

## **COUNCIL - WEDNESDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 2013**

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### **Late Items**

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#### **6. REPORTS OF THE CABINET, PANELS AND COMMITTEE**

(a) Cabinet (Pages 1 - 4)

Report of the meeting held on 19th September 2013 - attached.

(f) Employment Panel (Pages 5 - 8)

Report of the meeting held on 18th September 2013 - attached.

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## **Cabinet**

### **Report of the meeting held on 19th September 2013**

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#### **Matter for Decision**

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#### **16. FINANCIAL FORECAST**

**In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) (Item No.12 of their Report refers)** and by way of a report by the Assistant Director, Finance and Resources, reproduced separately on the Council agenda, the Cabinet has been acquainted with the present position in relation to the Council's financial forecast for the period up to 2018/19.

The Cabinet has been informed of progress to date in the achievement of savings and acknowledged the major financial challenges facing the authority arising from the Government's Spending Review. Particular attention was drawn to the Government's limit for Council Tax increase in the current year, uncertainty surrounding the level of Government Formula Grant and a proposal that Councils will be required to pass on a significant portion of the New Homes Bonus to the Local Enterprise Partnership.

The Cabinet was conscious of the additional major financial challenges being faced by the Council as a result of the Government's Review including the ability to deliver its current portfolio of services. It was reported that uncertainty also surrounded Government Support for Councils after the 2015 General Election with a potential for a fall in grant of 2.5% per year.

With regard to existing savings proposals, Members considered whether to continue to protect Town and Parish Councils from the impact of the Government's Local Council Tax Support Scheme. Given the challenges being faced by the authority as a result of the budgetary cuts, Members concurred with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel that this grant should not be continued beyond the current financial year, subject to there being no change in Government legislation.

In considering the additional savings requirements, Executive Councillors concurred with the Panel that the focus should be on the larger areas of the Council's expenditure and acknowledged the importance of communication to ensure that Huntingdonshire residents are able to influence and be kept informed of the process.

Having noted that the Managing Director was currently developing a performance management framework to link the Leadership Direction with the Budget/MTP, the Cabinet

**RECOMMEND**

**that Council:**

- (a) notes the contents of the report and acknowledges the financial uncertainty for local authorities;**
- (b) confirms that there will be no grants relating to the impact of Council Tax Support to Town and Parish Councils in 2014/15 and subsequent years;**
- (c) supports the Financial Forecast as the basis to estimate the potential level of savings required by the authority;**
- (d) requests the Managing Director to identify proposals for additional major savings for 2015/16.**

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**Matters for Information**

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**17. PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF LOCAL JOINT COMMITTEES IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE**

**Having regard to the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) (Item No.5 of their Report to the Council meeting held on 26th June 2013 refers), the Cabinet has been acquainted with the present position with regard to the proposed establish of Local Joint Committees (LJC's) in Huntingdonshire. Having been informed that the pilot scheme in the Norman Cross County division had attracted little interest, Executive Councillors considered a series of new principles for LJC's intended to promote local ownership of the scheme rather than a top-down approach**

In discussing the proposed boundary map for the LJCs, Members noted that the Town and Parish Councils had been consulted on whom they considered to be part of their local communities. However, Executive Councillors expressed reservations over the prescriptive nature of the areas and suggested that they should be perceived as guidelines in order to allow some flexibility. With this caveat, the Cabinet has approved a revised Constitution for LJCs in Huntingdonshire. In so doing, the Cabinet were of the view that Town and Parish Councils should be notified of the opportunity to establish their own LJC's across the District and have requested each individual Ward Members of the Council to attend their respective joint committees if a meeting is called by the communities.

**18. HUNTINGDONSHIRE TOWN AND PARISH CHARTER**

**In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) (Item No.14 of their Report refers),** the Cabinet has endorsed the contents of the Huntingdonshire Town and Parish Charter. The Charter sets out a framework for Cambridgeshire County Council, Huntingdonshire District Council and local Town and Parish Councils to work in partnership to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of Huntingdonshire. It explains how issues such as Neighbourhood Plans, Community Right to Buy, Community Right to Challenge and Community Infrastructure Levy will be dealt with. In that respect, the Cabinet has requested that reference be made within the Charter document to Local Joint Committees as an example of an appropriate forum in which to engage with communities.

**19. MAKING ASSETS COUNT – CAMBRIDGESHIRE’S PROPOSED APPROACH TO STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT**

**Having regard to the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) (Item No.11 of their Report refers),** the Cabinet has endorsed the key principles of the Making Assets Count project which aim to improve public service delivery by identifying opportunities and challenging decisions relating to the use and disposal of assets across Cambridgeshire. In so doing, the Cabinet has noted the County Council’s intention to proceed with the creation of a countywide publicly-owned joint venture, the MAC Public Property Partnership, as a delivery vehicle for the project. In that respect, Members noted that none of the authority’s assets will be committed to or encumbered by this without further reference to Cabinet.

