTEES FOR THE 2011/2 CIVIC YEAR**

Councillor Ray Manning proposed the recommendation on the agenda, stating that he believed that they best reflected the Council's proportionality, the 14-member Planning Committee size had worked well when used previously, and that there was no particular reason to increase any committee sizes. Councillor Simon Edwards seconded the motion.

Councillor Hazel Smith proposed an amendment to retain the Planning Committee size of 15 members. Councillor Sebastian Kindersley seconded the motion. Members speaking in favour of the amendment pointed out that regulatory committees were non-political, that it was essential to have enough members for long meetings to remain quorate until the end, and that committees with odd numbers of members were less reliant upon the Chairman's casting vote. Members speaking against the amendment noted that the Corporate Governance Inspection team had recommended a Planning Committee size of twelve, that the Planning Committees of neighbouring authorities were

all smaller, and that more members led to longer, less focussed, meetings.

The amendment was put to the vote and, with 21 votes in favour, 29 against and 1 abstention, the amendment **FELL**.

The original motion was put to the vote and, with 33 votes in favour, 17 against and 1 abstention, Council **RESOLVED**

- (1) To establish the following committees for the 2011/12 municipal year:
- Corporate Governance Committee (7 Members)
  - Electoral Arrangements Committee (7 Members)
  - Employment Committee (7 Members)
  - Licensing Committee (15 Members)
  - Planning Committee (14 Members)
  - Scrutiny and Overview Committee (12 Members); and
- (2) That the Terms of Reference for the above committees remain as set out in Article 6 and Part 3, Table One of the Council's Constitution.

## 11. **APPOINTMENTS OF MEMBERS AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS TO COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL, 2011/12**

The Chairman reminded members that only Council could make appointments to these committees, and that any vacancies would have to wait until the next Council meeting to be filled.

On the proposal of Councillor Ray Manning, seconded by Councillor Simon Edwards, Council **RESOLVED**

- (1) That seats be allocated on committees in accordance with the table below:

<b>Committee / Panel</b>	<b>Seats</b>	<b>Cons</b>	<b>Lib Dems</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Non-Group</b>
Corporate Governance Committee	7	4	2	1	0
Electoral Arrangements Committee	7	4	2	1	0
Employment Committee	7	4	2	1	0
Licensing Committee Licensing Committee (2003 Act) Licensing Committee (2005 Gambling Act)	15	8	4	2	1
Planning Committee	14	8	4	2	0
Scrutiny and Overview Committee	12	7	4	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>

and;

- (2) That, based on the allocations at (1) above, and the requirement for political proportionality, the following appointments to Committees be made for the 2011/12 civic year:

### **Corporate Governance Committee**

#### **7 Members:**

<b>Conservative (4)</b>	<b>Lib Dems (2)</b>	<b>Ind (1)</b>
Richard Barrett	John Batchelor	Douglas de Lacey
Francis Burkitt	John Williams	
David McCraith		

Charlie Nightingale

*Substitutes in hierarchical list:*

<b>Order</b>	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Lib Dems</b>	<b>Ind</b>
1	Ted Ridgway Watt	Bridget Smith	Alex Riley
2	Ben Shelton	Lynda Harford	
3	Roger Hall	Liz Heazell	
4	Raymond Matthews		

### **Electoral Arrangements Committee**

**7 Members:**

<b>Conservative (4)</b>	<b>Lib Dems (2)</b>	<b>Ind (1)</b>
Roger Hall	Hazel Smith	Mike Mason
Raymond Matthews	Edd Stonham	
Robert Turner		
Bunty Waters		

*Substitutes in hierarchical list:*

<b>Order</b>	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Lib Dems</b>	<b>Ind</b>
1	Mick Martin	Sebastian Kindersley	Neil Scarr
2	David McCraith		
3	Val Barrett		
4	Richard Barrett		

### **Employment Committee**

**7 Members:**

<b>Conservative (4)</b>	<b>Lib Dems (2)</b>	<b>Ind (1)</b>
David Bard	Liz Heazell	Alex Riley
Brian Burling	Jim Stewart	
Pippa Corney		
Simon Edwards*		

