

Minutes of the Meeting of East Cambridgeshire
District Council held in the Council Chamber,
The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Thursday
15 May 2014 at 6.30pm

P R E S E N T

Councillor Michael Allan	Councillor Elaine Griffin-Singh
Councillor Ian Allen	Councillor Lindsey Harris
Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith	Councillor Richard Hobbs
Councillor David Ambrose Smith	Councillor Bill Hunt
Councillor Sue Austen	Councillor Tom Hunt
Councillor Anna Bailey	Councillor Chris Morris
Councillor Derrick Beckett	Councillor Neil Morrison
Councillor David Brown	Councillor James Palmer
Councillor Tony Cornell	Councillor Charles Roberts
Councillor Lorna Dupre	Councillor Mike Rouse
Councillor Lavinia Edwards	Councillor Joshua Schumann
Councillor Kevin Ellis	Councillor Robert Stevens
Councillor Lis Every	Councillor Hazel Williams MBE
Councillor Colin Fordham	Councillor Gareth Wilson
Councillor Jeremy Friend-Smith	Councillor Pauline Wilson
Councillor Sheila Friend-Smith MBE	Councillor Andy Wright
Councillor Tony Goodge	

Prior to the commencement of formal business, prayers were delivered by Pastor Billy Onen, of The Olive Tree, Ely

Members observed a minute's silence as a mark of respect following the passing of Cllr John Palmer.

Cllr James Palmer spoke in tribute to the late Cllr John Palmer, saying that he had been a well respected man of integrity who had always worked hard for the best interests of the community in Soham.

1. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no public questions received.

2. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN 2014/2015**

It was resolved:

That Cllr Tony Cornell be elected to the office of Chairman of East Cambridgeshire District Council for the ensuing Municipal Year 2014/2015.

3. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Alderson, Kerby, Parramint, Read and Willows.

4. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

5. **MINUTES**

With regard to the Minutes of the meeting held on 27th February 2014, Cllr Allan pointed out that there was repetition of the word “*whilst*” on the twelfth line of page 5 of the minutes.

Further to the Minutes of the meeting held on 15th April 2014, Cllr Stevens asked that his remarks be amended to remove the word “*Wards*” from the final line of the fourth paragraph on page 27, to better reflect the context of what he had said. Whereupon,

It was resolved:

That subject to the agreed amendments, the Minutes of the meetings held on 27 February and 15 April 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN 2014/2015**

It was resolved:

That Cllr Michael Allan be appointed as Vice-Chairman of East Cambridgeshire District Council for the municipal year 2014/15.

7. **ELECTION RESULT – SUTTON BY-ELECTION**

The Chairman congratulated Cllr Lorna Dupre on being elected as a Liberal Democrat District Councillor for the Sutton Ward following the By-Election on 24th April 2014. Members echoed this sentiment with a round of applause.

It was resolved:

That the By-Election result be noted.

8. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman announced that he had agreed to take an urgent item of business under 100B 4(b) of the Local Government Act 1972. This would be taken as Agenda Item No. 19(a).

With the agreement of the Chairman, Cllr Bill Hunt addressed Council to pay tribute to the late Haddenham Parish Cllr David Fairchild, who had died recently.

Cllr Hunt stated that the passing of a Parish Councillor would not normally be reported at a District Council meeting, but David Fairchild had been a Councillor for fifty years, all bar a few weeks, and he had also been awarded the British Empire Medal; if anyone deserved that medal, it was David Fairchild. Cllr Hunt had known of Cllr Fairchild since the 1960's, and said he did not just represent Haddenham, he was Haddenham. He was always about the village, helping people. Cllr Hunt recalled that during the Mereham Inquiry, Cllr Fairchild had arrived one day with a box of parsnips for the officials so that they could enjoy them with their Christmas lunch.

Cllr Hunt concluded by saying that Cllr Fairchild had been a very special person, for whom he had great respect, and he extended his sympathies to Cllr Fairchild's family and huge cohort of friends and colleagues on their loss.

