

Dear Councillor

CABINET - THURSDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 2014

I am now able to enclose for consideration at the above meeting the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

**Agenda Item
No.**

4. GREEN HOUSE PROJECT - SALE OF HOUSES (Pages 1 - 2)

To receive a report from the Environment Team Leader seeking approval for the sale of the two Green House project houses in St Neots.

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CABINET

10TH SEPTEMBER 2014

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMENTS

ITEM:

3. CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE

The Overview and Scrutiny Panels have welcomed the receipt of performance information for the first quarter of the 2014/15 Municipal year and have noted that Executive Members will present future reports and answer questions on performance within their areas of responsibility.

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has received confirmation that the new regular reports on the Council's performance against the Corporate Plan will be publicised, including publishing them on the website. Having examined the indicators presented, Members have recommended that the report should incorporate information on waste minimisation and encouraging recycling and on street cleansing.

With regard to the proposal at paragraph 3.4 of the report by the Policy and Performance Manager to amend one of the performance indicators, the Panel is of the view that the Council should monitor the performance of its shared services. An assurance has been received that this principle will be taken forward as more shared services are developed.

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) is generally content with the format of the report, subject to the inclusion of an action column for each of the key actions at a later date. Comment has been made that identifying the direction of travel in each area is as important as reporting on the current position.

In response to questions regarding specific actions within the strategic themes that have been allocated to the Economic Well-Being Panel, Members have been advised that the business case for previously identified energy reduction projects across the Council estate will be subject to the normal approval process and that the outcome of the staff satisfaction survey will be presented to the Employment Panel in November 2014.

Following a question about the % of Council Tax collected and whether any change might have been caused by the welfare reforms, the Executive Councillor for Resources has indicated that the collection figures are acceptable and it appears the Council has pitched Council Tax at an appropriate level.

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) has endorsed the presentation of performance information in the report and has commented that it is easy to understand and can be readily traced back to the Corporate Plan. It has been recommended that future reports should include comments where targets have not been achieved on what is to be done to make improvements, whether the level of performance is to be accepted and what are the implications of not achieving the target.

4. GREEN HOUSE PROJECT – SALE OF HOUSES

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) has questioned whether consideration has been given to retaining the Green Houses as part of the

Council's forthcoming strategy to invest in capital assets in order to achieve a return. Members have been informed that the rates of return on market housing are not comparable with those that can be obtained from commercial property. Any capital receipts will be reinvested in the latter. On this basis and having been informed that net expenditure on the properties is likely to be lower than the figure in the table in paragraph 9.1, the Panel has supported the recommendations in the report by the Environment Team Leader.

6. SALE OF LAND, ST MARY'S STREET

During consideration by the Economic Well-Being Panel of the proposed sale of Council owned land at the front of the Pathfinder House site fronting St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, some Members have expressed concern that the Council does not appear to have explored all options for the site. The land might have provided an opportunity for the Council to reduce its homelessness costs by building its own accommodation on the site. This could have provided revenue and social benefits and enabled the Council to retain control of the land to the front of its office premises.

Having noted that work is being done to prepare a report on the Council's future strategic approach to capital investment, the recommendations within the report are endorsed, although further consideration should be given to the wording of recommendation b) to ensure that the Head of Resources, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Resources, will not be accepting the best offer for the site unless it is of a certain value.

The view has further been expressed that the absence of the capital investment strategy should not hinder the Council from disposing of other small parcels of land in its ownership at the current time.