\* as Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder

*Substitutes in hierarchical list:*

<b>Order</b>	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Lib Dems</b>	<b>Ind</b>
1	Val Barrett	John Batchelor	Douglas de Lacey
2	Richard Barrett	Lynda Harford	Mike Mason
3	Charlie Nightingale	Sebastian Kindersley	Deborah Roberts
4	Tony Orgee		

### **Licensing Committee, Licensing Committee (2003 Act), Licensing Committee (2005 Gambling Act)**

**15 Members:**

<b>Conservative (8)</b>	<b>Lib Dems (4)</b>	<b>Ind (2)</b>	<b>Non-Group (1)</b>
Richard Barrett	Trisha Bear	Sally Hatton	Cicely Murfitt (seat accepted from Liberal Democrat Group)
Val Barrett	Jose Hales	Alex Riley	
Alison Elcox	Liz Heazell		
Roger Hall	Janet Lockwood		
Mervyn Loynes			
Raymond Matthews			

David McCraith  
Charlie  
Nightingale

*Substitutes in hierarchical list:*

<b>Order</b>	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Lib Dems</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Non-Group</b>
1	David Bard	Hazel Smith	Neil Scarr	Nigel Cathcart (accepted from Liberal Democrat Group)

### **Planning Committee**

**14 Members:**

<b>Conservative (8)</b>	<b>Lib Dems (4)</b>	<b>Ind (2)</b>
Val Barrett	Lynda Harford	Sally Hatton
Brian Burling	Tumi Hawkins	Deborah Roberts
Pippa Corney	Sebastian Kindersley	
Caroline Hunt	Hazel Smith	
Mervyn Loynes		
David McCraith		
Charlie Nightingale		
Robert Turner		

*Substitutes in hierarchical list:*

<b>Order</b>	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Lib Dems</b>	<b>Ind</b>
1	David Bard	Trisha Bear	Neil Scarr
2	Ben Shelton	Jose Hales	Mike Mason
3	Richard Barrett	John Batchelor	Alex Riley
4	Raymond Matthews	Jim Stewart	Douglas de Lacey

### **Scrutiny and Overview Committee**

**12 Members:**

<b>Conservative (7)</b>	<b>Lib Dems (4)</b>	<b>Ind (1)</b>
Roger Hall	Jose Hales	Mike Mason
James Hockney	Tumi Hawkins	
Clayton Hudson	Liz Heazell	
Mervyn Loynes	Bridget Smith	
Ted Ridgway Watt		
Bunty Waters		
David Whiteman-Downes		

*Substitutes in hierarchical list:*

<b>Order</b>	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Lib Dems</b>	<b>Ind</b>
1	Ben Shelton	Lynda Harford	Deborah Roberts
2	Richard Barrett	John Batchelor	Sally Hatton
3	Charlie Nightingale	Edd Stonham	
4	Alison Elcox		

## **12. APPOINTMENTS TO JOINT COMMITTEES FOR 2011/12**

On the proposal of Councillor Ray Manning, seconded by Councillor Simon Edwards,  
Council **RESOLVED**

(3) That seats be allocated on joint committees in accordance with the table below:

<b>Committee / Panel</b>	<b>Seats</b>	<b>Cons</b>	<b>Lib Dems</b>	<b>Ind</b>	<b>Non- Group</b>
Joint Development Control	6	4	2	0	0

Committee: Cambridge Fringes					
Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee	6	4	2	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

and;

- (4) That, based on the allocations at (1) above, and the requirement for political proportionality, the following appointments to Committees be made for the 2011/12 civic year:

**Joint Development Control Committee: Cambridge Fringes**

**6 Members:**

<b>Conservative (4)</b>	<b>Lib Dems (2)</b>
David Bard	Liz Heazell
Tom Bygott	Lynda Harford
Charlie Nightingale	
Ben Shelton	

*Substitutes:*

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Lib Dems</b>
Tim Wotherspoon	Jose Hales

**District Council Spokesman**

Charlie Nightingale

**Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee**

**6 Members:**

<b>Conservative (4)</b>	<b>Lib Dems (2)</b>
Brian Burling	Lynda Harford
Simon Edwards	Hazel Smith
Bunty Waters	
Tim Wotherspoon	

*Substitutes:*

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Lib Dems</b>
Nick Wright	John Batchelor

**District Council Spokesman**

Tim Wotherspoon

**13. APPOINTMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION REVIEW WORKING PARTY 2011/12**

Councillor Sebastian Kindersley asked that the Constitution Review Working Party review the use of social media during meetings to allow those present to access social media if they wished to, without requiring Council bodies to suspend the relevant Standing Order at the start of each meeting.

