



EAST
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM NO 4(b)

Minutes of the Special Meeting of East Cambridgeshire District Council held in the Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Thursday 20 August 2015 at 6.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor Allen Alderson	Councillor Neil Hitchin
Councillor Michael Allan (Chairman)	Councillor Richard Hobbs
Councillor Christine Ambrose-Smith	Councillor Mark Hugo
Councillor David Ambrose Smith	Councillor Bill Hunt
Councillor Sue Austen	Councillor Chris Morris
Councillor Anna Bailey	Councillor James Palmer
Councillor Derrick Beckett	Councillor Andy Pearson
Councillor Mike Bradley	Councillor Hamish Ross
Councillor David Brown	Councillor Mike Rouse
Councillor Vince Campbell	Councillor Carol Sennitt
Councillor Steve Cheetham	Councillor Mathew Shuter
Councillor Paul Cox	Councillor Stuart Smith
Councillor Peter Cresswell (Vice-Chairman)	Councillor Lisa Stubbs
Councillor Lorna Dupré	Councillor Jo Webber
Councillor Lis Every	

Approximately 4 members of the public/staff were in attendance at the meeting.

Prior to the commencement of formal business, it was announced that this Council meeting was being webcast and broadcast live to the internet via YouTube.

33. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Two questions were received in accordance with the Public Question Time procedure.

The first question was asked by Ms Christine Whelan of Ely as follows:

'In view of the fact that Barratt Homes Northampton have failed to complete the works in the Kings Avenue area to the standard that will enable the County Council to adopt the roads, will the Council please confirm that all future developments, including those currently planned for North Ely, will include planning conditions that will ensure that developers build the public highways and facilities to a standard enabling them to be adopted by the County Council as advised by their Highways department?'

The Director Regulatory Services, Jo Brooks, thanked Ms Whelan for her question and gave the following response:

In order for the Council to impose a Planning Condition it must meet a number of stringent tests.

Road adoption is dealt with by the Highway Authority, Cambridgeshire County Council, and secured by separate Section 38 Agreements – this is outside of the Planning process.

It is not possible to impose a condition requiring the adoption of a road and the Council cannot insist on a Planning Condition to secure S38 Agreements.

The Council recognise that this is an issue. However, it cannot impose conditions that fail to meet the tests set out in legislation.

The following question then was asked by Mr Mark Inskip from Sutton:

‘On 31st July the High Court ruled unlawful the planning guidance issued by Housing Minister Brandon Lewis on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government which excluded development of 10 homes or fewer from the requirement to provide or contribute to affordable housing provision. In response the DCLG has stated that it will delete this guidance.

What impact will this judgement have on the expected levels of affordable housing in East Cambridgeshire?

How will this judgement be reflected in the revised East Cambridgeshire Local Plan?

What are the financial implications of this judgement on East Cambridgeshire?’

The Director Commercial and Corporate Services, Emma Grima, responded as follows:

What impact will this judgement have on the expected levels of affordable housing in East Cambridgeshire?

There will be no impact on the Council as we have an adopted Local Plan that requires affordable housing to be secured on sites of 11 or more dwellings.

How will this judgement be reflected in the revised East Cambridgeshire Local Plan?

As part of the Local Plan Review up-to-date evidence will be gathered; this will inform any proposed threshold.

What are the financial implications of this judgement on East Cambridgeshire?

There are no financial implications.

34. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chaplin, Edwards, Green, Griffin-Singh, Tom Hunt, Roberts, Joshua Schumann.

35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interests were received.

36. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made the following announcements:

'I am delighted to announce that East Cambridgeshire has been recognised as one of the best places to live in Britain, where a perfect blend of happiness and affordability exist. As the Leader of the Council has stated in the Press, we will do our utmost to make East Cambridgeshire the best place possible to live.

Regarding the 100 days commitment Action Plan. Our achievement is too lengthy to incorporate it all here. I will mention just a few that have been satisfactorily completed:

- (a) Guaranteeing the 2016 /17 council tax freeze
- (b) Incorporating 60% recycling rate into Waste Service Delivery plan
- (c) Commitment to free car parking into the Council's Constitution
- (d) Approving the time-table and process for the New Local Plan and
- (e) Target of 8 apprenticeship into the Economic Development Service Delivery Plan

Another piece of good news is that we have reached an agreement with the County Council that the bypass completion date is set at October 2017.

My charity for the next 2 years is going to be something very close to my heart. In 2013, my wife and I attended the annual dinner of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers at the Tower of London.

