

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held on  
Thursday, 21 May 2015 at 2.00 p.m.

### **PRESENT:**

**Councillors:** David Bard, Val Barrett, Henry Batchelor, Anna Bradnam, Francis Burkitt, Tom Bygott, Nigel Cathcart, Grenville Chamberlain, Graham Cone, Christopher Cross, Kevin Cuffley, Neil Davies, Simon Edwards, Sue Ellington, Andrew Fraser, Jose Hales, Roger Hall, Lynda Harford, Philippa Hart, Roger Hickford, Mark Howell, Caroline Hunt, Sebastian Kindersley, Douglas de Lacey, Janet Lockwood, Ray Manning, Mick Martin, Raymond Matthews, David McCraith, Cicely Murfitt, Charles Nightingale, Des O'Brien, Tony Orgee, Deborah Roberts, Tim Scott, Ben Shelton, Bridget Smith, Hazel Smith, Edd Stonham, Cllr Richard Turner, Robert Turner, Bunty Waters, Aidan Van de Weyer, David Whiteman-Downes, John Williams, Tim Wotherspoon and Nick Wright

**Officers:**

Alex Colyer	Executive Director, Corporate Services
Jean Hunter	Chief Executive
Virginia Lloyd	Lawyer
Graham Watts	Democratic Services Team Leader

### **1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL 2015/16**

The outgoing Chairman, Councillor David Bard, informed the Council that he had raised £3,000 for his chosen charities during his term of office.

Councillor Bard invited nominations for the election of Chairman of the Council for the 2015/16 civic year.

On the nomination of Councillor Ray Manning, seconded by Councillor Bridget Smith and there being no further nominations, Council **RESOLVED** that Councillor Sue Ellington be elected as Chairman of the Council for the 2015/16 civic year.

Councillor Ellington signed the acceptance of office. She reported that her theme during her term of office would be 'promoting independence' and that her chosen charity was Dogs for the Disabled.

### **2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL 2015/16**

The Chairman invited nominations for the election of Vice-Chairman of the Council for the 2015/16 civic year.

On the nomination of Councillor David Bard, seconded by Councillor Charles Nightingale and there being no further nominations, Council **RESOLVED** that Councillor David McCraith be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Council for the 2015/16 civic year.

Councillor McCraith signed the acceptance of office.

### 3. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brian Burling, Pippa Corney, Tumi Hawkins, James Hockney, Peter Johnson, Mervyn Loynes, David Morgan, Robin Page, Alex Riley and Peter Topping.

### 4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of Members' interests were made.

### 5. REGISTER OF INTERESTS

The Chairman reminded Members that they needed to update their register of interests whenever their circumstances changed.

### 6. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 February 2015 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### 7. REPORT OF THE RETURNING OFFICER

The Returning Officer's report was **NOTED** and Councillors Grenville Chamberlain, Graham Cone, Christopher Cross, Des O'Brien and Richard Turner were welcomed to the Council. The Chairman also congratulated all returning Councillors who were re-elected.

### 8. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Political group leaders and other Members of the Council paid tribute to Richard Barrett, Jonathan Chatfield, Alison Elcox, Neil Scarr and Jim Stewart as outgoing Councillors and thanked them for their service to the Council.

Councillor Ray Manning, Leader of the Council, made the following announcements:

- Councillor Manning and the Chief Executive had met with representatives of the Boundary Commission for the first time since receiving notice of the South Cambridgeshire boundary review. He reported that the meeting was very positive and that an informal workshop would be held for Members, details of which would be confirmed in due course;
- the Inspector appointed to examine the Council's Local Development Plan had requested a suspension of the examination. Notification had only very recently been received of this decision and a briefing for Members was scheduled to be held on 28 May 2015 at 6pm. Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Opposition, took this opportunity to present the Chairman with a requisition signed by five Members for an extraordinary meeting of the Council to be held to consider the suspension of the examination of the submitted Local Plan.

### 9. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions from members of the public had been received.

**10. PETITIONS**

No petitions due for consideration by Full Council had been received since the last meeting.