With the agreement of the Chairman, Cllr Gareth Wilson also spoke to endorse Cllr Hunt's comments, adding that Cllr Fairchild had been involved in the setting up of the Arkenstall Centre, and had chaired meetings for forty years.

With the agreement of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman drew Council's attention to the Isle of Ely Arts Festival booklet for 2014, which had been tabled. He said that himself and Cllr Sheila Friend-Smith worked hard for the arts for all of the District, and he asked Members to support the festival.

9. **PETITIONS**

No petitions had been received.

10. **MOTIONS**

No motions were received.

11. **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS**

No questions were received.

12. **LEADER AND DEPUTY LEADER OF COUNCIL, GROUP LEADERS AND DEPUTY GROUP LEADERS**

The Council received a report, P1, regarding details of the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, Political Groups, Group Leaders and Deputy Group Leaders for the forthcoming municipal year.

It was resolved:

That the details of the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council; Political Groups; Group Leaders and Deputies for the forthcoming municipal year, as set out below, be noted:

Conservative

Cllr James Palmer (Leader)
Cllr Charles Roberts (Deputy)

Liberal Democrat

Cllr Gareth Wilson (Leader)
Cllr Neil Morrison (Deputy)

Independent

Cllr Andy Wright (Leader)
Cllr Derrick Beckett (Deputy)

In accordance with Article 2.03(b), the declared Leader of the Council is Cllr James Palmer as Leader of the Conservative Group. In accordance with Article 2.03(c), the declared Deputy Leader of the Council is Cllr Charles Roberts as Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group.

13. **POLITICAL PROPORTIONALITY**

The Council received a report, P2, which gave details of the political balance of the Council and the implications for the allocation of seats on Committees.

Members noted that Appendix 1 showed the allocation of places on Committees, Sub-Committees and other Member Bodies in accordance with the requirements of the proportionality rules based on the revised Committee structure approved by Council on 15th April 2014. The table also reflected the current vacancy arising from the death of former Cllr John Palmer.

Group Leaders had been advised of the number of places available on each Committee to be filled by their Groups, and of any necessary adjustments to be made between the political Groups in their overall seat allocations. Appendix 2 was a proposed allocation of places on Committees/Sub-Committees from Group Leaders, reflecting the need for the Liberal Democrat Group to cede one place on a proportionate Committee/Sub-Committee and for the Conservative Group, Independent Group and Vacancy to gain places from the five spare places as yet unallocated on each of the five main Committees.

It was resolved:

That Council:

Notes the details of the political balance of the Council as set out in Appendix 1 and approves the allocation of seats on Committees, Sub-Committees and other Member Bodies as set out in Appendix 2 of the report.

14. **MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES (INCLUDING SUBSTITUTES) AND OTHER MEMBER BODIES 2014/2015**

Council received a report, P3, for Members to consider the appointment of Members and Substitute Members to Committees, Sub-Committees and to other Member Bodies for 2013/14.

An updated list of the Membership of the Committees, Sub-Committees and other Member bodies for 2014/2015, Appendix 1 of the Officer's report, was tabled at the meeting.

Cllr Wright remarked that in the previous agenda item, Members had approved Appendix 2 of the report. The Asset Development Sub-Committee was included in the proportionality calculations, and yet it did not appear on the list in this report. He continued, saying that proportionality might have to be recalculated following the forthcoming By-Election, and he felt that if 2 seats were allocated per Member, then everyone would get the same chance of serving on committees.

The Principal Democratic Services Officer explained that the Asset Development Sub-Committee was included in the proportionality calculations, but because it was a sub-committee of the Commercial Services Committee, would be

appointed at the meeting of that Committee held at the conclusion of the Council meeting. This was why there would be a mini meeting to appoint the membership of the Sub-Committee. With regard to the Personnel Appeals Sub-Committee, this was not included in the proportionality calculations because membership did not have to be proportionate.