That evening the soldier who served wine was Lee Rigby. You can image our shock when he was murdered just a few weeks later. I was a Fusilier and we have a charity called FAS – Fusiliers Aid Society. The Society offers support to Fusiliers past and present and their families when they are in need or are suffering hardship through no fault of their own. They deal with many soldiers and veterans from conflicts like Northern Ireland, the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan including World War 2 and Korea.

Finishing on a happy note, I am sure you would like to join me in congratulating the promotion of our new Director of Commercial and Corporate Services – Emma Grima.’

37. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND (LGBCE) ELECTORAL REVIEW OF EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE – EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION ON WARDING ARRANGEMENTS**

Council considered a report, Q57 previously circulated, containing a proposed submission to the Local Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) consultation on warding arrangements as part of the Electoral Review of East Cambridgeshire. The report explained the background to the decision by full Council in April 2014 to request the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to undertake a review of Council size with a view to reducing the number of Members from 39 to 27. It also explained the reasons for the revision of the Council’s proposed submission to the LGBCE to a Council size of 28 as a result of the development of new warding arrangements for the District.

Sally Bonnett, Infrastructure and Projects Officer, highlighted minor amendments to Table 1 of the Council’s proposed submission at Appendix 1 to the report, to include the omitted variance of -7.6% in respect of the proposed Bottisham Ward and to adjust the electorate figures and variances for the proposed Ely 1 and Ely 2 Wards as follows:

Ely 1 – 5,267 (2,634 per councillor) 2.9%
Ely 2 – 5,139 (2,570 per councillor) 0.4%

Ms Bonnett stated that the proposed Council submission had been prepared as a result of Member feedback and a Member Seminar and incorporated local Parish Council views, wherever possible. Subsequent to the Member Seminar, the proposed Fordham and Isleham Wards had been put forward as separate single Member Wards at the request of the current local Isleham Ward Member.

Ms Bonnett referred to written comments received from Wentworth Parish Council tabled at the meeting, requesting that Wentworth be in the same Ward as Witchford so as to maintain the important geographic and historical affinities that exist between the villages.

In that connection, a motion to agree the Council’s proposed submission at Appendix 1 to the report with the minor amendments to Table 1 detailed above, was proposed by Councillor Palmer and seconded by Councillor Bailey.

In proposing the motion, Councillor Palmer referred to the reasons for the proposed reduction in the number of Councillors, stating that 1 year ago the financial future of the Council and its unsustainable Budget position had resulted in a significant restructuring of both the Officer and Committee

structures of this Council. This had been a clear statement that the Council was willing to look critically at ourselves and to find more efficient ways to serve the local residents of the District. Councillor Palmer had been particularly heartened by the LGBCE commendation of our Council submission to them on Council size and the fact that the LGBCE had supported our view that the Council could be run with 27 Councillors, which would make us the leanest Council in the country and ensure that we lead the way in fairness and efficiently serving the public. Councillor Palmer commended Sally Bonnett on her excellent work in preparing the proposed warding submission presented at this meeting and stated that this gave a clear memorandum to be submitted to the LGBCE.

Councillor Dupré then proposed the following amendment tabled at the meeting, which was seconded by Councillor Austen:

‘That the Council agrees the submission to the LGBCE attached as Appendix 1 as amended below, including a revised Map 1 (attached):

Ward Name	No. Councillors	Electorate 2020	Variance (%)	Description	Detail
Woodditton	2	5,010 (2,505 per councillor)	-2.1	Includes Cheveley, Ashley, Kirtling, Saxon Street, Woodditton, Stetchworth and Dullingham	This arrangement keeps the Cambridgeshire part of Newmarket in one ward and reflects the Newmarket centred sociology of the southern villages.
Bottisham 1	1	2,710	5.9	Includes Bottisham, Brinkley, Borrough Green and Westley Waterless	This arrangement keeps Borrough Green and Westley Waterless in the same ward.
Bottisham 2	1	2,330	-8.9	Lode, Reach, Swaffham Bulbeck and Swaffham Prior	This arrangement reflects the Newmarket centred sociology of the southern villages.

That the Council instructs the Infrastructure and Projects Officer to make the necessary amendments to the detailed submission to reflect the above.'

In proposing the amendment, Councillor Dupré commented that she considered it premature to be considering the District Ward boundaries when the final County Council Divisional boundaries were not yet known. Therefore, there was the danger of a fragmented outcome. It would have been better to have been able to await the final recommendations from the County Council review before proposing our own boundaries. Nevertheless, Councillor Dupré stated that she preferred a Council size of 28 to 27, as it made more sense and created better boundaries, and so she would not be opposing this. Councillor Dupré explained why she considered that her amendment gave a better alignment for the south of the District as detailed in the table to the amendment. In concluding, Councillor Dupré commented that a measure of good local governance was not to have the lowest number of Councillors in the country, as otherwise the best form of local governance would be a single dictator.