**11. ERMINE STREET HOUSING LTD: RE-APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR**

Councillor Mark Howell, Portfolio Holder for Housing, proposed the re-appointment of Stephen Hills as Director of Ermine Street Housing Ltd for a further 12 months. Councillor Simon Edwards, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing, seconded the proposal and Council unanimously **APPROVED** the re-appointment of Stephen Hills as Director of Ermine Street Housing Ltd, the Council's Housing company, for a further 12 months alongside his role as Director of Housing for the Council.

**12. ALLOCATION OF SEATS TO COMMITTEES FOR 2015/16**

Councillor Ray Manning, Leader of the Council, presented a report on the allocation of seats to committees for 2015/16 and proposed that Council approved the allocation of committee seats set out in Appendix A to the report, which reflected a reduction in the size of the Civic Affairs Committee and Planning Committee and an increase in the size of the Corporate Governance Committee and Employment Committee. Councillor Manning referred to the great deal of work the Civic Affairs Committee would be undertaking over the coming year in respect of the South Cambridgeshire boundary review and was of the view that committee sizes should support efficient and effective meetings. Councillor Simon Edwards, Deputy Leader of the Council, seconded this proposal.

The Chairman invited a second proposition, and Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Opposition, proposed that Council approved the allocation of committee seats set out in Appendix B of the report. This reflected the same increase in the Corporate Governance Committee and Employment Committee, but also proposed a decrease in the membership of the Civic Affairs Committee and an increase in the Planning Committee. Councillor Smith felt that the Planning Committee was going to be concerned with a very large number of complex, large scale applications in the coming years and that this would require the committee's membership to be made up of the most experienced and best qualified Councillors, drawn from all three political groups. Councillor Anna Bradnam seconded the proposal.

Discussion ensued on the size of the two Joint Development Control Committees, which were larger than the Leader's proposed Planning Committee size of 12 members. It was pointed out, however, that Joint Development Control Committees had to include representatives from each of the respective partner Councils. This made it necessary for Joint Development Control Committees to have a slightly larger membership in order that a fair representation, taking into account political proportionality, could be achieved on each committee.

Speaking in favour of the Leader of the Opposition's proposal, Councillor Sebastian Kindersley was concerned at the message that would be portrayed to members of the public, developers and agents should the Planning Committee reduce its membership to 12 Members. Councillor Nick Wright reflected on the size of a jury in a court of law being 12 and felt that this was an appropriate size for the Council's Planning Committee.

Voting on the two proposals, with 30 votes in favour of the Leader of the Council's proposal, 16 votes in favour of the Leader of the Opposition's proposal and 1 abstention, Council **APPROVED** the allocation of seats on committees and joint bodies, as follows:

	No. of seats	Conservatives	Liberal Democrats	Independents
Civic Affairs	12	9	2	1
Corporate Governance	9	6	2	1
Employment	9	6	2	1
Licensing	15	10	3	2
Planning	12	9	2	1
Partnerships Review	9	6	2	1
Scrutiny and Overview	9	6	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>

	No. of seats	Conservatives	Liberal Democrats	Independents
Joint Development Control – Cambridge Fringes	6	4	1	1
Northstowe Joint Development Control	6	4	1	1

Enough Members as prescribed by the Council's Standing Orders requested a recorded vote. Votes were therefore cast as follows:

### **In favour**

Councillors David Bard, Val Barrett, Francis Burkitt, Tom Bygott, Grenville Chamberlain, Graham Cone, Christopher Cross, Kevin Cuffley, Simon Edwards, Sue Ellington, Andrew Fraser, Roger Hall, Lynda Harford, Roger Hickford, Mark Howell, Caroline Hunt, Ray Manning, Mick Martin, Raymond Matthews, David McCraith, Charles Nightingale, Tony Orgee, Tim Scott, Ben Shelton, Richard Turner, Robert Turner, Bunty Waters, David Whiteman-Downes, Tim Wotherspoon and Nick Wright.

### **Against**

Councillors Henry Batchelor, Anna Bradnam, Nigel Cathcart, Neil Davies, Jose Hales, Philippa Hart, Sebastian Kindersley, Douglas de Lacey, Janet Lockwood, Cicely Murfitt, Deborah Roberts, Bridget Smith, Hazel Smith, Edd Stonham, Aidan Van de Weyer and John Williams.

