



## COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 20 FEBRUARY 2013

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### Late Items

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Agenda No.	Item
(a)	Cabinet (Pages 1 - 6) Report of the meeting held on 14th February 2013 attached.
(c)	Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) (Pages 7 - 10) Report of the meeting held on 12th February 2013 attached...

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## Cabinet

### Report of the meeting held on 14th February 2013

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#### Matters for Decision

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#### 58. BUDGET 2013/14 AND MEDIUM TERM PLAN 2014/18

The Cabinet has considered the content of the 2013/14 draft budget, the Medium Term Plan for the period 2014/18 and the level of Council Tax for 2013/14. **The details are contained in Appendix A to the report by the Head of Financial Services included as Agenda Item No. 3 on the Council agenda.**

Subsequently, the final government grant figures have been published and Members have noted that the level of Revenue Support Grant and retained Business Rates has not changed but that two new specific grants had been awarded which will marginally increase the revenue reserves by £226k. The impact is shown in Appendix C to the report by the Head of Financial Services included as Agenda Item No. 3 on the Council Agenda.

In considering the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being), Members concurred with the Panel that Council Tax levels should be increased by £4.67 in order to meet unavoidable inflation and to preserve the Council's reserves and valued services as far as possible both this year and in the future.

With regard to the budget, the Cabinet noted that the overall budget was 4.8% higher than the original budget for 2012/13. Members have been advised that the increase was as a result of multiple factors with inflation being a major contributor. Reference also was made to the introduction of more efficient working practices and the need to constantly strive to find efficiencies. In that respect, Executive Councillors noted that the Panel will be examining, in detail, the future budget once the current budget process has been completed.

The Cabinet noted the Panel's views regarding the grant allocation to Town and Parish Councils towards their loss in income following the introduction of the Government's Local Council Tax Support Scheme. In noting the Panel's concerns over the abuse of the grant by some Councils, the Cabinet has reiterated that similar grants in future years could not be guaranteed.

Having noted that the business community supported the proposed Council Tax increase at the recent consultation meeting and in thanking the Panel for their input, the Cabinet

#### **RECOMMEND**

- (a) that, subject to appropriate adjustments to Annex D to reflect the final settlements in relation to special and specific grants, the proposed budget, Medium Term Plan and Financial Plan appended to the report of the Head of Financial Services be approved; and**
- (b) that a Council Tax increase of £4.67 representing a level of £133.18 for a Band D property be approved for 2013/14.**

#### **59. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2013/14**

**Reproduced at Appendix B of the Head of Financial Services report at Agenda Item No. 3 on the Council's agenda** is the proposed Treasury Management Strategy for 2013/14. The Strategy, which complies with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Code of Practice, has clear objectives for the management of the Council's borrowing and investments. Executive Councillors' attention was drawn to a new element of this year's Strategy which allows the Council to provide loan finance to local organisations that can support Council services or to organisations where the Council may make a margin on the loan subject to adequate safeguards. It was stressed that discussion on the criteria for such loans would be considered at the Treasury Management Group and that each loan would require Cabinet approval.

#### **RECOMMEND**

- (a) that, subject to appropriate adjustments to the Planned Borrowing Table as a consequence of the final settlement in relation to special and specific grants, the 2013/14 Treasury Management Strategy appended at Appendix B to the report of the Head of Financial Services be approved; and**
- (b) that the Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators for 2013/14 as set out in Appendix B of the report of the Head of Financial Services be approved;**

#### **60. ST NEOTS RAILWAY STATION FOOTBRIDGE**

**By way of a report by the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy (reproduced as an Appendix to this report)** the Cabinet has considered the background to a request for a capital contribution towards the costs of a new footbridge at St Neots Railway Station. The proposed footbridge is a critical element of the new infrastructure for St Neots, providing an important link for pedestrians and cyclists travelling between the St Neots Expansion area, the railway station

and the rest of the town. Members have been advised that a renegotiation of the BCIS index has resulted in a reduction in the project's S106 funding and the cost of the original project, initiated in 2005/06, has increased. In order for the project to proceed any additional funding will need to be financed by the District Council as the contributions from Network Rail and the County Council are fixed. Given that no specific schemes have been identified to proceed from the Town Centre Developments capital provision of £290,000 and as a number of efficiencies have been identified in the 2013/14 revenue budget for Planning Services, the Cabinet

