

MINUTES

COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2008

2.00 PM



PRESENT

Councillor Mike Exton Chairman

Councillor Bob Adams
(Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Harrish Bisnauthsing
Councillor Pam Bosworth
Councillor Christine Brough
Councillor Paul Carpenter
Councillor Mrs Frances Cartwright
Councillor George Chivers
Councillor Michael Cook
Councillor Nick Craft
Councillor Alan Davidson
Councillor John Dawson
Councillor Mrs Joyce Gaffigan
Councillor John Harvey
Councillor Robert Hearmon
Councillor Trevor Holmes
Councillor Reginald Howard
Councillor Kenneth Joynson
Councillor Jock Kerr
Councillor Albert Victor Kerr
Councillor Reg Lovelock M.B.E.
Councillor Peter Martin-Mayhew
Councillor Stuart McBride

Councillor Andrew Moore
Councillor Mrs. Linda Neal
Councillor John Nicholson
Councillor Mrs Margery Radley
Councillor Bob Russell
Councillor Bob Sandall
Councillor Susan Sandall
Councillor Trevor Scott
Councillor Ian Selby
Councillor Mrs Maureen Spencer-Gregson O.B.E.
Councillor Ian Stokes
Councillor Michael Taylor
Councillor Jeffrey Thompson
Councillor Frank Turner
Councillor Andrea Webster
Councillor Tom Webster
Councillor Graham Wheat
Councillor Mike Williams
Councillor Avril Williams
Councillor Paul Wood
Councillor Raymond Wootten

OFFICERS

Chief Executive
Strategic Director (BA)
Corporate Head of Finance &
Customer Services

OFFICERS

Legal Services Manager (Monitoring
Officer)
Planning Policy Services Manager
Democracy Services Manager

"Listening Learning Delivering"

OFFICERS continued

Tenancy Services Manager
Grounds Maintenance Co-ordinator

58. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

There being no questions submitted, the public open forum did not take place.

59. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Before the apologies for absence were tendered, the Chairman advised members that the microphone system was now linked to an automatic queuing system controlled from the Vice-Chairman's position. Pressing the microphone switch now indicated a wish to speak; members' microphones would then be activated by the Vice-Chairman when it was their turn to speak.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Auger, Broughton, Miss Channell, Farrar, Helyar, Higgs, Maureen Jalili, Sam Jalili, Parkin, Smith, Judy Smith, and Stephens.

60. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr. Richard Wyles, Corporate Head Finance and Customer Services, declared a personal interest in minute 65, appointment of Section 151 Officer and left the meeting during this item.

Councillor Hearmon declared a personal interest in Councillor Wootten's motion at minute 68 by virtue of his position as Secretary of the Grantham Hospital Defence Committee.

61. MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY MEETING HELD ON 4 SEPTEMBER 2008

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 September 2008 were approved as a correct record, subject to amendment to reflect:

- Councillor Avril Williams was not present as listed but had given her apologies;
- Councillor Chivers was not present as listed but had given his apologies.

Councillor Selby asked why there appeared to be inconsistency in use of a title before the first name of some female Councillors and using first names for some male Councillors. The Chairman explained that this was to reflect

how individual Councillors wished to be addressed and to distinguish between those members with the same surname.

62. COMMUNICATIONS

(1) Lean Systems: The Chief Executive referred to a number of poster size papers depicting various flow charts which were displayed around the walls of the council chamber. He explained that it was all part on ongoing work to improve the way some of the services operated and was called lean systems thinking. Currently the revenues and benefits service was being examined using this methodology as it was one of the services which cut across a large section of the organisation. He offered to talk through the various work flows with any interested members after the meeting.

(2) The Chairman referred members to the recent invitation to join him for the Members' Christmas lunch at Belton Park Golf Club on 15 December 2008 and asked members to confirm their acceptance or otherwise on the pro forma previously circulated. He reminded members that the invitation was also open to partners.

(3) The Chairman announced that £450 had been raised for the Chairman's charities at the previous night's Halloween Quiz. Following his cycle ride around Europe, the Chief Executive had raised £468.94 in sponsorship which would be split between the Chairman's charities and the Grantham Hospice ABC Appeal.

(4) The Vice-Chairman introduced Mr Steve Frisby, Grounds Maintenance Co-ordinator from Tenancy Services who had been invited to give a short presentation on the Council sponsored sheltered housing scheme flower display competition. The Vice-Chairman said he had been very impressed with the efforts made by the residents for the competition which had engendered great community spirit. He called upon the Council to continue to support this event despite budget pressures and the current economic climate.

