

# HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER/STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN on Wednesday, 21 September 2022

PRESENT: Councillor S J Conboy – Chair.

Councillors L Davenport-Ray, S W Ferguson, M A Hassall, B M Pitt, T D Sanderson, S L Taylor and S Wakeford.

APOLOGY: An Apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor B A Mickelburgh.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor J Kerr.

## **28 HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II**

The Cabinet stood in a Minutes Silence to reflect upon and remember the life and reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II who passed away on 8th September 2022.

## **29 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19th July 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **30 MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

No declarations were received.

## **31 MARKET TOWNS PROGRAMME - AUTUMN UPDATE**

*Due to the reasons contained within the report and having obtained the agreement of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth), this item of business was considered under the Special Urgency Provisions - Section 16 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules, as contained in the Council's Constitution, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.*

Consideration was given to a report by the Corporate Director (Place) providing an update on activity across the strands of the Market Towns Programme, in particular, the activity on the St Neots Fund Future High Street highways related projects, the planned wider engagement in the draft masterplans for St Ives, Ramsey and Huntingdon and the imminent external funding opportunities.

In introducing the report, the Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing reported that a series of consultation and engagements events were being undertaken and that a new team was now in place to help deliver this work with a Programme Manager due to commence in post from October 2022. The

engagement events encouraged local members to recognise the need for productive plans to be worked up to the benefit of local communities. He then drew the Cabinet's attention to the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) where it was noted that recordings of sessions would be sent to Town and Parish Clerks.

The Executive Councillor for Community and Health commented that he would like to see the resurrection of the Wayfinding Project and encouraged the Cabinet to be mindful of the way messages were delivered to the community which often frustrated the public rather than the content of the message itself. He went on to state that this often left communities feeling that they had not been consulted upon. In discussing signage across the Market Towns, it was noted that efficiencies would be identified as part of this work.

The Managing Director then made comment upon the need for the Council to be mindful of ongoing revenue costs associated with projects and the need to work in partnership with local communities and partners to ensure effective delivery of projects.

In welcoming the Local Growth Fund Bid for Ramsey Great Whyte Enhancements and in response to a question raised by the Executive Councillor for Planning, the Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing reported that a decision from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority was expected in October 2022.

Having acknowledged the apprehension which existed amongst some communities over the proposed plans, the Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing reported that he would continue to engage with such communities and was due to attend a meeting with Ramsey Town Council the following week.

Having expressed their wish to discuss the content of Appendix 1 (a copy of which is appended in the Annex to the Minute Book), the Cabinet agreed to move the meeting into private session.

## **32 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

## **33 MARKET TOWNS PROGRAMME - AUTUMN UPDATE (CONTINUED)**

The Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing then drew the Cabinet's attention to the financial position in respect of the Market Towns Programme which Cabinet Members welcomed. It was anticipated that future reports would continue to include financial details of the Market Towns Programme projects.

### **34 RE-ADMITTANCE OF PUBLIC**

RESOLVED

that the public be re-admitted to the meeting.

### **35 MARKET TOWNS PROGRAMME - AUTUMN UPDATE (CONTINUED)**

Whereupon, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) to note progress on the Market Towns Programme over the last quarter;
- (b) to note that reports would be brought back to Cabinet on a quarterly basis updating on any contracts that have been entered into through the previous Cabinet delegation; and
- (c) to note the latest update on the Market Towns Programme finances and resources.

### **36 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022-23 QUARTER 1**

With the aid of a report prepared by the Business Intelligence & Performance Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered progress made against the Key Actions and Corporate Indicators listed in the Council's Corporate Plan 2022/23 for the period 1 April to 30 June 2022. The report also incorporated progress on the current projects being undertaken by the Council.

The Executive Councillor for Customer Services summarised the progress made in delivering the Key Actions for 2022/23 over the reporting period where the Cabinet were pleased to note that with the exception of one, all were on track. In respect of Corporate Indicators, 100% of these were either on track or within acceptable variance. In terms of the latter, it was hoped that of the 9 reported, 5 of these would be on track by the end of the reporting year and an explanation was delivered on the 4 that were likely to remain amber (but within acceptable variance).

Corporate projects had progressed well with only one identified as being significantly behind schedule. This project related to the Revenue and Benefits Services' e-Billing project. In his concluding remarks, the Executive Councillor for Customer Services stated that he was mindful of the impact of the winter and recent government announcements concerning the cost of living and energy crisis which was likely to impact upon performance levels in the future.

