

Minutes



Meeting COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

Date Thursday, 17th July 2003 (10.30 am to 2.15 pm)

Councillor membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

Reg Strauther (Chairman)
Mrs Nellie Smedley (Vice-Chairman)

	Kate Allsop	A	Bruce Laughton
	Dick Anthony		E D W Llewellyn-Jones
A	Chris Baron		Ellie Lodziak
	Roy R J Barsley		Joe Lonergan MBE
	John Bell		J T A Napier
	Sue Bennett	A	R Needham
	Joyce Bosnjak JP	A	K L O'Toole
	M M Brandon-Bravo OBE		Mrs Carol Pepper
	Colin Bromfield		Tom Pettengell
	Kenneth Bullivant		Mrs Sheila Place
	Richard Butler		R A Poynter
	Terry Butler		Peter D Prebble
	Steve Carroll		Chris Preston
	John Carter		D E Pulk
	W J Clarke		R S Robinson
	John Cottee		Rita Sharpe
	M J Cox		Vicki Smailes
	Mrs K L Cutts	A	Mrs S M Smedley
	Yvonne Davidson		B G Smith
	Alan Davison		A S Stewart
	V H Dobson	A	J R Stocks
	Andy Freeman		M Storey
	Glynn Gilfoyle		Martin Suthers OBE
	John M Hemsall	A	The Hon Joan Taylor
A	Stan Heptinstall MBE	A	David Taylor
	Graham Jackson		Maureen Tewson
	Richard Jackson		Parry Tsimbiridis
	Rod Kempster		Keith Walker
	David Kirkham		Mick Warner

OPENING PRAYER

Prior to commencement of the formal business, the Council was led in prayer by Rev. David Hopkins.

MINUTES

RESOLVED:- **2003/052**

That, subject to the inclusion of references to the presentation, by Councillor Peter D Prebble, of a petition in relation to a possible residents' parking scheme at Lawrence Street, Newark and to the receipt of apologies for absence on other County Council business from Councillor A S Stewart, the Minutes of the last meeting held on 26 June 2003 be agreed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Councillor Chris Baron
Councillor S J Heptinstall
Councillor Bruce Laughton
Councillor Stella Smedley (on other County Council business)
Councillor John R Stocks (on other County Council business)
Councillor David Taylor

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

The following petitions were presented to the Chairman by the Members indicated:-

- Seeking the retention of Gilthill Primary School building (presented by Councillor Richard Robinson)
- Requesting traffic calming on Hirst Road, Holdenby Close and Lidgett Lane Retford (presented by Councillor J T A Napier)
- regarding traffic problems on Lime Grove, Newark (presented by Councillor Peter D Prebble)

- seeking traffic calming/speed reduction on the A606 at Hickling Pastures (presented by Councillor Richard Butler)

RESOLVED:-
2003/053

That the petitions be forwarded to the appropriate Cabinet Members for consideration.

QUESTIONS

(a) Under Standing Order 6.1

Councillor Peter D Prebble asked the following question:-

"Does the Cabinet Member for Social Services share my acute disappointment at the cancellation of a national conference to discuss the role of councillors as corporate parents, called "If This Were My Child ...", which was to have been held in London on 14th July?

Is he also concerned at the postponement of the Green Paper on child protection, which was to have had major implications for a number of Nottinghamshire children?

Does he share my view that this delay has only occurred because of the Government's embarrassment at the inappropriate appointment of Margaret Hodge as Minister for Children, given her previous record as Leader of Islington Council in the 1980's and early 1990's."

Councillor Dick Anthony, Cabinet Member for Social Services, replied as follows:-

"I would like to thank Councillor Prebble for his question and may offer my sympathies for the severity of his disappointment over the cancellation of the Conference.

As Councillor Prebble is largely unknown to our officers in Social Services, may I also welcome his sudden change and if, at any time, he feels the need to approach any officers in the Children's Department I would only be too pleased to furnish him with the names.

I understand that the Conference is to be re-arranged at a future date, so perhaps the opportunity to harness this enthusiasm will not be lost to us after all.

However, I do share Councillor Prebble's commitment to a County Council that takes its corporate parenting role very seriously.

The Conference was planned for the 14th July and, of course, postponed to enable the Prime Minister to become personally involved in the launch of the Green Paper. I agree with the new Minister for Children that this demonstrates his commitment and the commitment of the whole Labour Government. The welfare and safety, health and opportunity – this is a very serious matter Chair.

Although we are eager to see the recommendations in the Green Paper, with their implications for Child Protection Services nationally, the County Council has already made a vigorous response to the Lamie Report.

Councillor Prebble, some of your Members, your colleagues, are involved in that process. I don't know whether they have told you or not.

- We have audited our Children's Services against national standards and received very positive feedback that the County Council's Social Services Department is

‘Serving most people well with very promising prospects’.