### **Abstention**

Councillor Des O'Brien.

Political group leaders put forward their nominations for seats on committees and Council unanimously **APPROVED** nominations as set out below:

***Civic Affairs Committee***

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Liberal Democrats</b>	<b>Independent Group</b>	<b>Non-Group</b>
David Bard	Sebastian Kindersley	Deborah Roberts	Nigel Cathcart
Simon Edwards	Bridget Smith		<i>(Seat offered by the Conservatives)</i>
Sue Ellington			
James Hockney			
Ray Manning			
Raymond Matthews			
Charles Nightingale			
Bunty Waters			
<i>See Non-Group</i>			

*Substitutes in hierarchical list:*

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Liberal Democrats</b>	<b>Independent Group</b>
Kevin Cuffley	Jose Hales	Douglas de Lacey
Roger Hall	Janet Lockwood	Neil Davies
Grenville Chamberlain		Edd Stonham
Christopher Cross		Peter Johnson
		Robin Page

***Corporate Governance Committee***

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Liberal Democrats</b>	<b>Independent Group</b>
Francis Burkitt	Bridget Smith	Douglas de Lacey
Tom Bygott	John Williams	
Andrew Fraser		
Roger Hall		
David McCraith		
Tony Orgee		

*Substitutes in hierarchical list:*

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Liberal Democrats</b>	<b>Independent Group</b>	<b>Non-Group</b>
Charles Nightingale	Philippa Hart	<i>See Non-Group</i>	Nigel Cathcart
Des O'Brien		Edd Stonham	<i>(Substitute seat offered by the Independent Group)</i>
Ben Shelton		Neil Davies	
		Peter Johnson	
		Robin Page	

***Employment Committee***

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Liberal Democrats</b>	<b>Independent Group</b>
Val Barrett	Sebastian Kindersley	Edd Stonham
Simon Edwards	Bridget Smith	
Lynda Harford		
James Hockney		
Caroline Hunt		
Alex Riley		

*Substitutes in hierarchical list:*

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Liberal Democrats</b>	<b>Independent Group</b>
Graham Cone		Douglas de Lacey
Charles Nightingale		Neil Davies
		Peter Johnson
		Deborah Roberts
		Robin Page

**Licensing Committee**

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Liberal Democrats</b>	<b>Independent Group</b>	<b>Non-Group</b>
Val Barrett	Anna Bradnam	Deborah Roberts	Cicely Murfitt
Graham Cone	Jose Hales	<i>See Non-Group</i>	<i>(Seat offered by the Independent Group)</i>
Kevin Cuffley	Janet Lockwood		
Andrew Fraser			
Roger Hall			
Mervyn Loynes			
Raymond Matthews			
Charles Nightingale			
Alex Riley			
Richard Turner			

*Substitutes in hierarchical list:*

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Liberal Democrats</b>	<b>Independent Group</b>
Mick Martin	Tumi Hawkins	Douglas de Lacey
		Peter Johnson
		Neil Davies
		Edd Stonham
		Robin Page

**Planning Committee**

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Liberal Democrats</b>	<b>Independent Group</b>
David Bard	Anna Bradnam	Deborah Roberts
Brian Burling	Sebastian Kindersley	
Pippa Corney		
Kevin Cuffley		
Lynda Harford		
Des O'Brien		
Tim Scott		
Ben Shelton		
Robert Turner		

*Substitutes in hierarchical list:*

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Liberal Democrats</b>	<b>Independent Group</b>
Caroline Hunt	Tumi Hawkins	Robin Page
David McCraith	Aidan Van de Weyer	Douglas de Lacey
Val Barrett	Jose Hales	Peter Johnson
Christopher Cross	Henry Batchelor	Edd Stonham
Charles Nightingale	Hazel Smith	Neil Davies

**Partnerships Review Committee**

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Liberal Democrats</b>	<b>Independent Group</b>
David Bard	Henry Batchelor	(See Liberal Democrat Group)
Kevin Cuffley	Jose Hales	
Andrew Fraser	(Seat offered by Independent Group)	
Roger Hall		
James Hockney	Janet Lockwood	
Ben Shelton		