On the proposal of Councillor Ray Manning, seconded by Councillor Simon Edwards, Council **RESOLVED** that the Chairman of the Council, Leader, Deputy Leader and Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee be appointed to the Constitution Review Working Party for the 2011/12 Civic Year, along with the following representatives from the political groups:

<b>Conservatives (1)</b>	<b>Lib Dems</b>	<b>Ind (1)</b>	<b>Non-Group (1)</b>
[offered to Nigel	(1) Jim Stewart	Mike	Nigel Cathcart (accepted seat from

Cathcart] Mason Conservative group)

*Substitutes*

<b>Conservatives</b>	<b>Lib Dems</b>	<b>Ind</b>
Roger Hall	Janet Lockwood	Alex Riley
Richard Barrett		Neil Scarr

#### 14. APPOINTMENTS TO THE CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP 2011/12

Councillor Ray Manning reported that Councillor David Whiteman-Downes would be the Conservative Group's sixth nominee. In response to questions about the requirement to offer seats to non-group members, it was confirmed that Councillor Nigel Cathcart had seats on the Constitution Review Working Party and on the Standards Committee.

On the proposal of Councillor Ray Manning, seconded by Councillor Simon Edwards, Council **RESOLVED**

- (5) That seats be allocated on the Climate Change Working Group in accordance with the table below:

	Seats	Cons	Lib Dems	Ind	Non-Group
Climate Change Working Group	10	6	3	1	0

and;

- (6) That, based on the allocations at (1) above, and the requirement for political proportionality, the following appointments to the Climate Change Working Group be made for the 2011/12 civic year:

<b>Conservative (6)</b>	<b>Lib Dems (3)</b>	<b>Ind (1)</b>
David Bard	Jose Hales	Douglas de Lacey
Tom Bygott	Stephen Harangozo	
Mick Martin	Bridget Smith	
Ted Ridgway Watt		
Peter Topping		
David Whiteman-Downes		

*Substitutes in hierarchical list:*

<b>Order</b>	<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Lib Dems</b>	<b>Ind</b>
1	Roger Hall	Liz Heazell	Sally Hatton
2	Richard Barrett	Trisha Bear	
3	Tony Orgee	Janet Lockwood	
4	Ben Shelton	Hazel Smith	

#### 15. DISTRICT COUNCIL MEMBER APPOINTMENT TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE 2011-2015

Councillor David Bard, Vice-Chairman of the Council, took the chair for this item after Councillor Tony Orgee declared a personal interest.

On the nomination of Councillor David Bard, seconded by Councillor Ray Manning, Council **RESOLVED** to re-appoint Councillor Tony Orgee to the Standards Committee for 2011-2015.

Councillor Tony Orgee then returned to the chair.



## 16. ADJOURNMENT OF THE MEETING

Council adjourned to allow its Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups to elect their Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen for the 2011/12 Civic Year. Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen were elected as follows:

<b>Body</b>	<b>Chairman</b>	<b>Vice-Chairman</b>
Climate Change Working Group	David Bard	Stephen Harangozo
Constitution Review Working Party	Tony Orgee	Ray Manning
Corporate Governance Committee	Francis Burkitt	David McCraith
Electoral Arrangements Committee	Robert Turner	Raymond Matthews
Employment Committee	David Bard	Pippa Corney
Licensing Committee, Licensing Committee (2003 Act), Licensing Committee (2005 Act)	Roger Hall	Raymond Matthews
Planning Committee	Pippa Corney	Robert Turner
Planning Enforcement Sub-Committee	Mervyn Loynes	Val Barrett
Scrutiny and Overview Committee	James Hockney	Bridget Smith

## 17. APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE, JOINT & OTHER MEMBER BODIES 2011/12

### 17 (a) Sawston Patient Reference Group

On the proposal of Councillor Ray Manning, seconded by Councillor Simon Edwards, Council **RESOLVED** to include the Sawston Patient Reference Group on the list of outside bodies to which Council makes appointments.

### 17 (b) Appointments to Outside, Joint & other Member Bodies 2011/12

Council received the list of nominations of members seeking to represent the Council on outside bodies.