Cllr Gareth Wilson, noted that there were no substitutes listed for the Asset Development Sub-Committee. Quoting from the Council's Constitution (Page 4 (14), paragraph 24.2.2 refers), he said that at the moment, the Constitution stated that *"For each relevant Committee or **Sub-Committee**, the Council will appoint up to two substitutes in respect of each Group ..."* and he therefore believed that substitutes should be appointed for the Asset Development Sub-Committee.

The Chief Executive interjected to say it was a matter for Council to decide if Members wished to have substitutes for the Asset Development Sub-Committee. The Principal Democratic Services Officer stated that as members of the Asset Development Sub-Committee needed to be members of the Commercial Services Committee if substitutes were appointed, the Liberal Democrat Group would only be able to appoint 1 substitute and the Group of Independents would have none.

Cllr Gareth Wilson continued, saying that he was particularly concerned because Cllr Sheila Friend-Smith would be unable to attend the first Sub-Committee meeting. He was therefore raising this issue tonight as he felt it was important to make sure that the Sub-Committee was fully represented.

The Chief Executive stated that if Council wished to have substitutes on the Asset Development Committee, a motion to this effect could be proposed. Cllr Palmer suggested that the matter be reviewed after the forthcoming By-Election on 19th June, and Cllr Wright stated that he would be happy to accept this.

Cllr Wilson said he did not wish a decision to be put off, and duly proposed that each Group should have 2 substitutes on the Asset Development Sub-Committee, in keeping with paragraph 24.2.2 of the Constitution. The motion was seconded by Cllr Pauline Wilson. Cllr Brown pointed out that the motion needed to be amended to allow for *"up to 2 substitutes"* and Cllr Gareth Wilson confirmed that he was content to accept this. When put to the vote,

It was resolved:

That Council approves the membership of Committees, Sub-Committees and other Member bodies for 2014/15, as tabled at the meeting, subject to the following amendment:

Asset Development Sub-Committee:

The Political Groups have the ability to appoint up to 2 substitute Members, in accordance with the Constitution.

15. **CALENDAR OF MEETINGS**

Council received a report, P4, which set out the Calendar of Meetings for 2014/15 for the revised Committee structure approved at the Special Council meeting on 15th April 2014.

Cllr Gareth Wilson noted that the start time for full Council had been brought forward to 6.00pm on the calendar. He believed this earlier time would make it difficult for some members of the public, and also some Members to attend, and he proposed that the original start time of 6.30pm be retained.

His motion was seconded by Cllr Morrison and having been put to the vote, was declared to be lost.

It was resolved:

That the Calendar of Meetings for 2014/15 be noted.

16. **ANNUAL REVIEW – CORPORATE PRIORITIES AND RISK REGISTER 2013/14**

Council received a report, P5, which set out the annual review of corporate priorities and risk register for 2013/14. Appendix 1 to the report detailed performance against 2013/14 corporate priorities and made proposals for any changes in 2014/15, and Appendix 2 set out a review of the 2013/14 Corporate Risk Register.

In proposing the recommendation to agree the Annual Review and the Corporate Risk Register, Cllr Palmer said that in bringing in a new regime to ensure the Council would work in a more business-like manner, he had never promised that it was going to be an easy ride. However, the Conservative Group had been strong and had brought forward changes for Council to embrace. There was a new role for Members which had been accepted by the Opposition and he was sure that there would be exciting times ahead. He then spoke of specific Corporate Indicators.

With regard to Indicator No. 3 (To reduce the number of families with children in bed & breakfast and those in residence for more than six weeks), Cllr Palmer said the Council had been spending too much and not doing enough and had acted swiftly to address this. There had been zero households in B&B since August 2013.

In respect of Indicator No.6 (To facilitate the opening of a cinema at Downham Road/A10 by 2015), Cllr Palmer stated that the Council was working hard to deliver on this priority.

Cllr Palmer said that in connection with Indicator No. 11 (To deliver the MTFS 2012/13 to 2016/17, as defined by Finance & Governance Committee), it had been the right thing to freeze Council Tax in 2014/15 and he would do everything he could to deliver quality services for a fair price.