*Substitutes in hierarchical list:*

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Liberal Democrats</b>	<b>Independent Group</b>
Bunty Waters	Aidan Van de Weyer	Deborah Roberts
Tony Orgee	Tumi Hawkins	Douglas de Lacey
Grenville Chamberlain		Peter Johnson
		Neil Davies
		Edd Stonham

**Scrutiny and Overview Committee**

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Liberal Democrats</b>	<b>Independent Group</b>
David Bard	Henry Batchelor	(See Liberal Democrat Group)
Grenville Chamberlain	(Seat offered by Independent Group)	
Kevin Cuffley		
Roger Hickford	Jose Hales	
Bunty Waters	Philippa Hart	
David Whiteman-Downes		

*Substitutes list in hierarchical list:*

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Liberal Democrats</b>	<b>Independent Group</b>
Christopher Cross	Anna Bradnam	Neil Davies
Graham Cone		Douglas de Lacey
Val Barrett		Peter Johnson
Lynda Harford		Edd Stonham
		Deborah Roberts

**Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee**

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Liberal Democrats</b>	<b>Independent Group</b>
Brian Burling	Hazel Smith	Douglas de Lacey
Alex Riley		
Tim Wotherspoon		
Nick Wright		

Spokesperson: Tim Wotherspoon

*Substitutes in hierarchical list:*

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Liberal Democrats</b>	<b>Independent Group</b>
Simon Edwards	Aidan Van de Weyer	Edd Stonham
Ray Manning	Bridget Smith	Neil Davies

**Joint Development Control Committee – Cambridge Fringes****Conservative                      Liberal Democrats      Independent Group**

David Bard                      Aidan Van de Weyer      Douglas de Lacey

Kevin Cuffley

Charles Nightingale

Ben Shelton

Spokesperson: David Bard

*Substitutes in hierarchical list:***Conservative                      Liberal Democrats      Independent Group**

Tom Bygott                      Janet Lockwood              Neil Davies

Tim Wotherspoon              Jose Hales                      Edd Stonham

**Northstowe Transport Working Group****Conservative                      Liberal Democrats**

Ray Manning                      Hazel Smith

Alex Riley

*Substitutes in hierarchical list:***Conservative                      Liberal Democrats**

Tim Wotherspoon              Aidan Van de Weyer

Lynda Harford

Council unanimously **APPROVED** the below appointments to Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of committees:

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Chairman</b>	<b>Vice-Chairman</b>
Civic Affairs	Sue Ellington	Charles Nightingale
Corporate Governance	Francis Burkitt	Tony Orgee
Employment	Alex Riley	Val Barrett
Licensing	Andrew Fraser	Raymond Matthews
Planning	Lynda Harford	David Bard
Partnerships Review	Ben Shelton	
Scrutiny and Overview	Roger Hickford	Kevin Cuffley

Councillor Ray Manning proposed Councillor James Hockney as Vice-Chairman of the Partnerships Review Committee, which was seconded by Councillor Simon Edwards.

Councillor Bridget Smith proposed Councillor Henry Batchelor as Vice-Chairman of the Partnerships Review Committee, which was seconded by Councillor John Williams.

With 29 votes compared to 18 votes, Council **APPOINTED** Councillor James Hockney as Vice-Chairman of the Partnerships Review Committee.



Council unanimously **APPROVED** the re-appointment of Grant Osbourn as the Council's lead independent person and Gillian Holmes as the Council's deputy independent person.