#### **Joint Bodies**

On the proposal of Councillor Ray Manning, seconded by Councillor Simon Edwards, Council **RESOLVED** to appoint Members for 2011/12 to the following joint bodies:

<b>Body</b>	<b>Members</b>
Joint Strategic Growth Implementation Committee (JSIC)	David Bard (substitute Nick Wright) Sebastian Kindersley (substitute John Batchelor) Ray Manning (substitute Simon Edwards)
Joint Transport Forum	Ray Manning (substitute David Bard) John Williams (substitute John Batchelor) Nick Wright (substitute Ted Ridgway Watt)

#### **Outside and Other Member Bodies**

Councillor Bridget Smith noted that she had been the reserve member on the Adults Wellbeing and Health Scrutiny Committee since 2009/10. Votes were held for positions where more members had been nominated than vacancies were available.

On the proposal of Councillor Ray Manning, seconded by Councillor Simon Edwards, Council **RESOLVED** to appoint Members to the following outside and other bodies for four years or until the end of the individual Member's term of office:

<b>Body</b>	<b>Members</b>
Adults' Wellbeing and Health Scrutiny Committee	Roger Hall (substitute Bridget Smith)
Age Concern	Charlie Nightingale
Association of Impington Action for Sport (IMPACT)	Jonathan Chatfield
Cambridge Airport Consultative Committee	Caroline Hunt
Cambridge and County Folk Museum Committee of Management	Neil Scarr
Cambridge and District Citizens' Advice Bureau Management Committee Trustee Board	Neil Scarr
Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust Advisory Council	Roger Hall
Comberton Village College Governing Body Sub-Committee	Alison Elcox
Conservators of the River Cam	Tim Wotherspoon
County Advisory Group on Archives & Local Studies	Roger Hall
Emmaus Cambridge Community	Hazel Smith
Friends of Milton Country Park	Jonathan Chatfield
Local Government Arts Forum: Arts Forum for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Steering Group	Tim Wotherspoon
Needingworth Quarry Liaison Committee	Brian Burling
Old West Internal Drainage Board	Brian Burling
Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	Nick Wright
Sawston Patient Reference Group	David Bard
Sawston Village College Sports Users' Committee (2 vacancies)	David Bard David Whiteman-Downes
South Cambridgeshire Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) Management Board (2 vacancies)	Richard Barrett Neil Scarr
Swavesey Internal Drainage Board	Brian Burling Sue Ellington
Swavesey Village College Community Committee	Sue Ellington Nick Wright
West Anglia Crossroads for Carers	Charlie Nightingale

## 18. ANNUAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE REPORT TO COUNCIL 2011

Mrs Kathleen English, Standards Committee Chairman and Independent Member, presented the 2010/11 Annual Report to Council, which highlighted the major changes coming in 2012 when the Localism Bill became law and noted the absence again this year of any complaints about district councillors' conduct. Mrs English thanked Standards Committee members for their enthusiasm and commitment in light of so many significant changes, and the officers who supported the Committee. In response to members' comments about the outcomes of hearings, Mrs English emphasised that the current regime was statutory and not necessarily a system the Committee would have chosen to operate, and that the presence of the subject member at a hearing was

essential for the hearing panel members to receive evidence from both sides. The Chairman commended the positive comments made by members and Mrs English for her hard work.

Council **RECEIVED** the Standards Committee Annual Report.

**19. ANNUAL SCRUTINY & OVERVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT TO COUNCIL 2011**

Scrutiny and Overview Committee Chairman Councillor James Hockney presented the Committee's Annual report, highlighting the Committee's achievements, in particular the four Task and Finish Group Reviews, improved consultation with children and young people, and the on-going consideration of major issues facing South Cambridgeshire. Jackie Sayers, Scrutiny Development Officer, was thanked for her hard work and support.

Council **RECEIVED** the Scrutiny and Overview Committee Annual Report.