Corporate Indicator No. 8 (To implement recycling service changes as outlined in the Council's DCLG bid and work in partnership with the County Council and other district Councils in Cambridgeshire) had been completed. He wanted to deliver the best quality service, and this had been achieved due to the hard work of the Officers, to whom he offered his sincere thanks.

Referring to Indicator No. 14 (To develop a detailed option brief for Soham Rail Station by March 2015 and identify external sources of funding for the delivery of the scheme), Cllr Palmer stated that everything was being done to push the scheme forward, and deliver houses, infrastructure and employment.

Cllr Roberts seconded the motion for approval.

Cllr Bill Hunt said he had served on the Council for 7 years and had never been so excited as now. Real progress was being made and there would be more to come. He thought that all Members should be proud of what had been achieved. These were very exciting times, the Council was delivering impressive things and with no increase in Council Tax. Everyone should adopt a “can do” attitude and work as a team for the people of the District.

Cllr Allen welcomed the chance to review the Corporate Priorities, and offered his congratulations on Indicator No.3 having been resolved. He thought the implementation of the new recycling service had made things much better, but was disappointed that the weekly service had been retained. In connection with this, he asked what sort of guarantee could be given that a weekly collection would be continued post 2016/17. With regard to Indicator No.1 (To facilitate the commencement of the Southern Link Road by 2015), he thought it would be a great shame if the Council failed on this and it would be wise to review this indicator.

In looking at the recommendations for 2014/15, Cllr Stevens said he was thinking of the villages in his part of the District where many things had been distilled into Village Visions and Parish Plans. Some of the villages were crying out for play areas, traffic calming and reduced speed limits for people walking and cycling. Other local authorities made money available from the New Homes Bonus but in this Council only 15% was paid to the villages, which could be increased to 25% if they had a Village Plan. He felt that this Council was not doing very much to encourage larger developments in villages, if they saw funding arising from these being used predominantly in Ely and the other towns.

Community Infrastructure Levy would raise money to go to the District for projects in Ely, Soham and Littleport, but help was needed elsewhere. Giving Bottisham as an example, Cllr Stevens said the Village College now had academy status and served most of the 15 villages in the south of the District. The school needed help with its swimming pool, and the village needed a decent play area for the children.

Cllr Schumann responded to Cllr Allen's comments, saying that everything possible would be done to try and ensure that work on the Southern Link Road commenced in 2015. With regard to the new recycling service, the hard work of the Officers and Cllrs Hobbs and Ellis had been key in its delivery. Because of the improved recycling rates, the District had received an additional £44,000 in income in Quarter 3 and recycling rates were currently running at 50.7%.

Cllr Hobbs left the Chamber at 7.38pm.

Cllr Dupre raised queries regarding Indicators Nos. 2 and 9. In respect of Indicator No.2 (To facilitate the introduction of superfast broadband to the District by 2015), she said she was aware that the County Council was involved, but she was not aware of what the District Council's role had been. She was surprised to see that the installation works had been completed because as far as she was aware, a “go live” date had not yet been announced. With regard to Indicator No.9 (To

reduce the average number of working days lost to sickness per FTE) she was pleased to see that the numbers had decreased and asked if the Leader if he was happy that this had been resolved. Cllr Dupre concluded by asking the Chief Executive to explain how the “can do attitude” could be measured.

The Chief Executive replied that in the case of superfast broadband, the Council had agreed to forego Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) Reward Grant funding from Cambridgeshire in order to progress the scheme; this had been a very definitive intervention. With regard to working days lost to sickness, it was not intended to discharge the indicator as it would remain an ongoing priority to be retained in the HR Service Delivery Plan. The issue of “can do attitude” had been discussed with Cllr Roberts and the Principal Housing Officer, to see how Service Delivery Plans could be used and how it could be achieved by Officers through those Plans. It was more of a challenge to deliver such esoteric indicators but he was sure that the Service Delivery Champions would want to work with their departments on this issue.