### 13. APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE, JOINT AND OTHER MEMBER BODIES FOR 2015/16

Having been moved by Councillor Ray Manning, Leader of the Council, and seconded by Councillor Simon Edwards, Deputy Leader of the Council, Council unanimously **APPROVED** the below appointments to outside bodies:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Representative</b>
Cambridge Airport Consultative Committee	Caroline Hunt
Cambridge and County Folk Museum Committee of Management	Charles Nightingale
Cambridge & District Citizens' Advice Bureaux Management Committee Trustee Board	Lynda Harford
Cambridge City, South Cambs & County Council Strategic Transport & Spatial Planning Group	Sebastian Kindersley Robert Turner Tim Wotherspoon Ray Manning (Substitute)
Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Waste Partnership	Mick Martin (as Portfolio Holder) Alex Riley (Substitute)
Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee	Sue Ellington Andrew Fraser (Substitute)
Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust Advisory Council	Roger Hall
Cambridgeshire Water Forum	Tim Wotherspoon
Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel	Ben Shelton
Comberton Village College Governing Body Sub-Committee	Tim Scott
County Advisory Group on Archives & Local Studies	Roger Hall
Emmaus Cambridge Community	Hazel Smith
Friends of Milton Country Park	Anna Bradnam
Greater Cambridge City Deal Executive Board	Ray Manning Simon Edwards (Substitute)
Health and Wellbeing District Members Forum	Sue Ellington
Natural Cambridgeshire	Tim Scott
Needingworth Quarry Liaison Committee	Brian Burling
Over & Willingham Internal Drainage Board	Christopher Cross
Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	Nick Wright
Responsive Repairs Partnership Management Board	Val Barrett Bunty Waters Hazel Smith
Sawston Patient Reference Group	David Bard
Swavesey Internal Drainage Board	Brian Burling Sue Ellington
Swavesey Village College Community Committee	Mark Howell Sue Ellington

Councillor Ray Manning proposed Councillor Tim Wotherspoon as the Council's representative on the Conservators of the River Cam, which was seconded by Councillor David Bard.

Councillor Douglas de Lacey proposed Councillor Peter Johnson as the Council's representative on the Conservators of the River Cam, which was seconded by Councillor Deborah Roberts.

With 32 votes compared to 15 votes, Council **APPOINTED** Councillor Tim Wotherspoon as the authority's representative on the Conservators of the River Cam.

**14. JOINT SCRUTINY & OVERVIEW COMMITTEE AND PARTNERSHIPS REVIEW COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15**

Councillor Roger Hickford proposed the Scrutiny and Overview Committee's section of the joint Scrutiny and Overview Committee and Partnerships Review Committee Annual Report for 2014/15. Councillor Kevin Cuffley seconded the proposal.

Councillor Ben Shelton proposed the Partnerships Review Committee section of the joint report. Councillor Andrew Fraser seconded the proposal and Council unanimously **APPROVED** the joint Scrutiny and Overview Committee and Partnerships Review Committee Annual Report 2014/15.

Councillor Shelton, on behalf of both Committees, thanked the Democratic Services team for its support over the past year.

**15. MAJOR OPPOSITION GROUP LEADER'S ANNUAL STATEMENT**

Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Opposition, presented her annual statement.

Councillor Smith acknowledged that in certain areas the Council was performing well, despite the ongoing pressure to make cuts which inevitably resulted in reduced services. She cited the homelessness, benefits and housing teams in particular who continued to excel despite an ever increasing and complex workload.

However, Councillor Smith referred to some concerns she had in respect of the following:

- the fact that the Local Plan had plunged the Council into a Planning Policy void, the results of which threatened to do untold damage to many of the district's beautiful villages through unplanned, unwanted and undesirable development;
- the new town of Northstowe and the lack of affordable housing provision;
- the lack of democratic rigour within the Greater Cambridge City Deal, particularly with regard to the inclusion of rural cycling schemes as part of proposals for infrastructure improvements;
- the lack of transparency and accountability over certain issues, such as an informal group that had been set up to provide a political steer in respect of Northstowe Section 106 contributions for which it was unclear whether Terms of Reference had been agreed, whether minutes of meetings were available or how this Council's representatives had been appointed onto the group.

Councillor Smith informed the Council that she and her group would act as a critical friend and hoped that the administration would welcome this approach. She added that her group would continue to ask challenging questions and speak the truth, as well as continue to give a voice to those people who found the Council's bureaucracy impenetrable and question the need to make cuts over and above quality of service.

Councillor Smith closed by saying that she and Members of her group would continue to represent the welfare of all residents of South Cambridgeshire to the very best of their ability and uphold the shared aspiration of all Members that South Cambridgeshire was the best place to live in Great Britain.

Council **NOTED** the Major Opposition Group Leader's Annual Statement.