## **RECOMMEND**

**that the Council approves a capital contribution of £316,069 towards the St Neots Rail Footbridge project to be funded by way of a transfer of £290,000 from the capital provision for Town Centre Developments and £26,000 from the Planning Services revenue budget.**

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### **Matters for Information**

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#### **61. PROCURING A GREEN DEAL PARTNER RELATIONSHIP FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

**Having regard to the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) (Item No. 47 of their Report refers),** the Cabinet has endorsed the establishment of a Green Deal Partnership Scheme for Cambridgeshire. In so doing, the Cabinet has considered a supporting business case aimed at improving the energy efficiency of homes and commercial buildings across the County.

It is intended that the Partnership will conduct a joint competitive procurement exercise to select one or more Green Deal Provider. The Cabinet has supported such a move and has authorised the Head of Paid Service and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Environment, to negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding governing joint working and to enter into a contract with the chosen provider.

Executive Councillors have concurred with the Panel that the Provider should be selected on the basis of their ability to deliver high quality energy serving measures in a responsible way that meets the needs of customers. The Panel were of the view that safeguards need to be put in place to ensure that the scheme does not operate in a way that might damage the Council's reputation. In supporting this view, the Cabinet has requested the Head of Paid Service to clarify the terms under which the Council could withdraw from the Partnership should the implemented scheme not be meeting its objectives.

**62. DELEGATED POWERS – ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT**

Approval has been given to a series of amendments to the powers delegated to Officers in respect of the enforcement of environmental crime such as littering, fly tipping, nuisance cars for sale and abandoned vehicles. The Council's Scheme of Delegation will be amended accordingly.

J D Ablewhite  
Chairman

**ST NEOTS RAILWAY STATION FOOTBRIDGE  
(Report by Head of Planning and Housing Strategy)**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to recommend that Cabinet approves a capital contribution of £316,069 towards the funding package (total project cost being £6,036,000) for the new St Neots Railway Station Footbridge.

**2. BACKGROUND**

2.1 The new St Neots Railway Station Footbridge has been designed by Network Rail to both enhance access to the station and also, most importantly, to provide direct connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists travelling between the St Neots Eastern Expansion area, the railway station, and to the rest of the town. The new footbridge has been designed with lifts as well as stairs in order to allow full accessibility for disabled people.

2.2 The project was initiated in 2005/6 and it was originally envisaged that it would be totally funded by Section 106 contributions secured from the Loves Farm, St Neots development along with direct Network Rail funding. The Section 106 Agreement provided a total of £2,676,000 towards the project, subject to indexation.

2.3 Detailed project development and design work has been undertaken by Network Rail, in consultation with Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council. All necessary consents have been obtained and the project is now ready for implementation. The overall project cost is £6,036,000.

2.4 Network Rail now intends to implement the project from April 2013 with completion envisaged by March 2014. The project includes works over the operational East Coast Main Line railway, which are anticipated to commence in May 2013.

**3. THE PROPOSED FUNDING PACKAGE**

3.1 The proposed overall project funding profile is as follows:

Network Rail investment	£2,561,300
Public sector investment (S106, CCC, HDC)	£3,474,700
<b>Total</b>	<b>£6,036,000</b>

3.2 To enable the project to proceed there is a need for a further capital contribution of £316,069 from this Council. This is needed to cover a combination of increased project costs (at an additional £198,700) and as a result of a reduction in the amount of S106 funding that is now available. The reduction in the S106 funding has been caused by the need to recalculate the original agreed S106

contributions against the BCIS Index. This has unfortunately resulted in a reduction in the value of that contribution that equates to £117,369.