Cllr Tom Hunt said that when he was elected, he had made it one of his priorities to speak up for youth issues and it was heartening to see the commitment to benefit the younger demographic in the District.

Cllr Beckett said his problem was with how the priorities were sometimes achieved. It had always been the Committees that made the decisions, but just recently there had been more decisions made on the grounds of urgency. In the case of Indicator No.7 (To provide a detailed costed plan for the development and construction of a new District leisure facility by the end of 2014), the Deputy Chief Executive and the Chairman of the Community & Environment Services Committee had taken the decision to spend £50,000. Cllr Beckett said it seemed to him that things were rapidly moving away from a committee structure to one or two individuals making the decisions.

Cllr Hobbs returned to the Chamber at 7.50pm.

Cllr Bailey responded to Cllr Stevens’ comments by saying that his Group had previously wanted to use the New Homes Bonus to “prop up” the budget. She commented that parishes could precept to upgrade/provide play areas, this was part of localism.

She continued, saying that not everything in life could be measured in figures, and she had championed the “can do” attitude. Much of what the Authority did was statutory; what was done was not always nice, but it could be done in a positive way. Cllr Bailey said she wanted positive rather than negative stories coming forward, and it was right to have this attitude. The Service Delivery Plans would give a microscope on each service and she wanted to receive feedback.

Cllr Hobbs, referring to Cllr Stevens’ remarks about funding for the smaller villages, stated that the Small Villages Grants pot had been used extensively in the south of the District. It was to be reviewed and kept alive.

Cllr Wright, picking up on Cllr Beckett’s comments regarding Indicator No.7, said he thought that Group Leaders were always informed about decisions taken on grounds of urgency as well as the Spokespersons. He then asked if the Authority was so devoid of staff that no one in the building had the capability to deal with this matter and he also wished to know where the other £10 million to construct the leisure facility was coming from.

Cllr Hobbs explained that it had been necessary to commission the assessments in order for the Council to be eligible to apply to the Sport England Strategic Facilities Fund for a financial contribution towards a new leisure facility. The work had to be carried out to see what was needed and it was essential that everything was done correctly to get assistance from Sport England.

Cllr Williams said she was delighted to read the list of priorities, but she was disappointed that only six were District-wide. She had given some thought about what was good for her “patch” and everywhere south of Soham, and felt that the Corporate Priorities should be reviewed to see if there was anything important in the south of the District. She believed there was a danger that the Council would be so tied up in the new Priorities that the south of the District would be abandoned; where she lived people felt that it was the north of the District that got everything.

Cllr Morrison said he too wished to speak up for his “patch”. He did not think that “Talking Up Littleport” was a very good phrase as it implied starting from a low base and he also wished to know why car parking improvements had been dropped when assurances had been given that it was only a matter of time before it would be addressed. The Chief Executive replied that the Asset Development Committee had made a site visit to the car park and would be working up a business case for more modest changes due to issues on the business case relating to securing conference investment.

Cllr Bill Hunt suggested that Cllr Morrison should wait until Council had gone into exempt session to discuss car parking in detail. It was, he said, a case of looking at the pluses and minuses, deciding whether it was worthwhile and sensible and spending the money wisely.

Cllr Gareth Wilson reminded Council that the grants awarded from the Small Villages Fund had to be match-funded. He was extremely pleased to see that £45,000 per annum would be allocated to the fund as from 2015. He felt that East Cambridgeshire, as a rural district, had concentrated on the towns and not on the rural villages. It was important to look after the smaller villages and the people who lived in them because much had been skewed towards Ely, and besides which, it would benefit Ely by having prosperous villages all around.