**16. CHANGES TO THE OFFICER EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURE RULES REGARDING THE DISMISSAL OF CHIEF OFFICERS**

*NOTE – The Chief Executive and Executive Director (Corporate Services) left the meeting for the consideration of this item.*

Councillor Simon Edwards, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing, presented a report which set out changes approved by Parliament to the rules relating to the dismissal of the Head of Paid Service, Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer. He moved the recommendations contained within the report, which Councillor Ray Manning, Leader of the Council, seconded.

Appendix 1 of the report showed the current wording of the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, compared with the proposed revised wording. A question was raised as to why reference to 'Executive Directors' had been removed from this part of the Employment Procedure Rules in the newly proposed wording. Councillor Edwards explained that the new regulations referred only to statutory Chief Officers, namely the Head of Paid Service, the Chief Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer. There would still be a process in place to be followed for Executive Directors, and other senior officers of the Council, but these new rules had to be in place for the Council's Chief Officers. Members were reminded that the Council's only Executive Director was also the Council's Chief Finance Officer. Councillor Edwards informed the Council that he would request that this issue be highlighted to the Employment Committee alongside the matter of remuneration for the lead and deputy independent persons.

Council unanimously **AGREED**:

- (a) To amend the Officer Employment Procedure Rules in accordance with Appendix 1 of the report.
- (b) To amend the terms of reference of the Employment Committee in accordance with Appendix 2 of the report.
- (c) To invite the Independent Remuneration Panel to consider whether the annual allowance of the lead and deputy independent persons should be increased to acknowledge their new responsibilities under this legislation, or to consider a fixed payment should it be necessary for them to act in this capacity.
- (d) To provide the Employment Committee with the delegated authority to consider and make a decision on the Independent Remuneration Panel's recommendations in relation to the annual allowance of the lead and deputy independent persons, or the introduction of a fixed payment.

**17. RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

Councillor Francis Burkitt presented a report on the Council's Risk Management Strategy and Strategic Risk Register and proposed that the two documents be noted. Councillor David McCraith seconded the proposal.

Reference was made to the recent announcement regarding the suspension of the examination of the Local Plan and a request was put forward for an urgent meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee to re-consider this aspect of the Strategic Risk Register. It was noted that the Risk Register was a Cabinet responsibility, with the Corporate Governance Committee being responsible for the Risk Management Strategy. Councillor Simon Edwards, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing, added that the Register was risk aware and sought to mitigate risk as far as possible, but emphasised that it was impossible to completely eliminate all risks.

Council **NOTED** the Risk Management Strategy and Strategic Risk Register.

## **18. WRITE-OFFS 2014/15**

Councillor Simon Edwards, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing, presented a report which notified Council of debts written off under powers delegated to the Portfolio Holder and Chief Finance Officer as required by the Constitution. He moved that the report be noted, which was seconded by Councillor Ray Manning, Leader of the Council.

Councillor Edwards reported that the Council had an excellent record of recovering monies owed to it and took this opportunity to congratulate the Executive Director (Corporate Services) and his team.

Council **NOTED** the amounts written off under delegated powers for 2014/15.

## **19. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

### **19 (a) Councillor Douglas de Lacey**

Councillor Douglas de Lacey asked the following question:

“We do not have many statutory obligations. One key such obligation is to provide a waste collection service. Please would the Portfolio Holder explain why for nearly three weeks at Easter we failed in our duty to empty the public rubbish and dog bins in Girton, leading to piles of dog faeces at the foot of every bin, an unsightly health hazard?”

He had originally submitted the question in March 2015, but explained that the problem still existed.

Councillor Mick Martin, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services, reported that the refuse collection team had unfortunately experienced a significant bout of illness which meant that 25% of loaders and vehicle drivers had been off on sick leave. He thanked the dedication of the team during this difficult period of time. Councillor Martin also praised the efforts of two officers who voluntarily went out on the rounds to offer assistance.

Councillor de Lacey, as a supplementary question, asked whether money spent on various projects within the Council could be transferred to cover for these front-line members of staff whenever other significant illnesses occurred in the future.

Councillor Martin noted the suggestion, but made the point that any organisation of any size would struggle to cover for 25% of its workforce.