Mr Frisby began his presentation by explaining that this was the second year that the Council had held the floral features competition for the supported housing schemes in the district. This year had also seen the introduction of a new gardens element which was a joint venture between the Council and the District Association made up of representatives of the Neighbourhood Groups.

The ethos behind running the competition was that it centred on tenant and resident participation. This was of mutual benefit to the Council as well because it encouraged community pride and social interaction. This fitted around the Council's priorities of promoting sustainable, self reliant communities and enhancing the street scheme which contributed to the area being a nicer place to live and work.

17 supported housing schemes had taken part involving 150 people working towards a common goal. Their efforts had also seen a considerable amount of money being raised for the benefit of the local community. Members were shown slides of some of the participating schemes and gardens which clearly indicated that the standards were extremely high. First place for the supported housing scheme competition had gone to Sandon Close in Grantham. Mr. Frisby concluded by saying that next year the Council would be encouraging even greater participation and would be looking at sustainability by introducing new ideas and features to enhance the neighbourhood all year round.

Members thanked Mr Frisby and indicated how impressed they were with the efforts of the residents and tenants and expressed support for the continuation and expansion of the competition. The benefits in terms of neighbourhood pride and community spirit far outweighed the comparatively low cost. It was pointed out that such events also helped to integrate those new to a local community.

(5) Subject to some typographical amendments, members noted the list of engagements undertaken by the Chairman since the last Council meeting.

63. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: SUBMISSION CORE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

DECISION: that the Council

- (1) agrees the detailed changes to the Core Strategy, including the corrections to the dwelling completion figures for Stamford and The Deepings;**
- (2) approves the publication of the document as the Submission Core Strategy for the making of representations and submission to the Secretary of State;**
- (3) delegates authority to the Corporate Head of Sustainable Communities in consultation with the Economic Development portfolio holder to make any necessary amendments associated with the publication process prior to submitting the Core Strategy to the Secretary of State.**

The Economic Development portfolio holder submitted report number PLA727 concerning a key document – the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) – forming part of the overall Local Development Framework. The DPD sets out a long term vision of what the area would be like in the future and provides the strategic framework that will manage and guide development to achieve this vision, including the delivery of Grantham Growth.

On 6 October, the Cabinet had considered and approved the Submission Core Strategy DPD, subject to some additional amendments to the text. The Council was now asked to endorse the detailed changes, approve publication of the document, and delegate authority to the Corporate Head to make any necessary further changes before the document was submitted to the Secretary of State. The portfolio holder referred to considerable amount of work involved in this process which was not made easier by the Government moving goalposts all the time. The recommendations contained in the report, subject to amendment of dwelling completion figures, was moved and seconded.

The Planning Policy Services Manager drew members' attention to a typographical error in the DPD in which figures for completion of dwellings by 31st March 2008 in Stamford and The Deepings had been transposed. The correct figures were 501 dwellings for Stamford and 220 dwellings for The Deepings. It was important these figures were corrected as it had implications for the number of sites that had to be identified within those settlements to accommodate these dwellings.

The Chairman invited questions and comments from the floor on affordable housing targets and associated criteria, consultation periods and the involvement of parish councils, and what was meant by the term "sound" in relation to the LDF. The Planning Policy Services Manager explained that the aim was still to achieve 40% affordable housing on a development but this had to be negotiated on a site by site basis with the developer because different factors could impact in different ways on each site. The criteria set for affordable housing was based on local income levels and the price on the open market relative to those local income levels. She confirmed that parish councils would be sent a copy of the Core Strategy DPD but this was not a further consultation period. There had been three periods of consultation on the LDF over the last 2 to 3 years. This stage was about demonstrating that the Core Strategy was sound i.e. that it was capable of being delivered and sustained. People were now being given the opportunity to make representations on whether or not they agree with the authority that the document is sound. An inspector would examine the document and consider any representations made as to its soundness.

A vote then took place on the motion which was carried.

64. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CONSTITUTION COMMITTEE

DECISION: To approve the following amendments to the Constitution:

- (1) Council procedure rules: at clause 10.2 of page 125 relating to questions by the public, the words "before the day of the meeting" be deleted and replaced with "before the time of the start of the meeting";**
- (2) Access to Information procedure rules: at clause 10 of the**

table relating to the categories of exempt information relating to the Standards Committee at page 154, be amended to include:-

- **Description column – “and Part 10 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 including the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008”**
- **Qualification column – “Information relating to the Assessment Sub-Committee and the Review Sub-Committee shall be exempt without qualification”**
- **Notes column – “This will apply to all information supplied to the Assessment Sub-Committee and the Review Sub-Committee”**

(3) The Data Protection Policy be removed from the Constitution and be replaced by a comprehensive list of the Council’s policies together with a web-link to access the Policies on the Council’s website.