Cllr Wright commented that he had yet to receive answers to his earlier questions about the capacity of staff and how the remaining £10 million was to be funded. The Chief Executive responded, saying that Sport England *had* to be employed to carry out the feasibility study in order for the District to be able to access funding. In respect of the remaining funding for the leisure facility, it was difficult to put forward a package until the costs were known. However, the Council was committed to raise monies from the sale of assets, there would be funding from the existing swimming pool, and the facility was on the CIL 123 List for a long term funding plan. The funding sources would be brought before Members and the Committee would need to be clear where the funding was coming from.

Cllr Palmer drew the discussion to a conclusion by saying that Cllr Wright had rightly questioned how £12 million could be spent on the construction of a new leisure centre, and he wished to assure him that any finance spent would be completely affordable and transparent. Similarly, Cllr Allen was right to mention the Southern Link Road; Cllr Palmer said he would not let it slide, it was time it was delivered, and it would happen. However, with regard to refuse collection, he could

not commit to what would happen in four years time; for now he felt that Members should applaud what was happening now.

It was resolved:

That the annual review of corporate priorities and the risk register 2013/14, as detailed in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report, be agreed.

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

Council considered a report, P6, which detailed a recommendation from the meeting of the Development & Transport Committee held on 14th April 2014 in respect of the Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring Report 2013.

Cllr Morrison stated that he had raised some questions regarding the Annual Monitoring Report, but he had not yet received any answers. The Chief Executive apologised for the delay and assured Cllr Morrison that he would get the answers to him as soon as possible.

Cllr Williams said she had enjoyed reading the document but wished somebody to explain why only 14 affordable dwellings were built during the monitoring year. She could not understand why the figures were so low but wondered if it was because some of the developments coming forward were small. Cllr Schumann remarked that the Council was committed to 30% affordable housing. The Chief Executive concurred, adding that the smaller developments had not delivered, even in Ely, and Officers were still in discussion with the developers regarding delivery of 30% within viability rules. He said he would endeavour to provide all Members with an answer to this issue.

Cllr Roberts wished to reassure Members that the weakness in the delivery of affordable homes was recognised and would be addressed. Community Land Trusts (CLT's) were a Corporate Priority and they would be refocused on as the preferred option. Stretham & Wilburton CLT was building 50 houses and the community would have 15 of them, and it was protected to rent them at 65% of the market rent.

Cllr Williams responded, saying that she was not against CLT's, but they had to be in the right place and at the right time. The average time to deliver was 5 years and required an enormous amount of commitment from the community.

Cllr Allen said he had attended the Planning Committee meeting at which the Ely North applications were discussed and he recalled that affordable housing was subject to viability. In response to Cllr Schumann's remark that they were Reserved Matters applications, Cllr Allen commented that nothing else had been. When asked by Cllr Brown what this had to do with this report, Cllr Allen replied that he was trying to address Cllr Williams' comments regarding affordable housing and highlight that viability should not impact on affordable housing. He was not against the principle of CLT's, as they were a mechanism for delivery, but he questioned whether they should be the preferred method of delivery for affordable housing.

Cllr Gareth Wilson stated that 24 affordable dwellings would be finished in Haddenham by 2015, based on an exception site. He believed the Council should

use its best endeavours to get exception sites and said he would like to see them as a priority. Cllr Beckett agreed that rural exception sites were one of the best methods of affordable housing delivery because they came at no cost to this Council, whereas he believed that CLT's would incur a cost.

Cllr Wright said it was clear to him that the Council's policy was not working and that possibly it was because the Authority kept "upping the ante". He suggested that maybe the policy needed to ask for less in order to gain more; he also said he agreed with Cllr Beckett about exception sites.

Cllr Roberts, responding to Cllr Williams, said the CLT in Stretham had taken 2 years, during which time the framework policy and funding was put in place. It was about people embracing localism and getting on with it. The Authority had a poor track record regarding affordable houses so far. It was his view that the rural exception site policy did not work, but CLT's did.

Cllr Bill Hunt interjected to remind Council that the application for the 24 affordable homes at Haddenham had originally been rejected but then allowed on appeal. The area was subject to flooding and it had been necessary to make an application to the County Council for safe crossings.