- We have established a Safeguarding Children Forum, which has already undertaken some very important work.
- Elected Members, together with the Director, are visiting local offices and having direct contact with staff to ensure that they are properly supported in their work.
- We are preparing our budget proposals for next year to strongly respond to the needs of children and will build an action plan from the recent inspection of children's services across the county.

In the light of our recent inspection, it is unlikely that any other Authority in this country has a better picture of its readiness to respond to the Climbie Inquiry.

This is further evidenced by the recent decision by Government to invite Nottinghamshire to become one of the Children's Trust 'pathfinders'.

Margaret Hodge has made a clear statement to the LGA on the 8th July that the delay in publication of the Green Paper will not stop the Government taking any necessary immediate action to further the interests of children.

And given that she has just taken up the post, its delay will allow her time to ensure that she has a clear view of our priorities and concerns.

In accepting these statements, it seems to me that she is determined to give strong personal leadership to the agenda that will arise from the Green Paper.

Councillor Prebble asks if I think the delay has occurred because of the Government's embarrassment at the appointment of Margaret Hodge. I don't know where he is coming from because whether it is a Tory view or a Liberal or a Labour Party view because they do tell me you change parties like you change your socks! So, whether it is a Labour view or a Liberal view, I don't know, but

could I say that I can think of appointments that have caused previous Governments far greater embarrassment.

I want to talk about the real issues around what this Government of ours is trying to do.

Very few people, in their life-time, have the opportunity to change a lot for those in need – very few people have that opportunity. Councillor Prebble is in a very good position to assist in that sort of provision, by being a County Councillor, but what does he talk about?

He doesn't talk about the services that are being provided for children. He talks about Margaret Hodge and what she did in the 80s as a Councillor – digging up dirt!

And when I say that the involvement of the Prime Minister and the Labour Government demonstrates and it does demonstrate that we are very concerned, as a Labour Party, what happens to our children and what sort of services we provide for our children.

Every child must have the opportunity to fulfil its potential – does that happen? Every child must be properly protected and so that they are safe – the media has been full of it recently.

And no child should be denied the chance to make the most of their lives.

Children must be at the heart of everything we do. They are the future generations of this nation.

The Government have started it - created Sure Start, then brought together Early Years Education, health, childcare, family support all under one umbrella with children's needs at the centre of everything and who was the MP with the vision, five years ago, to drift us or take us down this path? Drift is the wrong word to promote and demonstrate Margaret Hodge. Let's don't forget what we said. I never heard anybody complain about Margaret Hodge five or six years ago when she started talking about Sure Start and early learnings. I have a letter here which shows our commitment - "Margaret Hodge has accepted an invitation from the Early Years Partnership to be the guest speaker at next year's annual Early Years Development Conference on Childcare." That's our confidence in Margaret Hodge and that's an official letter.

I can't help it if the Conservatives don't like what they are hearing - that isn't my problem. I am speaking truthfully. I mean, if you can prove I am a liar then do it, but what I am talking about is what is actually happening and I will start again.

This Government started and created Sure Start. Sure Start, and everybody is pleased about Sure Start, if they aren't they shouldn't be in this Chamber representing the local authorities. So I will skip that and I will not say it again because you seem to be getting a bit annoyed.

In 1998 this was seen as a revolution in children services; today it is a model which is the envy of the whole world and Margaret Hodge was involved in this.

We have got 500 Sure Start centres - nursery education available for all four year olds and most three year olds and the development of publicly funded children's services.

Children's life chances are determined by what happens in the first few years of their lives and this is why we are setting up this system. To ensure equal opportunities we must give the very best start in their lives. It is taken for granted, but we must have the commitment and determination to protect children at risk and support children with particular needs, making sure that keeping children safe is at the heart of all we do.

We are dealing with complex issues and there are no easy answers. We must strive to minimise risk and maximise opportunity.

We must develop services, which support parents and families in their most important job - bringing up their children.

It is not just absolutely vital to protect children at risk - as we learn from, time to time, from the deaths of children and most recently the tragic death of Victoria Climbié.

It is equally important for all our children if we are to enable them to develop their full potential and grow up as happy, healthy and well-rounded individuals with a positive contribution to make to society.

Councillor Prebble that's what we are about - not interested in going back two decades to collect sleaze about ex-Councillors, but to make sure that we protect our children in this Authority.

Yes, I am disappointed that the Conference was cancelled and yes, I am concerned that the Green Paper on Children's Protection has been postponed, but Councillor Prebble neither event can be connected to the position of Margaret Hodge.

The only spurious connection between the three issues is it gives you the opportunity to drag us all through the mud. Just like your colleagues have done nationally and locally for decades."

(b) Under Standing Order 6.2

There were no questions under Standing Order 6.2 for the Chairs of the Nottinghamshire Police Authority and the Combined Fire Authority.

PERIODIC ELECTORAL REVIEW

A report of the Chief Executive had been circulated with the agenda for the meeting. Prior to the debate, Members noted the receipt of copies of two further letters to the Boundary Committee for England (BCE).

