

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the Council Chamber, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Thursday, 28 September 2006.

PRESENT: Councillor I C Bates – Chairman.

Councillors P L E Bucknell, Mrs J Chandler, N J Guyatt, A Hansard, Mrs P J Longford, T V Rogers and L M Simpson.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs D C Reynolds.

69. MINUTES

Subject to the inclusion of a reference as to the Cabinet's appreciation of the work of Mr Ray Palmer and the Friends of Paxton Pits Nature Reserve under item No 57, the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 7th September 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

70. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

71. NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT

The Cabinet gave consideration to a report by the Community Initiatives Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the possible introduction of neighbourhood management initiatives in two areas of the District.

Members were informed that the neighbourhood management model employed a focussed approach to distinctive areas comprising between 5,000 and 12,000 residents which exhibited relatively high levels of deprivation and which would benefit from a more co-ordinated and local approach to the delivery of services. In that respect Eynesbury and Huntingdon North (Oxmoor) had been identified as areas potentially suited to this approach having regard to indices of deprivation published by the Government. Having discussed the partnership contributions likely to be available from the agencies involved and the extent to which neighbourhood management might be addressed in the forthcoming White Paper on Local Government, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that further discussions be undertaken with other significant service providers to develop the

neighbourhood management proposals outlined in the report now submitted; and

- (b) that the areas of Huntingdon North (Oxmoor) and Eynesbury be developed as neighbourhood management initiatives reporting via the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership.

72. AUTOMATED FORMS PROCESSING IN HOUSING BENEFITS - SUPPLEMENTARY CAPITAL ESTIMATE

By way of a report by the Head of Revenue Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered a request for the release of funding from the Medium Term Plan for the implementation of the automated forms processing project in the Housing Benefits division.

Whereupon, and having noted the potential for software to be adapted for other purposes, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the relevant funding be released for the automated forms processing project;
- (b) that supplementary capital estimate of £59,000 for the project be approved; and
- (c) that the estimated revenue savings in 2007/08 and 2008/09 be noted.

73. HOUSING AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFITS - INCREASE IN STAFF

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Revenue Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which reviewed the staff numbers in the Benefits Section of the Commerce and Technology Directorate, in light of a significant increase in caseload, the complexity associated with assessments and the potential loss of benefit subsidy if adjustments to claims were delayed.

Members were advised that in order to meet the Government's threshold for processing claims and to avoid £70,000 in subsidy penalties, it was anticipated that three additional Housing Benefit Assessment Officers would be required. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that an additional three members of staff be recruited to the Housing Benefits section on the terms outlined in paragraph 7.3 of the report now submitted.

74. MEDIUM TERM PLAN - REQUESTS FOR RELEASE OF FUNDS

By way of a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered a request for the release of funding for two Medium Term Plan schemes.

Having considered the schemes involved, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the relevant funding be released for the replacement of play equipment and associated safety surfacing in play and activity areas throughout the District and for a contribution towards a partnership project for the provision of skateboard, inline skates, BMX and other similar outdoor activity park areas specifically aimed at teenagers and young people.

75. TREASURY MANAGEMENT INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE

A report by the Head of Financial Services was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which reviewed the respective levels of performance achieved during the period April to June 2006 by External Fund Managers in the matter of the investment of the Council's capital receipts.

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted.

76. CONCESSIONARY FARES

Further to Minute No. 05/176 and by way of a report by the Director of Operational Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were updated with progress on the new concessionary bus fare scheme introduced on 1st April 2006 together with details of proposed revised arrangements.

It was explained that since the introduction of the new scheme, discussions had been ongoing between Cambridgeshire principal authorities and Peterborough City Council to extend it so as to enable free travel across the county and city. Members were advised that the changes had arisen following a general assessment of recorded travel data which showed a decline in patronage and concerns about the perceived restrictions inherent in the new scheme. Having noted the financial implications of the revised scheme, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the revised concessionary bus fare scheme be approved for implementation from 1st October 2006 and the associated financial implications noted; and
- (b) that the Head of Environment and Transport be requested to report to Cabinet on progress of the revised scheme after 6 months operation.

77. BROUGHTON CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

Further to Minute No. 05/2007, the Cabinet considered a report by the Planning Policy Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) outlining the responses received to the consultation on the

Character Statement and Management Plan for the Broughton Conservation Area and suggested amendments as a consequence thereof.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the revised Character Statement for the Broughton Conservation Area as amended to reflect the content of the Annex to the report now submitted be approved;
- (b) that the Management Plan for the Broughton Conservation Area be approved as a set of proposals for the enhancement of the area and as the basis for discussion and project work; and
- (c) that the Head of Planning Services be authorised, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy to make any minor consequential amendment to the text and illustrations as a result of the amendments referred to in (a) above.

78. WARBOYS CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

Further to Minute No. 06/21 and by way of a report by the Planning Policy Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Cabinet considered the responses received to the consultation on the Character Statement and Management Plan for the Warboys Conservation Area and suggested amendments as a consequence thereof.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the revised character statement for the Warboys Conservation Area as amended to reflect the content of the Annex to the report now submitted, be approved;
- (b) that the Management Plan for the Warboys Conservation Area be approved as a set of proposals for the enhancement of the area and as a basis for further discussion and project work; and
- (c) that the Head of Planning Services be authorised, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, to make any minor consequential amendments to the text and illustrations as a result of amendments referred to in (a) above.

79. ST IVES MARKET TOWN TRANSPORT STRATEGY

With the aid of a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered the content of the St. Ives Market Town Transport Strategy.

Having noted the responses received to consultation on the Strategy and the steps to be taken to implement the schemes identified, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the St. Ives Market Town Transport Strategy, as appended to the report now submitted, be approved.

80. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to the personal circumstances of particular persons and parties.

81. NEW HEADQUARTERS AND OTHER ACCOMMODATION PROJECT: CONSULTANCY SERVICES

Further to Minute No. 06/68 and by way of a report by the Director of Central Services and the Head of Technical Services (a copy of which is appended in the Annex to the Minute Book), the Cabinet considered proposals to effect savings in the cost of consultancy services retained in connection with the new headquarters and other accommodation project. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Director of Central Services be authorised to serve notice to terminate the consultancy services provided by the consultants referred to in the report.

82. HEADQUARTERS AND OTHER ACCOMMODATION PROJECT: UPDATE

The Cabinet received and noted a report by the Head of Technical Services (a copy of which is appended in the Annex to the Minute Book) outlining progress on negotiations with regard to the conclusion of a development agreement for the delivery of the Council's new Headquarters and other accommodation, together with current estimates of the capital cost and revenue implications.

Chairman