**20. MAJOR OPPOSITION GROUP LEADER'S ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL (DISCRETIONARY)**

Councillor Sebastian Kindersley, Major Opposition Group Leader, addressed Council. He commended the successful appointment of a new Chief Executive, which demonstrated the benefits of cross-party working. He had reviewed the questions asked by members and motions made during 2010/11 Council meetings and felt that there was room for improvement, as the majority of questions had come from opposition group members and there had been only three cross-party motions. He urged the administration to be more progressive with their future aims, approaches and actions for the Council. He concluded by referring to South Cambridgeshire's first-place finish in the UK Quality of Life survey, which he saw as due in no small part to the work of officers and asked members for a message of support for officers at a difficult time, to which Council responded with a round of applause.

Council **RECEIVED** the Major Opposition Group Leader's Annual Report.

**21. WRITE-OFFS: ANNUAL REPORT TO COUNCIL 2011**

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder commended the work of the Revenues and Benefits service, which had the best collection rates in the Eastern Region and one of the best in the country. The percentage of write-offs was tiny compared to the amount collected, and reflected only those debts which the Council did not have any reasonable expectation of collecting. In response to questions, he confirmed that no debts relating to Smithy Fen had been written off and that action continues. He undertook to provide members with further details in the near future.

Council **NOTED** the annual write-offs report.

**22. AMENDMENTS MADE TO THE CONSTITUTION 2010/11**

Council **NOTED** the list of amendments made to the Constitution during the previous year.

**23. QUESTIONS ON JOINT MEETINGS**

The Leader reported that the effect on the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership of legislative changes was not yet known, but it was likely that the Partnership in its current

form would remain until the new police commissioners had been appointed. The Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Partnerships had proposed to merge as so many of the same attendees were members of both, but the government had prohibited a merger at this time. The Leader hoped that the new Policing Bill would include provision for establishing a more widespread forum for crime and disorder issues.

#### **24. UPDATES FROM MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

The Chairman noted that no written updates had been received.

#### **25. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

##### **25 (a) From Cllr John Williams to the Leader of Council**

Councillor John Williams asked, "Given the position the council is at with its proposed gypsy and traveller policies and taking account of current adopted development control policies, why has the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Mental Health Trust been told by planning officers that it must at this time include a traveller site in its masterplan for developing the Ida Darwin Hospital site for housing?"

Councillor Tim Wotherspoon, Northstowe & New Communities Portfolio Holder, replied that there had been two consultations on the Council's Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document: a 2006 consultation on the principles and a 2009 consultation on site options, the latter of which had included the Ida Darwin site. He referred to the Council's duty to promote racial equality including improving relations between different communities, and that the Masterplan was at an early stage and could provide sites both for Travellers and the settled community.

Councillor Williams, as his supplementary question, asked whether the Council was abusing its position as the planning authority by directing developers to include Travellers' sites in their Masterplans. Councillor Wotherspoon undertook to provide a written response to all members, which would be appended to the minutes.

##### **25 (b) From Cllr Liz Heazell to the Leader of Council**

Councillor Liz Heazell asked Leader, "Does the Leader not agree that the increased knowledge cabinet members gain by attending meetings /discussions / briefings with Ministers should be shared with all members by means of written reports so that members and officers can be better informed?"

The Leader replied that the administration preferred to require less, rather than more, paper and was reluctant to increase the number of information items coming to Council. He explained that many of the meetings Cabinet members had with Ministers were neither formal nor minuted, but where minutes were produced, they would be taken to Portfolio Holder meetings where all members could participate in a discussion.

Councillor Heazell asked that short reports or e-mail be produced to ensure that all members had a clear understanding of issues coming from the government and Councillor Manning agreed to produce short reports or e-mail where issues were of general interest rather than of particular relevance to one portfolio. He reminded members that it was a coalition government and that it would also be helpful to have short reports or e-mails from the Opposition group on their discussions with Ministers.

**25 (c) From Cllr Stephen Harangozo to the Leader of Council**

Councillor Stephen Harangozo asked, "Cambridgeshire's delivery of sustained reductions in local carbon emissions is being affected both by 'delaying' and severe budget cuts. Does the Leader agree that the government's aspirations on climate change are likely to be significantly undermined unless additional measures are brought in to help struggling authorities here and elsewhere and what support / incentives would he like to see from government?"

Councillor Peter Topping, Sustainability, Planning and Climate Change Portfolio Holder, replied that there were opportunities for local leadership and that he believed that South Cambridgeshire was already in a strong position through some of its projects like the Sustainable Parish Energy Programme, the Rampton Drift eco-home project, solar panels at South Cambridgeshire Hall and the recycling scheme. He hoped that Ministers would listen to the experiences of Councils like South Cambridgeshire to help deliver the government's green ambitions. He undertook to ask officers to write to the government with details of the Council's experience.