Opening the debate, Councillor Mick Warner, Leader of the Council, referred to:-

- the revised date for receipt of the BCE's final recommendations as to electoral arrangements for Nottinghamshire County Council, which was now expected to be April 2004.
- The County Council's acceptance of the "building blocks" for County electoral divisions, which are District Councils' electoral wards.
- Members' common view that it would be more appropriate for there to be simultaneous PERs of all electoral boundaries within the area of a two or three tier local authority.
- The unforeseen number of multi-member divisions recommended by the BCE.
- A view that, in some areas, communities of interest had been disregarded.

Concluding his remarks, Councillor Warner moved that the draft response to the BCE attached to the Chief Executive's report should be replaced with a revised version, which he circulated to all Members. The motion was seconded by Councillor David Kirkham.

The revised version of the draft response was then on the table and was before Council for consideration.

There then followed a detailed debate on the revised response, during which the following points emerged:-

- Opposition from the local member in relation to the BCE's recommendation relating to Ruddington, who described long-standing community links in that area.
- Strong concerns about the need to ensure and continue existing community coherence and identity in the final recommendations.
- Recognition that there are a number of issues within the revised draft response where there is unanimous support within the Council.

As indicated in the preceding paragraph, the Chairman was aware from the tenure of debate that there was a degree of unanimity in relation to support for some of the recommendations which the Boundary Committee had made. He therefore adjourned the meeting to enable discussions between the Leaders of the Groups.

ADJOURNMENT

In accordance with the foregoing, the meeting was adjourned at 12.02 pm, with the luncheon adjournment taking place between 12.15 pm and 1.45 pm.

UPON THE COUNCIL RECONVENING

It was noted that Councillor Martin Brandon-Bravo was absent, due to a prior appointment.

Arising from his earlier comments about unanimity of support for some of the BCE's draft recommendations, the Chairman made the following announcement:-

"I appreciate that it is not possible for members of the Conservative and Liberal Democrats Groups to support in its entirety the draft response which Members have before them. In the circumstances, I suggest that a list of the areas where we are all in agreement should be shown in the minutes. If the Council agrees to this, I would ask the Leaders of those Groups to let the Chief Executive have their lists and we will have them included."

This proposal was acceptable to members and it was agreed that the Council would proceed on the basis described by the Chairman.

Debate was resumed, during which a majority view was expressed as to the unsatisfactory nature of multi-member divisions, unless there were overwhelming local circumstances supporting or necessitating their creation.

At the conclusion of the debate, Councillor Warner proposed that, in light of comments made in relation to Ruddington, the shaded paragraphs at 7.1, 7.2 and 7.4 of the draft response should be included in the version upon which the vote would be taken.

This proposal was put to the meeting and, following a show of hands, was declared to be carried by 33 votes to 16.

(The Members of the Conservative Group who were present asked that the Minutes should show that they voted against the proposal).

The revised draft response, as amended by the inclusion of the shaded paragraphs referred to above was then before the meeting.

Following a show of hands, 10 Members indicated that they required a division. Voting was recorded and it was ascertained that the following 33 Members voted "for":-

Dick Anthony	Ellie Lodziak
Roy R J Barsley	J T A Napier
John Bell	Mrs Sheila Place
Sue Bennett	Chris Preston
Joyce Bosnjak JP	D E Pulk
Colin Bromfield	R S Robinson
Terry Butler	Rita Sharpe
Steve Carroll	Vicki Smailes
John Carter	Mrs N Smedley
W J Clarke	B G Smith
Yvonne Davidson	M Storey
Alan Davison	Reg Strauther
Andy Freeman	Parry Tsimbiridis
Graham Jackson	Mick Warner
David Kirkham	C P Winterton
E D W Llewellyn-Jones	Yvonne Woodhead

A Woodward

And that the following 17 Members voted "against":-

Kenneth Bullivant
Richard Butler
John Cottee
M J Cox
Mrs K L Cutts
V H Dobson
John M Hemsall
Richard Jackson
Rod Kempster

Joe Lonergan MBE
Mrs Carol Pepper
Tom Pettengell
Ray Poynter
Peter D Prebble
A S Stewart
Martin Suthers OBE
Keith Walker

It was, therefore:-

RESOLVED:-
2003/054

- (1) That the County Council's response to the Boundary Committee for England be approved.
- (2) That the Chief Executive be authorised to sign and submit the final response on behalf of the Council.

CHAIRMAN

NOTES:-

- (a) The lists of areas of support were received from the Leaders of the Conservative and Liberal Democrats Groups prior to the close of the meeting. Their contents have been merged to compile the document attached at Appendix A to these Minutes.

- (b) The formal response to the Boundary Committee's draft recommendations, including the revisions arising from the inclusion of the shaded paragraphs referred to earlier and an indication of the areas of unanimity shown at (a) above is attached at Appendix B to these Minutes.