- 3.3 This development is a critical element of the new infrastructure that is required to support the sustainable growth of St Neots. The District Council needs to cover the further capital funding project contribution of £316,069 as the contributions from Network Rail and the County Council are fixed, and it will not be possible to seek further S106 funds from the developer.
- 3.4 The District Council is able to identify existing budgets which can be transferred to fund this shortfall. No specific schemes have been identified to proceed from the Town Centre Developments capital provision of £290,000 and therefore these monies can be transferred with any desired replacement funding being considered in next year's MTP Review. Due to efficiencies elsewhere, the balance can be found from the 2013/14 revenue budget for Planning Services.
- 3.5 Subject to this approval, the breakdown of the proposed overall project funding profile would be as follows:

Network Rail	£2,561,300
S106 Railway Bridge and Station contributions	£2,558,631
CCC Cambridge / St Neots Transport Corridor	£300,000
CCC St Neots MTTs	£300,000
<i>Sub Total</i>	<i>£5,719,931</i>
HDC	£316,069
<b>Total</b>	<b>£6,036,000</b>

- 3.6 As the District Council is providing the necessary additional funding in this instance, we will be looking for this to be balanced out by the County Council within other partnership schemes.
- 3.7 The Code of Financial Management allows the Cabinet to approve budget transfers up to £300,000. As the required contribution is slightly in excess of this, the Cabinet will need to recommend that the Council for approves the transfers.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATION**

##### **4.1 It is recommended**

**that Cabinet recommends to Council that approval be given for a capital contribution of £316,069 towards the St Neots Rail Footbridge project which is to be funded by the transfer of £290,000 from the capital provision for Town Centre Developments and £26,000 from the Planning Services revenue budget.**

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Steve Ingram, Head of Planning and Housing Strategy,  
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## **Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being)**

**Report of the meeting held on 12th February 2013**

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### **Matters for Information**

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#### **47. PROCURING A GREEN DEAL PARTNER RELATIONSHIP FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

The Panel has been acquainted with the background to the establishment of a countywide Green Deal partnership. The Home Energy Act requires all local authorities actively to promote and report on local Green Deal activity within their area whilst also playing a lead role in its delivery. Under the scheme, households can spend up to £10,000 on energy saving measures within their homes with repayments made through their energy bills. The “Golden Rule” is that repayments should not exceed the projected cost savings on an average bill for the duration of the green finance arrangement, which can be as long as 25 years for houses.

The Panel has been acquainted with the events that have led to the development of a Cambridgeshire Green Deal brand. To date, three of the participating authorities have endorsed the proposals. A joint procurement exercise will now be required in order to establish a partner relationship with a fully accredited Green Deal Provider. This will be subject to EU procurement rules but there is a desire to attract local assessors and installers to participate in the scheme. It has been confirmed that the costs of any energy improvement works will be levied upon the property and not homeowners. In the case of private rented properties, permission to carry out works will need to be sought from the landlord.

Members’ attention has been drawn to the Green Deal investment potential in Huntingdonshire together with the likely leads to be generated which is expected to produce an income of around £30,000-£60,000 per annum for the District. These projections are based on the findings of a report commissioned by the County Council. Emphasis has been put on the need for safeguards to be in place to ensure the scheme does not operate in a way that might damage the Council’s reputation.

The Panel has discussed the Energy Company Obligation (ECO), which focuses on hard to treat properties and vulnerable and fuel poor households. Funding to undertake any works to qualifying properties under the ECO will be obtained via the award of grant from the Government’s “Green Deal Pioneer Places” fund, regardless of a

household's income. The assessment will be based purely on the property itself.

The Panel has reached the conclusion that a robust methodology and associated assessment software will be required to support the accreditation and certification of energy improvement assessors and installers. This will guarantee the standard of works undertaken and the probity of the practices employed to sell them and also protect the Council's reputation. They will need to be aligned to established points of contact within the Council and communities to act as "trusted" informants about the scheme.