**25 (d) From Cllr Tumi Hawkins to the Leader of Council**

Councillor Tumi Hawkins asked, "In view of the fact that affordable housing is in short supply in our district, and that we should be considering all opportunities for its provision, what is the view of this council on the Government's proposal to grant permitted development rights to change of use from commercial B use classes to residential C3 use class, and is this council responding to the ongoing government consultation on this issue?"

Councillor Peter Topping, Sustainability, Planning and Climate Change Portfolio Holder, replied that the Council had an interest in maintaining a good balance between housing and jobs, and that he intended to seek further detail from the government about how Councils could receive infrastructure benefits from such a change of use. In response to Councillor Hawkins' supplementary question, he undertook to get a written response from officers about the level of empty Class B properties which could potentially be used for housing, including affordable housing.

**25 (e) From Cllr Bridget Smith to the Leader of Council**

Councillor Bridget Smith asked, "It can not have passed the notice of any member how unhappy many of our staff are having learnt that they will be facing significant reductions in their salaries in 2 years time. The potential impact on this council of low staff morale resulting from officers who do not believe that their considerable efforts are valued, are great. Please can the leader itemise the actions he will be personally taking to support those staff who are losing out?"

Councillor Simon Edwards, Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder, agreed that the effect on staff had not gone unnoticed and replied that the Council had offered counselling to all employees, that employees could access the Employee Assistance Helpline free of charge and in complete confidence, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Two seminars, delivered by the Money Advice Service, had been arranged for June, aiming at helping staff to make financial efficiencies in their personal budgets. There had already been four Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) seminars delivered and a pension scheme guidance note made available to all staff. In parallel with these actions, a new sickness management strategy had been adopted which included support arrangements and opportunities for personal development.

Councillor Smith regretted that her question had been reported in the media, and especially the responses made to the article which had added to officers' distress, and asked Councillor Edwards what steps Cabinet would take to address the public misperception of officers' remuneration. Councillor Edwards sympathised with officers and hoped that the two years' protection offered enough time for staff to undertake suitable retraining and find other jobs within the organisation, but felt that trying to rectify the situation with a press release would provide further opportunities for distressing comments, which would not improve the situation for officers.

**25 (f) From Cllr Mike Mason to the Leader of Council**

Councillor Mike Mason asked, "In the process of setting the budget for the current financial year and noting the emerging medium term financial strategy, members have expressed concern that the Council will no longer be debt free and will need to finance the proportion of the national housing debt of some £206 million over the next thirty years. Can the Leader now share with members any latest information from CLG, giving an indication as to the timescale and payment of this debt, together with the method of raising the necessary loan finance?"

Councillor Simon Edwards, Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder, replied that the Council was currently undertaking a business modelling exercise to inform how the debt could best be managed and to ensure that service priorities are addressed appropriately, and that a fresh stock condition survey had just been completed. He emphasised that the debt would have to be met from within the Housing Revenue Account and would therefore be paid for out of the rental income stream from Council houses and not from the General Fund. A revised debt settlement figure was expected from Communities and Local Government (CLG) in November 2011, with the final figure in February 2012. The Council would need to have completed the detailed business plan modelling and treasury management strategy in time for raising the finances for April 2012. One option would be to borrow the full £200M from the Public Works Loan Board but other options would be considered during the year. The Housing Portfolio Holder would receive a detailed project plan at his 15 June meeting.

Councillor Mason, as his supplementary question, asked Councillor Edwards to ensure that all members had received all the information before the start of the annual budget process. Councillor Edwards reiterated that the debt was being imposed on the Housing Revenue Account, which was ring-fenced, and would have no impact on Council Tax levels or the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

**26. CHAIRMAN'S ENGAGEMENTS**

The Chairman's engagements were **NOTED**. Councillor Nightingale, in response to a question from Councillor Deborah Roberts, whose father had been a member of the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne on the Rhine Crossing, encouraged her to visit the Imperial War Museum at Duxford where the flag unveiled in memory of the Rhine Crossing was on display.

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**The Meeting ended at 5.57 p.m.**

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