At the same time, the Cabinet has positively endorsed the pragmatic approach that the District Council has taken to date in respect of maximising the use of the authority’s assets and agreed that further common sense sharing opportunities should be fully explored and expediently delivered wherever possible.

**20. JOINT MATERIALS RECYCLING FACILITY PROCUREMENT**

**In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) (Item No.10 of their Report refers),** the Cabinet has been acquainted with the background to a proposal by the Recycling Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership (RECAP) to jointly procure a materials recycling facility to manage and process all the recycling materials collected across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The proposals relate to the bulking, sorting and onward processing/sale of recyclable materials.

Whilst the Cabinet supported the principle of the proposal, Executive Councillors have sought assurances that the authority would benefit from being part of a combined procurement with other local authorities. Mention was made of the risk associated with the contract and the lack of any financial justifications in the report. In

that respect, the Cabinet has requested that the final Invitation to Tender document be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) prior to final approval by the Cabinet and that a special meeting be called for that purpose, if necessary, to meet the timetable for the joint procurement.

In the meantime, the Cabinet has:

- ◆ endorsed the Council's commitment to the procurement and appointment of a Contractor to deliver Joint MRF services for all participating RECAP partners, unless all partners agree not to appoint;
- ◆ approved the RECAP Advance Partnership Working Charter and Governance Agreement;
- ◆ endorsed the nomination of a preferred supplier by Peterborough City Council, in collaboration with the participating partners, on behalf of the RECAP participating partners; and
- ◆ approved the RECAP approach to the Waste Framework Directive and Waste Regulations regarding the collection of recyclate materials streams from 2015.

## **21. FACING THE FUTURE 2013**

The Cabinet has approved a process to review the future potential business options for the delivery of Council services and has agreed that they be considered in respect of all services currently provided by the Council. The proposals explore a range of options available to reform the way the authority delivers its services, with the aim of creating a sustainable solution to the stark financial difficulties facing the authority. These include generating additional income, smart investments, development of property or land assets, transfer of services, sharing services, outsourcing and possible salary reduction measures.

In welcoming the pragmatic approach being adopted by the authority, the Cabinet has requested the Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen to prepare proposals for a delivery review programme for consideration at the next meeting of Cabinet and to agree resourcing for that programme and a proposed governance structure. At the same time, the Overview and Scrutiny Panels have been requested to review all options in line with the programme and to present their conclusions and recommendations to the Cabinet.

J D Ablewhite  
Chairman

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## **Employment Panel**

### **Report of the meeting held on 18th September 2013**

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#### **Matters for Information**

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#### **6. FIRST CONTACT SERVICE – UPDATE**

Further to Item No.3 of the Report to the meeting of the Council held on 18 September 2013, the Panel has received information on the use of the First Contact Service during the period January 2011 to August 2013. This confidential service was introduced in 2001 as part of the Council's overall stress management arrangements as an alternative means of support for employees. It is available to anyone whose problems (whether work related, personal or a combination) are affecting their ability to work effectively. Details of the use of the Service, the current membership of the First Contact Group and the training which is undertaken by the volunteers to enhance their skills and existing knowledge have been provided.

Having noted that the service continues to be well used by employees and that it provides a valuable addition to the existing support services offered by the Council to its employees and Members during times of difficulty, the Panel has acknowledged the positive contribution and benefit that the First Contact service brings to the organisation and its employees' well-being. The Panel has also expressed their appreciation for the support provided and work undertaken by the First Contact team and would like to encourage more employees to get involved.

In terms of the future development of the First Contact Service, Members were pleased to note that work will continue over the next few months to further improve the service and promote it both to employees and managers. Efforts will also continue to recruit more male volunteers to the Group, together with volunteers in the One Leisure Service. To assist in this respect, the Panel has asked the One Leisure Management Team to take steps to encourage more staff to volunteer.

#### **7. TRANSGENDER AND GENDER REASSIGNMENT – STATEMENT OF GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES**

To fulfil an outstanding action within the Council's Single Equality Scheme and to support and protect employees who are proposing to undergo a process of gender reassignment, the Panel has reviewed and endorsed the contents of a new Statement of Guidance for transgender and gender reassignment in the workplace. The guidance, which is based on best practice, provides practical steps

and assistance for both managers and employees on issues relating to transgender, transexuality and gender reassignment.

## **8. USE OF CONSULTANTS, HIRED STAFF AND TEMPORARY STAFF**

Having regard to the recent changes in their terms of reference the Panel has been provided with details of the Council's expenditure on consultants, hired and temporary staff during the period 2012/13, in comparison with the previous year. The information has also been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) who have made a number of observations. (Item No.8 of their Report to the Council refers).