The Panel is also of the view that the Green Deal offer for Cambridgeshire needs to commence operation as soon as possible. While there is a need to ensure the partnership arrangements with a Green Deal provider and the offers are sound, Members are aware that other providers have started marketing their products and they do not want to miss this opportunity. Adherence to the timescales for the launch of the scheme specified in the report should ensure this does not happen.

Members have further commented that the level of referral fees should not be part of the criteria employed to select the Provider. The Provider should be selected on the basis of their ability to provide high quality energy saving measures in a responsible way to meet the needs of customers. Having discussed the role of the Environment Team in generating leads and undertaking marketing activity, the Panel has recommended the Cabinet to

- ◆ approve the establishment of a partnership of the Cambridgeshire Districts to deliver the Green Deal work proposal, subject to detailed approval of a Memorandum of Understanding between the local authorities involved at Public Service Board;
- ◆ approve a procurement exercise and subsequent award of contract(s) to one or more Green Deal Providers to be let on a Countywide basis and in collaboration with Cambridgeshire Local Authorities; and
- ◆ Authorise the Head of Paid Service and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding governing joint working and to enter into a contract with a chosen Green Deal Provider, subject to consultation with the Executive Councillor for the Environment.

The Panel has requested an update on progress of the scheme after 12 months of operation.

#### **48. REVIEW OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

The outcome of a review of the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels undertaken by a joint Working Group comprising Members from each of the Panels has been reported to the Panel. The findings reveal that the Panels are generally acting effectively in

discharging their responsibilities and fulfilling their terms of reference. A number of opportunities for improvement have been identified and will be incorporated within an action plan that will be subject to review by the Working Group.

Matters discussed by the Panel include the "Member Champion" appointed by the Economic Well-Being Panel. It is considered that this is good practice and should be developed. Members have also commented on the role of the Panels in influencing the Cabinet's decision making, the need to generate more publicity on their work and ways of encouraging public attendance at their meetings.

Members have endorsed a recommendation that the Working Group should meet with the Executive Leader to discuss opportunities for earlier scrutiny and involvement in the formulation of policy.

#### **49. AGRICULTURE WORKING GROUP**

An in-depth study into the Council's planning policy framework as it relates to agriculture has been completed by the Agriculture Working Group. As part of their investigations, the Working Group has held discussions with local representatives of Linking Environment and Farming and of the National Farmers Union and developed a list of matters that might be addressed in Council policy. The Working Group has examined the relevant part of the draft Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and is satisfied that the most significant issues are now covered. A number of comments have been made on the draft Policy and these will be reviewed by the Planning Service.

The Panel has been pleased to note that its recommendation relating to the Council's use of consultants when dealing with planning applications where agriculture is a factor has been accepted by the Development Management Panel.

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#### **Other Matters of Interest**

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#### **50. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING) - PROGRESS**

The Panel has reviewed its programme of studies. It has been confirmed that the Waste Collection Working Group will resume once the RECAP studies have been completed. On a related matter, Members have queried why they have not been provided with information on the new waste collection rounds, which will go live on 25th February 2013. In addition, the Panel is concerned that the Land beach Waste Management Plant is currently not operational and that this will significantly increase the level of waste directed to landfill. The Chairman has undertaken to make enquiries on behalf of the Panel in both respects and to report back thereon. Members have requested a breakdown of the current recycling figures to ascertain what the impact of the situation at Land beach has been.

**51. WORK PLAN STUDIES**

The Panel has received details of the studies being undertaken by the other Overview and Scrutiny Panels. In response to a question on the investigations being undertaken by the Economic Well-Being Panel in respect of the One Leisure Business Plan, Members have been advised that the public were excluded when this matter has been considered.

**52. NOTICE OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

The Panel has been acquainted with the current Notice of Executive Decisions. Items entitled Local Plan and Revision to Wind Power Supplementary Planning Document will be submitted to future meetings of the Panel.

**53. SCRUTINY**

The Panel has considered the latest edition of the Decision Digest and discussed matters contained therein.

D Harty  
Chairman