



EAST  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of East Cambridgeshire  
District Council held in the Council Chamber,  
The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Thursday  
5 January 2017 at 6.00pm

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## **PRESENT**

Councillor Allen Alderson	Councillor Julia Huffer
Councillor Michael Allan (Chairman)	Councillor Bill Hunt
Councillor Christine Ambrose-Smith	Councillor Chris Morris
Councillor David Ambrose-Smith	Councillor James Palmer
Councillor Sue Austen	Councillor Charles Roberts
Councillor Anna Bailey	Councillor Hamish Ross
Councillor Derrick Beckett	Councillor Mike Rouse
Councillor David Brown	Councillor Joshua Schumann
Councillor Steve Cheetham	Councillor Carol Sennitt
Councillor Paul Cox	Councillor Alan Sharp
Councillor Peter Cresswell (Vice-Chairman)	Councillor Mathew Shuter
Councillor Lorna Dupré	Councillor Stuart Smith
Councillor Elaine Griffin-Singh	Councillor Lisa Stubbs
Councillor Richard Hobbs	Councillor Jo Webber

1 member of the public was in attendance at the meeting

### 40. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The following question was received from Mr Graham Redman of Sutton and read out in his absence:

*'Four weeks ago I notified the Council that there were problems with the online planning Public Access system with a large number of documents missing from the site that had previously been available. As of today (4<sup>th</sup> Jan) the documents are still missing, making it impossible for the public to view supporting documents and comments on planning applications without visiting ECDC in person.*

*Can the Council please confirm:*

- 1. What has caused the issue?*
- 2. When it is anticipated that the site will be fixed and the missing documents restored?*

3. *How many applications were affected, and what is being done to ensure a fair public consultation on the affected applications?'*

The Director Resources responded as follows:

Firstly, I would like to apologise to customers, members and staff for the problems.

As part of the Council's Transformation Programme, an Electronic Document Records Management System was agreed to be taken forward for the Council. This would provide a single solution to scanning and retrieving documents across the Council.

The Council had used EDRMS systems before, but moving to the solution provided by IDOX system provides a stronger integration to the Council's UNIFORM system, which used by Planning, Building Control, Licensing and Environmental Health services.

The IDOX solution went "live" in early December 2016. As with any project, there were a number of teething issues. However, there was one, fundamental issue, which had not been identified as a risk.

Previously, the complete documents were scanned into the old EDRMS system. These would then have some personal information redacted in accordance with The Data Protection Act, for example names and addresses and be created into a PDF document, before being published on the website. Regretfully the EDRMS project uploaded the original documents prior to their redaction rather than the redacted PDF file. There are 187,000 documents which are held in the old EDRMS which need to be made available through the website. So although we are able to publish all documents, we have not published documents until the redaction issue is resolved as to do so without redaction would leave the Council open to action by the Information Commissioners Office for breaches of the Data Protection Act.

There are clearly lessons to be learned from this, particularly with regard to the testing which took place prior to the "go live". The Planning team have made customers aware of the problem, and have shared redacted documents when requested. All new documents which have come into ECDC over the past few weeks have been redacted and published on the website, although it has come to our attention that some of these documents are still not appearing on the website and this is being investigated.

The problem has been escalated within IDOX, and an action plan has been agreed which sees the technical solution tested and implemented over the next week, with the upload of all

redacted documents being completed over the weekend of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> January. ECDC staff will be available over that weekend to resolve any issues. IDOX staff will then be on site in the following week to resolve any outstanding issues.

All applications past and present that have any redacted information on them have been affected.

The whole of the planning department have been speaking with customers and where requested emailing or sending out hard copies of documents which are not viewable. Agents were also informed by the Planning Manager at their Christmas get together and Members of the Planning Committee have been informed at committee meetings.

We are doing everything we can to resolve the problem, and again, I apologise.

41. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Bovingdon, Bradley, Chaplin, Edwards, Every, Green, Hugo, Tom Hunt and Dan Schumann.

42. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Declarations of interests were received in respect of Agenda Item 9 on the Localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme from Councillors Bill Hunt, Bailey, Stubbs, Griffin-Singh, Palmer, Sennitt, David Ambrose-Smith and Christine Ambrose-Smith, as owners of rental properties within the District. Councillor Bill Hunt stated that he would exercise his public speaking right and then withdraw from the meeting for the item and Councillor Palmer stated that he would remain but not speak or vote on the item.

43. **MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

44. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Councillor Beckett entered the meeting at 6.05pm.*

The Chairman made the following announcements:

**Civic Service**

Referring to my Civic Service which was held in Fordham on 27 November 2016, I would like to thank all of you who attended

and I would specially like to thank Cllrs Christine Ambrose-Smith, Sue Austen, Derrick Beckett, Julia Huffer and James Palmer who very kindly read the Christmas excerpts that my wife Mary and myself wrote.

Furthermore, I must thank the Police Cadets and Fordham WI who as usual provided excellent assorted refreshments.

Also I would like to thank Denise Gawthrop for her help and particularly Lynne Smart, who not only organised everything, including sorting out the order of all the distinguished dignitaries present, but also read a portion of the reading.

### Chairman's Reception

My last Chairman's Reception is going to be held on Friday 3 February 2017 at 7.30pm at the Maltings in Ely. I sincerely hope to see you all and once more I'll do my best to provide you with a surprise or surprises.

### Budget Seminar

Members are reminded of the annual Budget Seminar scheduled for Tuesday 24th January at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, which you previously have been notified of. The Member Seminar will provide the opportunity to brief members on the Budget reports going to Corporate Governance and Finance Committee; and then onto full Council. It will reflect on the recently announced provisional grant settlement, and update members on the latest thinking around longer term financial issues, such as retained business rates. The Seminar will cover financial projections around the Trading Company, Leisure Centre and the Waste Management service.