Councillor Bill Hunt commented that the LGBCE would actually decide on the final ward boundaries for the District. Councillor Hunt commended Sally Bonnett and Councillor Bailey on their work in preparing the Council's proposed warding submission and stated that it was expected that this would be opposed by the opposition Members. However, it would save an estimated £50,000 per year in Members Allowances and a further sum in officer resources to support Councillors. Councillor Hunt stated that this was further proof that the administration was delivering on its promises.

The Chairman reminded Councillors that they were currently speaking on the amendment.

Councillor Cresswell spoke in opposition to the amendment as a local Ward Member for the south of the District, since he believed that this area should comprise 2 two Member Wards as proposed in the submission appended to the officer report. Councillor Alderson also spoke in opposition to the amendment as a local Member, stating that the proposed two Member Bottisham Ward seemed to work fairly well, but the division of that area into two separate Wards created large hinterlands which would be difficult to administer by one Councillor. Councillor Shuter stated that he was both a District and County Councillor for part of this area, and also opposed the amendment. He stated that the proposed Bottisham 2 Ward name would be erroneous as it did not include Bottisham, and that the area could be better administered as a two Member Ward.

Councillor Dupré commented that there was not a perfect solution and that the comments on workloads showed that reducing the number of Councillors put more strain on Councillors covering a larger number of parishes and did not demonstrate efficient and effective local government. Councillor Dupré stated that the role of the opposition was to challenge the

administration to justify its policies and decisions and therefore opposition should not be considered as undesirable.

Upon being put to the vote, the amendment was declared to be lost.

Speaking on the motion, Councillor Bailey commented that the timetable for the review process had been set by the LGBCE and that the Commission's final recommendations for the County Council review would be published in September 2015, which still would be before the publication of the draft recommendations for this District. Councillor Bailey stated that the review was not about the lowest number of Councillors but the right number of Councillors for the District. There already had been a restructuring of the Committee system to ensure that it operated efficiently. Councillor Bailey thanked Sally Bonnett for her work on the Council warding proposal and acknowledged that it would never be possible to please everyone but that this was a good solution. The public also had given overwhelming support to a reduction in the number of Councillors as part of a survey conducted by the administration prior to the Elections. Councillor Bailey believed that the LGBCE might wish the 2015 electorate figures also to be provided as part of the submission and she would draw Ms Bonnett's attention to a small number of typographical errors in the submission. With reference to the Wentworth Parish Council comments, Councillor Bailey highlighted the fact that Parish Councils and other parties could make their own submission to the LGBCE. This represented the first stage of the consultation process and a further consultation would take place once the LGBCE published its draft recommendations, by which stage we would have the final outcome of the County Council review. Therefore, Councillor Bailey stated that she was comfortable with the process and would be voting for the motion.

In response to Councillor Dupré's comments, Councillor Palmer acknowledged that it was the opposition Members' role to represent those local constituents that did not vote for the administration. Councillor Palmer referred to the fact that due to holidays, other commitments, etc, there were 29 Councillors present at this Special Council meeting, so the Council was operating on 29 Members tonight.

Upon being put to the vote, the motion was declared to be carried.

It was resolved:

That the submission to the LGBCE attached as Appendix 1 to the report, with the minor amendments to Table 1 detailed above, be approved.

38. **ACTION TAKEN BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ON THE GROUNDS OF URGENCY**

Council considered a report, Q58 previously circulated, detailing action taken by the Chief Executive on the grounds of urgency regarding the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) review of Cambridgeshire County Council.

Councillor Dupré highlighted the fact that this Council had made a submission to the LGBCE which breached its own Constitution. Councillor Dupré also drew attention to the sentence in the report that stated that ‘the timetable meant that Council could not approve any submission prior to it being submitted to the LGBCE’. Councillor Dupré expressed concern that no effort had been made to convene a Special Council meeting or to consult with other Councillors prior to a submission being made to the LGBCE. This did not demonstrate a commitment to localism or to the Council’s Committee system on the part of the ruling administration and instead showed a greater similarity to a Cabinet system without the commensurate scrutiny which goes with that system. Councillor Dupré considered this to be unacceptable, undemocratic and an abuse of the Constitution and Committee system.

It was resolved:

That the action taken by the Chief Executive on the grounds of urgency be noted.

The meeting concluded at 6.35pm.

Chairman.....

Date 22 October 2015