**19 (b) Councillor Aidan Van de Weyer**

Councillor Aidan Van de Weyer asked the following question:

“In response to the Syrian refugee crisis, in which 4 million people have fled Syria for neighbouring countries, the Government set up the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation (VPR) scheme to help a few of the most vulnerable, such as those requiring medical attention unavailable in the initial host country or those who are otherwise at risk. This scheme depends on the cooperation of local councils to provide small numbers of houses and other services. What action has this Council taken to explore participation in the VPR scheme and in particular to assess the resource requirements and the consequences of providing such help to the Council’s other work?”

Councillor Mark Howell, Portfolio Holder for Housing, responded by saying that the Council had taken no action on this issue.

Councillor Van de Weyer, as a supplementary question, asked whether this could be explored in order that the consequences could be understood.

Councillor Howell said that the Council’s allocation was very clear and that South Cambridgeshire residents would come first and take priority. It was noted, however, that there was very little the Council could do if anything was imposed by the Government.

**19 (c) Councillor John Williams**

Councillor John Williams asked the following question:

“In responding to a question about the reduced waste and recycling collections over the Christmas period at the full council meeting on 26 February 2015 the then Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services expanded his response to include the affect the changes are having on staffing and the budget; however he made no mention of the adverse affect the new arrangements are having on other front line street services under his responsibility such as road sweeping. Could the Leader explain why this important adverse affect of the delivery of the new waste and recycling service was not also made known to all members of this council at that meeting?”

Councillor Mick Martin, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services, referred to the answer he had provided to Councillor Douglas de Lacey in an earlier question which explained the sickness issues that the refuse collection team had experienced.

Councillor Martin picked up on the inference that he had hidden something from Full Council when answering a previous question, which he emphasised was not the case. He confirmed that street cleansing was not included as part of the changes to the waste and recycling service and that the team had suffered recently as a result of sickness absence and a need to recruit. The process of recruiting street cleaners and drivers was now underway.

Councillor Williams referred to April’s meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee where officers had reported that these issues had not been going on for only a few weeks but had actually been going on for a few months, with staff shortages being evident since Christmas. He claimed that this was nothing to do with sickness and was of the view that it was a plan to save money at the end of the financial year.

Councillor Mick Martin refuted this claim but said that Councillor Williams was entitled to his personal opinion.

**19 (d) Councillor Sebastian Kindersley**

Councillor Sebastian Kindersley asked the following question:

“The Government plans to extend the Right to Buy scheme to tenants in properties owned by Registered Social Landlords.

I am sure we all fully support the aspiration of homeownership. However, extending Right to Buy to housing associations is the wrong solution to our housing crisis. Following 40 years of successive governments’ failure to build the homes the country needs, soaring rents and house prices and the biggest baby boom since the 1950’s, ensuring that there are enough homes today and tomorrow must be our nation’s top priority.

Will the Portfolio Holder and/or Leader make representation to the highest level of Government highlighting grave concerns about this plan which will do nothing to help people into quality housing and which is likely to bring the number of affordable homes built crashing down as banks withdraw funding from the RSL sector?”

Councillor Mark Howell, Portfolio Holder for Housing, responded by saying that at the moment it was far too early to make such representatives as the full facts had not yet been received, although he understood the concerns. Councillor Howell would consider a response to the Government’s consultation on this issue at a future Portfolio Holder Meeting, which all Members would be invited to attend.

Councillor Kindersley took this opportunity to re-emphasise his gravest concerns in respect of the Right to Buy scheme being opened up to tenants in properties owned by Registered Social Landlords and Almshouses.

Councillor Howell reported that 28 Council houses were sold last year through the Right to Buy and that only 14 villages within South Cambridgeshire would qualify under the current rules relating to the Right to Acquire for housing associations. Based on current trends for Right to Buy under the current rules, this could equate to approximately 9 housing association properties per year being sold. He emphasised, however, that the existing rules were subject to change.

He also highlighted that, according to national research, a third of the residents living in housing association properties were retired with the majority of housing association tenants on the lower quartile of incomes. He felt that this was extremely significant, given that South Cambridgeshire was an expensive area to live.

**20. CHAIRMAN'S ENGAGEMENTS**

Council noted engagements attended by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman since the last meeting, as set out on the agenda, subject to the addition of the Chairman officially opening the Little Shelford Fun Run on 26 April 2015.

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**The Meeting ended at 3.55 p.m.**

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