Cllr Palmer agreed with Cllr Williams that 14 affordable houses were nowhere near enough, and the Authority was doing all it could to ensure that the North Ely development provided 30%. There was only so much money in the pot and whilst he believed in CLT's, he acknowledged that they were not the only mechanism for delivery. However, he agreed that rural exception sites had not delivered and they were not the answer to the District's problems. Whereupon,

It was resolved:

Development and Transport Committee – 14 April 2014

Local Development Framework: Annual Monitoring Report 2013

That the Annual Monitoring Report 2013 be adopted by this Council.

At 8.23pm the Chairman announced that the meeting would adjourn for a short comfort break. The meeting resumed at 8.26pm.

18. **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW: DECREASE IN PARISH COUNCILLORS
LITTLE THETFORD PARISH COUNCIL.**

Council received a report, P7, from which Members were asked to consider the outcome of the initial consultation as part of a Community Governance review, arising from a request from Little Thetford Parish Council to decrease their number of Parish Councillors from nine to seven.

Cllr Bill Hunt, speaking in support of the report, said that this was a very straightforward matter. Little Thetford was a small village and years ago it had ambitious plans which required an increase in the number of its Parish Councillors to deliver the work. Those plans had since been completed and the workload of the Parish Council had now reduced. As a consequence, there was no longer a need for nine Members and, in fact, the parish had problems in getting seven Members without co-opting, so a reduction in numbers was appropriate.

It was resolved:

That the Council's draft proposal, in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the Community Governance review, be:

"That the number of Parish Councillors on Little Thetford Parish Council be decreased from 9 to 7, to come into effect for the Parish elections in May 2015."

19. **INDIVIDUAL ELECTOR REGISTRATION (IER)**

Council received a report, P8, which sought to brief Members on the transition to Individual Electoral Registration (IER), the impact on electors and Members, and the potential issues arising from this change.

The Principal Democratic Services Officer summarised the main points of her report by reminding Members of the background to the forthcoming changes, and explaining the process for the canvasses that would be undertaken in 2014 and 2015.

She reiterated that this new regime was a fundamental change to the process for electoral registration, the impact of which would become apparent when it went live from June 2014 onwards. Members should be aware that irrespective of how well the message was communicated, the transition to IER had the potential to be poorly received in some parts of the community. In particular, residents might not be happy to provide National Insurance Numbers and dates of birth to canvassing staff.

Cllr Brown asked if it would be possible to have a list of FAQ's which also covered identity theft, to assist Members in dealing with any queries. The Principal Democratic Services Officer said that would be provided and the Electoral Commission would also be holding a big national publicity campaign to help educate the public.

It was resolved:

That the report be noted.

19(a) **URGENT ITEM OF BUSINESS UNDER 100B 4(b) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT: RESOLUTION TO EXTEND 6 MONTH RULE – SECTION 85 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972.**

Council received a report requesting Members to consider the extension of the 6 month rule for Cllr Philip Read, due to his absence from meetings because of ill health.

Cllr Wright said that because of the grounds for Cllr Read's absence, it gave him no pleasure to have to move that this Council should approve the motion, which was duly seconded by Cllr Beckett.

Cllr Williams pointed out that the 6 month period would expire on 11th August 2014, and not July, as stated in the report.

Cllr Dupre said that all Members wished Cllr Read a speedy recovery. She added that there was now another Member elected for the Sutton Ward who could

cover for him in his absence, but had Sutton been a one-Member Ward, the people of that Ward would have been disenfranchised.

It was resolved:

That Council approves an extension of the 6 month rule for Cllr Philip Read on ill health grounds to the end of the current year and expresses its best wishes to him for a speedy recovery.

20. **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was resolved:

That the press and public be excluded during consideration of the remaining agenda item because it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of public were present during the items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information of Categories 1, 2 & 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

21. **EXEMPT MINUTES – 27TH FEBRUARY 2014**

It was resolved:

That the exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The meeting concluded at 8.36pm.