The Chairman of the Constitution Committee moved the recommendations contained within the minutes of the committee meeting held on 13 October 2008. In so doing, he explained that the recommendations were to give more clarity to the deadline for submission of questions to the public open forum and to bring that deadline in line with that for members' questions on notice, and to give effect to recent legislation concerning the devolved Standards regime. The recommendations were seconded.

A member referred to the committee's discussion about the Constitution in general and its ease of use which had been minuted. He suggested that a proper, comprehensive debate was needed on this issue, not merely a "tinkering around the edges". The Chairman of the Constitution Committee agreed with this suggestion. A request was made for members to receive the recent updates to the Constitution as soon as possible. Upon being put to the vote the amendments were carried.

[Mr Richard Wyles, Corporate Head of Finance & Customer Services, left the council chamber at this point.]

65. APPOINTMENT OF SECTION 151 OFFICER (CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER)

DECISION: That Mr Richard Wyles, Corporate Head Finance & Customer Services, be designated the authority's Section 151 Officer with immediate effect.

The Leader presented report number SD25 which reminded members of the statutory obligation to appoint under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, an officer with designated responsibility for the proper

administration of the Council's financial affairs. Following the departure of the previous Section 151 Officer, Mr Wyles had acted as an interim designated officer pending the outcome of a recruitment exercise.

A recruitment exercise following an external advertisement and assessment process had been completed resulting in the recommendation to appoint Mr Wyles to the position of Corporate Head of Finance and Customer Services. During his interim appointment, Mr Wyles had demonstrated that he had both the qualifications and ability to continue in this role in a permanent capacity. Mr Wyles' appointment was so moved and seconded.

In response to a question on the recruitment exercise, the Leader explained that following external advertisement there had been a few applications but not as many as usually received for such senior positions. Two external candidates had gone through an assessment process but had not proceeded to formal interview. Mr Wyles had subsequently been appointed to a new role, that of Corporate Head of Finance & Customer Services which was not precisely the same as the post held by the previous S.151 officer. The motion was put to the vote and subsequently carried.

[Mr Wyles here returned to the meeting.]

66. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE RESOURCES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

DECISION:

(1) That the Members' Lounge is only to be used by the Members.

The Chairman of the Resources PDG presented two recommendations arising from its consideration of Questions on Notice which had previously been referred to his PDG by the Council.

The first issue concerned the use of the Members' Lounge. The original recommendation had been that the Members' Lounge only be used by the members. The member who had originally submitted the Question on Notice said he had since reconsidered the matter and acknowledged that a common sense approach was required having regard to the pressures for meeting accommodation. He therefore proposed that the recommendation be amended to reflect the practical need for the room to be used for officer meetings and usage associated with functions in the council chamber, but that the needs of Councillors to use that facility is given priority over any other uses. He made further comment on the condition of the room and suggested that it did need to be made more comfortable and user friendly. Support for the recommendation as amended was indicated with an example cited as allowing the room to be used for catering purposes in connection with a function in the chamber. In support of the

recommendation as originally put, reference was made to instances whereby members had travelled some way from the south of the district to work in the Members' Lounge to find it occupied by an officer meeting. Such occasions made it potentially awkward and inconvenient for the member concerned. A member said he had also witnessed it being used by staff for a coffee break.

Another member supported the upgrading of the facility which was poor in comparison with the Members' Lounge at the County Council offices.

The Chairman of the Resources PDG was asked whether he accepted the amendment. He indicated he did not. A vote was taken on the recommendation, as amended, which was lost. A further vote was then taken on the original recommendation that use of the Members' Lounge be only for Members. This was carried.

DECISION:

(2) In the light of information that costs associated with the Concessionary Travel Scheme appear to be greater than expected, noting the support of the Resources PDG, the Council adheres to its policy decision as it stands.

In proposing the second recommendation from his PDG, the Chairman advised the Council that this decision had been unanimous. The motion was seconded.

