

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the Civic Suite, Room 1A, Pathfinder House, St. Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Thursday, 11 December 2014.

PRESENT: Councillor J D Ablewhite – Chairman.

Councillors B S Chapman, D B Dew,
J A Gray, R B Howe, T D Sanderson and
D M Tysoe.

55. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 20th November 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

56. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were received from the Members present.

57. ZERO-BASED BUDGETING

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on progress of the Zero Based Budgeting (ZBB) programme. Executive Councillors had considerable involvement in the programme and they were satisfied that the process had been robust and that much has been learned. There had been a mixed approach from services, though this could partly be attributed to a lack of understanding about how the Council defined ZBB and about what practical steps were required for the star chamber. The Cabinet discussed the approaches taken by individual services and their performance in the star chamber. The Corporate Management Team was charged with robustly enforcing the Cabinet's view that cultural change should be adopted along ZBB principles.

All services had been required to do more work on their individual budgets for inclusion in the draft budget, which was being prepared by Officers in conjunction with their respective Executive Councillors. There would be scope for further debate by Members and changes to be made before the budget was finalised in February.

Of the improvements that needed to be made to the process, the most important was to develop the Council's systems to provide the necessary financial / management information to enable Officers to manage and monitor their services. In particular, the new systems would resolve what service budgets included and what were deemed to be corporate costs. In addition, it was confirmed this information would be independently verified. The Cabinet requested that a plan of the action that would be taken leading to the introduction of the new systems was submitted to a future meeting.

The Cabinet noted the comments of Members of the Economic Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The Panel had welcomed the Cabinet's approach to working with them. The Chairman of the Panel invited all Executive Councillors to the Panel's meetings in the New Year to discuss their budget proposals. Further scrutiny work would be undertaken on their performance throughout the year.

RESOLVED

- a) that the ZBB process for the setting of the 2015/16 Budget and the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the "process" findings and "savings" to date be noted;
- b) that the revised timetable for the completion of all other Council services by November 2015 in preparation for the setting of the 2016/17 Budget and the Medium Term Financial Strategy be approved;
- c) that the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) on the contents of the report be noted, and
- d) the process of the Star Chamber and the improvements to the robustness of financial information be noted.

58. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2015/2016

The Cabinet gave consideration to a report by the Benefits Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on a proposed change to the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015/2016. The change would mean that all child maintenance was disregarded in the Council's calculations, which would result in those who were in receipt of this type of income having greater levels of Council Tax Support entitlement.

It was reported that the change would affect approximately 350 households and would cost in the region of £2k. It would bring the Council into line with the majority of other Councils. The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) had supported the change. Having requested the Social Well-Being Panel to carry out an evaluation of the overall scheme and, in particular, its effect on employment trends, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the Council be recommended to approve the change to the local Council Tax Support scheme with effect from 1st April 2015.

59. ENERGY MANAGEMENT UPDATE

With the aid of a report by the Environment Team Leader (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) Executive Councillors received an update on the energy and cost savings that had been made through the Council's Carbon Management Plan 2009/14. In 2013/14 projects to the value of £183,000 had been implemented,

saving the council an estimated £55,000 per annum.

Members were informed that there was considerable scope to undertake further work. The Cabinet, therefore, supported a proposal to enter into a partnership with the County Council, the Greater London Authority and Local Partnerships to access the RE:FIT programme. The latter was a nationwide scheme involving an assessment of property to identify the potential for the installation of energy saving measures, leading to the option for preparation of a detailed Investment Grade Proposal outlining the cost of all potential projects and the guaranteed savings that would result. Initially the Council would commission free desk top energy assessments of the Council's nine main sites. Having noted that the Cabinet would be consulted before the subsequent stages of the programme were undertaken, Executive Councillors stressed that the revenue savings of such capital investments should be reflected in future budgets.

RESOLVED

- a) that the contribution of the Carbon Management Plan 2009/14 in assisting the Council to reduce its energy use and carbon emissions from its buildings and fleet be recognised.
- b) that support be given to the plans to enter into a partnership with the County Council, Greater London Authority and Local Partnerships to access the RE:FIT programme, allowing the Council to:
 - commission free desk top energy assessments of the Council's 9 main sites, and
 - explore the option of commissioning Investment Grade Proposals, where a business case for energy reduction is identified by the desk top assessment.

60. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, CRIME AND POLICING ACT 2014

The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Community (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the implications for the Council of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. The Act meant that enforcement would be streamlined and it gave the Council more control over its enforcement activities. With the exception of the Community Trigger, which was a duty, all the provisions of the Act constituted powers so the Council only had to use them if they were appropriate.

Executive Councillors were advised that Public Space Protection Orders and Dog Control Orders would expire if they were not reviewed and re-evidenced, thereby creating additional workloads. Members drew attention to the absence of available data on the likely benefits of the Act and on its objectives.

Comment was made that the Act could cause resources to be diverted to activities that had less benefit for the public and that the Community Trigger could be used in ways for which it was not intended and it could also have unintended consequences. Various ways of managing its use were discussed.

RESOLVED

- a) that the delegations to Officers, after liaison with Executive Councillors and Consultees, and to Enforcing Officers for dealing with the new powers contained in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, as set out in Section 6.1 of the report now submitted, be approved;
- b) that the delegations to Officers for dealing with the creation and maintenance of policies and procedures relating to the new powers contained in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, as set out in Section 6.1 of the report now submitted, be approved, and
- c) that Executive Councillors, Senior Officers and Overview and Scrutiny be requested to look at how enforcement under the Act should be undertaken in conjunction with the Police and to devise a draft scheme of thresholds for application to the Community Trigger and to report back on their findings.

Chairman