The Cabinet discussed the extensive work undertaken by the Council under the Homes for Ukraine scheme and the future plans for it now the initial six month period had come to an end. Assurances were delivered that the Council would continue to support guests and hosts in their journey towards guests living and working independently. The Executive Leader also commented that there was active dialogue with Ministers about the scheme. Cabinet Members also acknowledged that the support provided by Huntingdonshire exceeded that

provided by other local authorities nationally and commended services across the organisation for the extraordinary levels of support given.

In receiving the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth), it was

RESOLVED

that Cabinet note the progress made against the Key Actions and Corporate Indicators in the Corporate Plan and current projects, as summarised in Appendix A and detailed in Appendices B and C of the report now submitted.

### **37 FINANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022-23 QUARTER 1**

A report by the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) presenting details of the Council's projected financial performance for 2022/23.

Following a brief explanation from the Deputy Executive Leader and Executive Councillor for Planning, it was reported that the forecast outturn at the end of quarter 1 was £21,789m which reflected a forecast overspend of £275,000 attributed to reductions in income from Development Management, Car Parks and One Leisure together with increased staffing costs in the Leisure and Health and Development Management services. In respect of the capital programme, it was reported that following some re-phasing of the budget, this was now at £39,674m. The Cabinet were pleased to note that the Commercial Investment Strategy continued to generate a good level of return for the Council.

The Director of Finance and Corporate Resources then went on to advise that she was mindful of the recent announcements concerning the energy crisis and the impact this would have upon the Council. The matter would remain under review.

In response to a question raised by the Executive Councillor for Climate and Environment, the Corporate Director (People) advised that the reduction in Council Tax and collection rates when compared to the previous year was likely to be attributed to the transition towards Universal Credit and undertook to provide a definitive response outside of the meeting.

Other matters that were discussed included the mitigations in place to reduce the reported overspend and the potential impact of the cost of living and energy crisis upon One Leisure memberships and local businesses. The Managing Director confirmed that she, together with the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources, were networking and discussing with other peers such issues with a view to making pragmatic choices to the benefit of the Council as well as highlighting and cascading information down at weekly and bi-weekly meetings with service managers.

In noting the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth), the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) to consider and comment on the financial performance to the end of June 2022, as detailed in Appendix 1 and summarised in paragraph 3.2 of the report now submitted; and
- (b) to also consider and comment on the capital financial performance at the end of June 2022, as detailed in Appendix 1 and summarised in paragraph 3.3 of the report now submitted.

### **38 LONDON-LUTON AIRPORT WORKING GROUP**

In receiving background from the Executive Councillor for Customer Services and the Democratic Services Officer on the proposal to appoint 3 Members to serve on the London-Luton Airport Working Group, it was reported that the flight paths from the airport were now affecting areas of South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire which had not formed part of the original consultation. The areas within Huntingdonshire that were affected included Waresley, Great Gransden and Abbotsely. A public meeting had been held in July 2022 where 145 residents had reported a negative impact upon their communities. A suggestion was made by the Executive Councillor for Corporate and Shared Services to explore an option for the flight stack to operate over the English Channel. In concurring with the need to set up a Working Group to review these issues, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that Councillors N Hunt, S Ferguson and R J West be appointed to serve on the London-Luton Airport Working Group for the ensuing Municipal Year.

### **39 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

### **40 HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK - UPDATED BUSINESS CASE**

*Due to the reasons contained within the exempt report and an imminent decision being required and having obtained the agreement of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partnerships), this item of business was considered under the Special Urgency Provisions - Section 16 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules, as contained in the Council's Constitution, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.*

*Councillor J Kerr, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partnerships) was in attendance for this item.*

The Cabinet gave consideration to an exempt report by the Assistant Director (Recovery) (a copy of which is appended in the Annex to the Minute Book) on the updated business case relating to Hinchingsbrooke Country Park.

A detailed explanation was delivered by the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene on the developments to date.

Councillor J Kerr, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partnerships) outlined the comments she had received from the Panel following the abandonment of their meeting on 8th September 2022 in light of the announcement of the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Each comment raised was responded to at the meeting by the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene.

Following debate on the matter and having been satisfied with the explanation provided by the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene, it was

#### RESOLVED

that recommendations (a) to (d) inclusive contained within the exempt report now submitted be approved.

Chair