Several members asked to be given an indication of what exactly were the "greater than expected" costs of the scheme, or at least estimation in percentage terms. The resources portfolio holder explained that the council would not have the final figures until the half year data came through; current indications were that this council's expectations that the costs would be greater than the Government's assessment would be borne out. Other comments were made about the negative impact this Council's decision to exclude pre 9.30am travel from the scheme was having on some residents such as those needing to attend out patient appointments in Peterborough.

The Leader explained that the figures for take up should come through on a quarterly basis but there had been some difficulty in collecting data from operators which was currently being investigated. The first quarter's figures showed this council's scheme was 33% overspent compared to original estimates. However, she urged caution on quoting this figure because it was not yet known how accurate this would prove to be at the half year stage. Responding to criticisms that other Lincolnshire districts had allowed pre 9.30am travel, she pointed out that these councils had not actually paid for their schemes yet. South Kesteven had set aside extra money over and above that which the Government had estimated and she said she was aware that this authority had more in its budget for the South Kesteven District Council scheme than the other councils had for theirs.

There had even been the suggestion that South Kesteven should pay for the other authorities' shortfall. Several members endorsed this Council's policy of not committing resources to enhancing a scheme when the full cost was not yet known. The Deputy Leader acknowledged that there were some rural bus routes that had thrown up anomalies with regard to pre and post 9.30am travel and these were under examination.

The motion was put to the vote and carried.

67. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

One Question on Notice had been received from Councillor Mike Williams which was referred to the Communities PDG.

68. NOTICE OF MOTION GIVEN UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12

DECISION: The District Council writes to the Minister of State for Health Services to express this Council's support for the British Medical Association's campaign protesting at Government plans to merge local GP surgeries into one large GP led health centre in Grantham and other towns within South Kesteven.

In presenting his motion to the Council, Councillor Wootten began by expressing his support for local services for local people but now local accident and emergency and maternity services were all under threat of closure, as well as a lack of NHS dental surgeries and local post offices facing closure. He said the Government now wanted to close down over 1,700 local GP surgeries across the county. Councillor Wootten advised the council that he had received information which indicated that some of the GP practices in Grantham could be amalgamated into one large GP health centre. Lincolnshire Primary Care Trust had, he said, denied these proposals but he pointed out that this was the same PCT that denied that Grantham hospital was being run down. In June this year, the British Medical Association handed a petition to the Prime Minister with 1.3 million signatures in support of retaining local surgeries but this had fallen on deaf ears. Councillor Wootten said he understood that the Government proposed to have one large health centre in every PCT by April 2009. He suggested that if this proposal went ahead it would mean patients having to travel further for vital care. There were also proposals at the consultation stage to close down dispensaries within doctors' surgeries. Councillor Wootten said that large health centres could have a knock on effect on hospital services, particularly leading to closures and mergers and the diversion of resources away from existing local hospitals. He urged this Council to oppose the imposition of large, impersonal health centres at the expense of local GP surgeries, and lend its support to the British Medical Association's campaign. Councillor Wootten's motion was seconded.

Whilst supporting the principle behind Councillor Wootten's motion, Councillor Hearmon expressed concern that in order to sustain debate on

this issue, members needed some tangible evidence of the proposals he had raised. If indeed they were true, any decision would be taken by the PCT not the Government and therefore the Council should direct its flak at the PCT. Speaking as a member of the county's health scrutiny committee, Councillor Hearmon advised that if there were to be any major change to the delivery of health services, it would be referred for consultation to this committee. He suggested that the council needed to exhaust all channels before raising its objections direct with the Government.

Several other members spoke on this issue: one member said he had undertaken some research on the Department of Health's website which referred to a framework procurement partnership between the public and private sector to provide new health care facilities. He had also raised this issue with his local GP practice in Bourne who was of the view that this was not a threat to towns within South Kesteven as the area is too small to sustain large health centres. They would be looking at more viable areas like Lincoln, Grimsby and Scunthorpe. Another member voiced his suspicion at the PCT denials referring to what he saw as this Government's systematic dismantling of the health service over the last ten years. He suggested it was part of the Government's centralisation ethos to remove local GP surgeries and he urged members to support the motion before the Council. A point was also made that proposals to get some semblance of order within the NHS should be welcomed but that should not mean the Government dictating that areas like South Kesteven should have these large health centres.

In summing up, Councillor Wootten said that all the surgeries he had contacted in Grantham welcomed district council support for this campaign. On being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

69. PARISH COUNCIL CONFERENCE 2008

The Chief Executive reminded members that the third Parish Council Conference would be held on Wednesday 26 November 2008 at the Bourne Corn Exchange.

The meeting closed at 3.45 p.m.