Having recognised that spending on these categories was not necessarily bad and that there are specific situations where there is a positive benefit for the Authority, the Panel has asked the Assistant Director, Finance & Resources to prepare a policy framework to define 'Consultants' 'Hired' and 'Temporary' Staff and to provide guidance on how and when these types of staff should be used. Members have suggested that this should be linked to the Authority's Redundancy Policy and should outline the procurement processes to ensure that value for money is obtained.

## **9. EMPLOYMENT REPORT**

The Panel has received a quarterly report on Human Resource matters impacting on the performance of the organisation. On this occasion, the report has included the latest position and trends relating to -

- ◆ employee numbers;
- ◆ employee turnover;
- ◆ sickness absence reporting; and
- ◆ the Human Resources caseload.

In terms of tackling sickness absence, the Panel has noted that the average days sickness per FTE employee had decreased in the last quarter to 8.7, although this remained higher than the corresponding period in the previous year and continued to be an area of focus for the Human Resources Team. Members have been reminded that a new Sickness Absence Management Policy had been introduced in April 2013 but it was still too early to establish what impact this had had. Nevertheless the increase in the number of active cases being undertaken by the HR Team was a direct reflection of changes to the trigger points in the new sickness policy.

The highest cause of sickness absence continued to be stress, depression, mental health and fatigue and Members have been reminded that work is currently underway to investigate a work-based support service for staff who are experiencing stress at work. Further information is expected to be available for the next meeting.

In terms of the other reasons for sickness absence, the Panel has discussed the increase in musculo-skeletal problems and have



emphasised the need to address the number of absences which continue to be recorded as 'other'. In recognising that some of the highest levels of sickness absence were recorded in the Customer Services and Operations Divisions, Members have requested further information on the cost implications of this absence for the Authority. The Panel has also suggested that where there is a requirement for a member of staff to have a level of fitness to undertake a specific job role, consideration should be given to a process for ensuring that those returning from sickness are fit for work.

Finally, the Panel has placed on record its recognition of, and gratitude for the excellent contribution made by Mr T Wakelin during his 18 years employment in the local government service and conveyed its best wishes to him for a long and happy retirement.

## **10. LGSS PERFORMANCE**

The Panel has considered the performance of LGSS Human Resources, Payroll and Organisational Workforce Development services across the key service measures agreed under the current contract during the period 1st April to 30th June 2013. LGSS performance is measured in four areas namely -

- ◆ General Service Standards;
- ◆ HR Strategic and Advisory;
- ◆ Recruitment and Payroll; and
- ◆ Organisational workforce development.

To assist the Panel in monitoring the performance levels and to create a balanced and impartial report, feedback from the LGSS Contract Manager and the views of District Council staff on each of these service areas also has been provided.

Whilst the majority of service standards had been met, the Panel discussed the concerns which had been raised by managers about some general aspects of the recruitment service and have been informed that work was ongoing to address these. It was anticipated that the introduction of a Recruitment solution in the Autumn will address a number of these areas of dissatisfaction and the Panel has been assured that the new system had been tested and developed at workshops involving District Council staff. Members will continue to monitor the service issues raised by staff and the remedial measures taken by the District Council to resolve these.

In terms of LGSS' priorities for the next quarter, Members have been informed that these will include support for the ongoing pay review, delivery of the Workforce Development Strategy and preparations for the new requirement for automated pension enrolment. The Panel has requested further information on the proposals for the Workforce Development Strategy at a future meeting.

## 11. PAY REVIEW PROJECT

*(The following item was considered as a confidential item under paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.)*

The Panel has received an update on the progress being made on the Council's Pay Review Project. Members were informed that Stage 1, the evaluation and moderation process had concluded at the end of August. The Panel has expressed their appreciation to all the staff involved.

LGSS have now commenced work on the next stage of the project (Stage 2) which includes -

- ◆ pay modelling and development of a new pay and grading framework;
- ◆ policy development; and
- ◆ the consultation process.

Having noted that it was proposed to consult with staff on the new pay and grading framework and the appeals process in October 2013 with a view to implementing the proposals in April 2014, the Panel has been advised that Management were currently in discussions with the Staff Council about the ways in which they could support the consultation process.

Having been advised that the Second Stage of the project was progressing well, Members have been informed that a Communications Strategy has been developed to sit alongside the Project Plan to ensure that all staff have access to timely and accurate information,

In recognition of the fact that it might be useful for all Councillors to have a better understanding of the pay review process and the potential impact on District Council employees, the Panel has suggested that a briefing for all Members might be useful and this will now be built into the Communications Strategy.

S Cawley  
Chairman