

Dear Councillor

**CABINET - THURSDAY, 10 FEBRUARY 2022**

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.**

**3. FINAL 2022/23 REVENUE BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2023/24 TO 2026/27); INCLUDING THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME**(Pages 3 - 4)

To receive a report from the Chief Finance Officer providing detail of the Final Budget 2022/23 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2023/24 to 2026/27) including the Capital Programme.

Executive Councillor: J A Gray.

**4. 2022/23 TREASURY MANAGEMENT, CAPITAL AND INVESTMENT STRATEGIES**(Pages 5 - 6)

To receive a report on the 2022/23 Treasury Management, Capital and Investment Strategies.

Executive Councillor: J A Gray.

**5. A428 BLACK CAT TO CAXTON GIBBET IMPROVEMENTS SCHEME DEVELOPMENT CONSENT ORDER POSITION REVIEW**(Pages 7 - 8)

To receive an update on the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Improvements Scheme Development Consent Order.

Executive Councillor: J Neish.

**6. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT, 2021/22 QUARTER 3**(Pages 9 - 10)

To receive a report outlining details of the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2018/22 and project delivery.

Executive Councillor: J Neish.

**7. FINANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021/22, QUARTER 3**(Pages 11 - 12)

To receive a report presenting details of the Council's projected financial performance for 2021/2022.

Executive Councillor: J A Gray.

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## COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH)

### FINAL 2022/23 REVENUE BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2023/24 TO 2026/27); INCLUDING THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME

- 6.1 The Panel discussed the Final 2022/23 Revenue Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (2023/24 to 2026/27); including the Capital Programme at its meeting on 2nd February 2022.
- 6.2 Following a question from Councillor Chapman, the Panel heard that the New Homes Bonus was as a result of an annual report being submitted rather than a trigger point to achieve.
- 6.3 Councillor Chapman additionally commented that detail in relation to projects would be helpful in enabling the Panel to make informed observations and discussions. Historically commercial sensitivity had been cited as a reason for less detailed information than desired. This point was noted.
- 6.4 The report was praised by Councillor Roberts, who felt that the emphasis was just right. He also observed that with a strong local economy and a plethora of new business creation within the district, would there be any scope to be more optimistic in the figures. The Panel heard that whilst inspiration could be drawn from the inspirational local businesses and their creative ways of working, the budget has been set with realistic aims in mind.
- 6.5 Councillor Roberts additionally queried the consistency of the amends made to the pre application fees in Annex A. The finance team will investigate this question and respond to the Panel at a later date.
- 6.6 The proposed increase in Council Tax was queried by Councillor Wakeford, who also questioned the rationale for not having done so in the previous financial year and how this had impacted upon the current finances. The Panel heard that last years Council Tax freeze was the right thing to do for the residents of Huntingdonshire and the importance of striking a balance between spend and funds raised was emphasised. Councillor Wakeford was satisfied that this increase had been included into the budget across the medium term period, however he questioned the stability for the remaining years of the medium term and particularly what position could be expected in the next financial year. The Panel were reassured that the facts had been presented to allow for informed debate and that the budget was as conservative and realistic as possible to allow for strong progress in the coming municipal year.
- 6.7 Councillor Dew observed that the New Homes Bonus had been utilised to good effect over past years, and that having expressed initial doubts over the Commercial Investment Strategy (CIS), this had been well implemented to the benefit of the Council. He queried whether there had been any indication on

the future travel of funding and the Panel were informed that advice had been taken from Pixar to allow for the most accurate estimate in this matter.

- 6.8 In response to questions from Councillor Shellens and amiable debate, it was confirmed that the underspend had had a positive impact on the reserves. The Panel also heard that since 2014, the New Homes Bonus had been used in line with the CIS projects, however given the economic climate in the current financial year, it had been returned to the budget to strengthen the Council's financial position.
- 6.9 Councillor Shellens further questioned the substantial degree of risk associated with income forecast from traded services. The Panel were reassured that the legacy commercial estate held by the Council had formed the development of the CIS. Complete transparency is given through CIS reporting and this strategy has brought much needed income into the Council's budget. It was also noted that CIS acquisitions are currently at 97% occupancy.
- 6.10 Following a question from Councillor Sanderson, the Panel heard that leisure centre figures showed the predicted return of customers to centres but that these were also realistic numbers. It was further confirmed that leisure services had undergone additional scrutiny and work had been undertaken to restructure leisure costs. It was noted that the Panel would like to see a breakdown of costs by centre in the future.
- 6.11 The Panel welcomed the report and encourage the Cabinet to endorse the recommendations contained within the report.

## COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH)

### 2022/23 TREASURY MANAGEMENT, CAPITAL AND INVESTMENT STRATEGIES

- 5.1 The Panel discussed the 2022/23 Treasury Management, Capital and Investment Strategies at its meeting on 2nd February 2022.
- 5.2 Following a question by Councillor Shellens on the length of the report, the Panel heard that this was to ensure that all items were covered in sufficient detail.
- 5.3 Councillor Shellens additionally queried the use of Arlingclose forecasts, following which, the Panel heard that although economic forecasts were used as a guide, they were not relied upon for anything which could not be reacted to.
- 5.4 It was observed by Councillor Wakeford that there was scope for greater alignment between the strategies and new environmental principles. This point was noted and would be included in future reports.
- 5.5 The Panel heard that, following a query by Councillor Shellens, interest rates were not as low as one would expect and that this had not been a competitive landscape to operate in.
- 5.6 The Panel welcomed the report and encourage the Cabinet to endorse the recommendations contained within the report.

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## COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH)

### A428 BLACK CAT TO CAXTON GIBBET IMPROVEMENTS SCHEME DEVELOPMENT CONSENT ORDER POSITION REVIEW

- 5.1 The Panel discussed the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Improvements Scheme Development Consent Order Position Review at its meeting on 2nd February 2022.
- 5.2 Following a question from Councillor Chapman, it was confirmed to the Panel that dialogue between Huntingdonshire District Council, Cambridgeshire County Council and Bedfordshire County Council was open and ongoing.
- 5.3 Councillor Roberts stated that whilst he appreciated the timescales involved in the project, this should not be at the detriment of the detail, especially on biodiversity matters. The Panel heard that timescales are set by the Planning Inspectorate and have to be adhered to. All matters continue to be addressed until the Examination close when the Inspector will then consider any matters outstanding.
- 5.4 Following a further question from Councillor Roberts, it was confirmed to the Panel that the difference between County and District Council standards and HS2 standards as referred to in the cultural heritage section related to archaeology aspects.
- 5.5 Councillor Chapman observed that multiple traffic management studies were currently ongoing within St Neots but expressed concerns that the findings may not take the resulting outcomes of the other studies into account. This point was noted.
- 5.6 The Panel welcomed the report and encourage the Cabinet to endorse the recommendations contained within the report.

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## **COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH)**

### **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT, 2021/22 QUARTER 3**

- 5.1 The Panel discussed the Corporate Performance Report, 2021/22 Quarter 3 at its meeting on 2nd February 2022.
- 5.2 Councillor Roberts shared his appreciation that context had now been added to sections of the report, however he queried why the Bridge Place car park project had been removed from Appendix C. The Panel heard that there had been no progress in this project and it had been withdrawn as a result.
- 5.3 Following a question from Councillor Shellens, the Panel heard that direction of travel could be ascertained by comparing each quarters report which highlights the trackability and traceability of progress.
- 5.4 The Panel welcomed the report and encourage the Cabinet to endorse the recommendations contained within the report.

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## **COMMENTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (PERFORMANCE AND GROWTH)**

### **FINANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021/22, QUARTER 3**

- 5.1 The Panel discussed the Finance Performance Report 2021/22, Quarter 3 at its meeting on 2nd February 2022.
- 5.2 Following a question from Councillor Wakeford on high and unbudgeted costs for temporary staffing within the Development Management Team, the Panel were assured that permanent staffing solutions were now in place and this budget should be back on track in future reports.
- 5.3 The Panel welcomed the report and encourage the Cabinet to endorse the recommendations contained within the report.

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