The Seminar also will provide an opportunity for members to contribute to thinking around the key risks facing the Council, how these risks should be managed and how Internal Audit should be guided by these key risks. This will enable officers to review our approach to Risk Management and guide our Audit Planning work.

If you have not already done so, please can you inform Kimberley Wardle in Democratic Services as to whether or not you will be attending.

### New Service Delivery Plan Template

On 5<sup>th</sup> December 2016, Regulatory and Support Services Committee agreed a new Service Delivery Plan template and corresponding guidance notes. This will now supersede all of the other performance management reporting templates.

45. **PETITIONS**

No Petitions had been received.

46. **MOTIONS**

No motions were received.

47. **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS**

No questions from Members were received.

48. **SCHEDULE OF ITEMS RECOMMENDED FROM COMMITTEES AND OTHER MEMBER BODIES**

*Councillors Bailey, Griffin-Singh and Stubbs left the meeting for the duration of this item.*

Council considered a report, R162 previously circulated, detailing recommendations from Corporate Governance and Finance Committee:

**Corporate Governance and Finance Committee – 1 December 2016**

(a) **Localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme**

Councillor Bill Hunt addressed the Council and reminded Members that 3 years ago the discount for empty properties had been reduced from 6 months to 1 month, with a view to encouraging owners/landlords to bring them back into use as quickly as possible. Councillor Hunt considered this a misguided approach, as landlords wanted to minimise void periods in empty properties anyway. But many landlords also wanted to ensure that they were renting the highest quality of properties and a month was insufficient to achieve this. Landlords should not be penalised for undertaking work to upgrade properties and improve the condition of the rental housing stock and therefore Councillor Hunt believed that the discount policy for empty properties should be reviewed now, rather than waiting until later in the year and not implementing any changes until 2018/19.

*Councillor Bill Hunt then left the meeting for the remainder of this item.*

In proposing the recommendations from Corporate Governance and Finance Committee, Councillor Brown, as Chair of that Committee, stated that it was too late to review the discount policy for empty properties in time for implementation for 2017/18. Therefore, it was appropriate to review the policy during the coming year.

It was resolved:

1. That Council note the continuation of the current Localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme during 2017/18; with the intention that a full review of the scheme is undertaken in 2017/18.
2. That Corporate Governance and Finance Committee reviews the Council's policy with regard to Council Tax discounts and premiums; and discretionary business rate relief, in parallel to the above review.

*Councillors Bailey, Griffin-Singh, Bill Hunt and Stubbs returned to the meeting.*

49. **APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR**

Council considered a report, R163 previously circulated, to consider new arrangements for the appointment of external auditors following the demise of the Audit Commission. The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 required authorities to either opt-in to the appointing person regime or to establish an auditor panel and conduct their own procurement exercise. Councillor Brown, as Chair of Corporate Governance and Finance Committee, commented that conducting our own procurement exercise would take more time and resources and was unlikely to be as cost-effective as opting into the appointing person arrangements made by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) and therefore the latter approach was recommended.

It was resolved:

That this Council opts-in to the appointing person arrangements made by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) for the appointment of external auditors.

50. **POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS REVIEW**

Council considered a report, R164 previously circulated, detailing the outcome of the review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations. Amended pages of the review report (Appendix A) were tabled at the meeting, as one polling district and one street had been included in the wrong Ely Electoral Division.

Councillor Bill Hunt commented that no specific mention was made by name of the movement of the parish of Wicken to the Soham South and Haddenham Division in the 'Summary of Proposed Changes' at the start of the review report, although it was referred to in the 'Returning Officer's Proposal' later in the report.

Councillor Dupré queried whether this review only dealt with the changes arising from the revisions to the County Electoral Divisions within this District resulting from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) review of the electoral arrangements for Cambridgeshire County Council, and that there would be a further review to implement changes arising from the LGBCE review of District Council Wards to be implemented in 2019 and any review of Parliamentary Constituencies. The Electoral Services Officer, Joan Cox, confirmed that this was the case.

Councillor Hobbs referred to issues relating to two of the polling stations in the new Ely North and East Division, and queried if these would be reviewed in the future. The Electoral Services Officer confirmed that these and other issues would be considered as part of the further review to implement changes arising from the LGBCE review of District Council Wards.

It was resolved:

1. That the outcome of the Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations as detailed in Appendix A to the submitted report (as amended) be noted.
2. That the proposed changes in the Returning Officer's Proposals as detailed at Appendix A to the submitted report (as amended) be agreed.

51. **CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH COMBINED AUTHORITY – SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS**

Council considered a report, R165 previously circulated, requesting the appointment of two representatives to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority. An amended Appendix 1 was tabled at the meeting, containing revised calculations for the political parties within the County. These revised calculations had not affected the overall entitlement of seats on the Combined Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee for each Constituent Council.

Councillor Dupré queried whether the Leader of the Council, Councillor James Palmer, should withdraw from the meeting for this item as he had put himself forward as a candidate for the Conservative nomination to be Mayor of the Combined Authority. Councillor Palmer stated that he would not be withdrawing as he had not been selected to be the Conservative candidate for Mayor and therefore there was no conflict of interest at this stage.

Councillor Beckett queried whether Councils with significant minority Political Groups could combine together for the purposes of the

proportionality calculations for the Combined Authority, to increase their entitlement to seats. The Democratic Services Manager explained that under the draft Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2016, the entitlement to seats on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Combined Authority was based upon the proportionality of the Political Parties among the Members of the Constituent Councils and not Political Groups.

It was resolved:

That Councillors Alan Sharp and Lisa Stubbs be appointed as the two Members from the Conservative Group onto the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

The meeting concluded at 6.25pm.

Chairman.....

Date            23 February 2017