

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the Council Chamber, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon on 2nd September 2004

PRESENT: Councillor D P Holley - Chairman

Councillors I C Bates, Mrs J Chandler,
R L Clarke, N J Guyatt, Mrs P J Longford,
Mrs D C Reynolds, T V Rogers and
L M Simpson

33. MINUTES

Subject to the inclusion of Councillor R L Clarke in the list of attendees, the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 15th July 2004 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

34. COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

The Cabinet received a report by the Head of Policy to which was appended the final report following completion of the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment by the Audit Commission. Copies of the reports are appended in the Minute Book.

In noting the Commission's identification of many more strengths than weaknesses in their "Excellent" rating of the Council's performance, Executive Members emphasised the importance of avoiding complacency, in improving those areas where weaknesses had been discovered and in striving to maintain the high standards of achievement in others. Whereupon and in noting also that a draft Improvement Plan was to be prepared to address these issues, it was

RESOLVED

that the Improvement Plan referred to above be submitted to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

35. FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Consideration was given to a report by the Director of Commerce and Technology (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) setting out a range of potential options available in terms of adopting a strategy for managing its finances in the period to 2011/12.

In so doing, Executive Councillors were acquainted with the assumptions made in setting and updating the budget for the current year, Government policies and grant regimes, the work which had been undertaken thus far in reviewing the Council's base budget and Medium Term Plan and the implications of adopting a service or tax-driven alternative. Having reviewed those alternatives the Cabinet expressed a preference initially for a combination, reflecting a

scenario between the options outlined in paragraph 5.2 and 5.7 of the report with Council tax increases approximating to £12 per year. Against that background and in reflecting that the outcomes of the residents' consultation on options for spending on local services and Council tax levels would be available shortly, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the report be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) for comment and the Panel informed of the Cabinet deliberations thus far; and
- (b) that a further report be submitted to the next meeting of the Cabinet.

36. REVENUE OUTTURN 2003/04

A report by the Head of Financial Services was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained details of the outturn of revenue expenditure 2003/04 and the variations between the original and revised budget provision for that year.

The Cabinet also were acquainted with formal determinations undertaken by the Director of Commerce and Technology in accordance with the powers delegated to him. Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the level of net outturn expenditure in the sum of £15.210million as at 31st March 2004 and details of expenditure carried forward to the current year be noted; and
- (b) that the determinations made by the Director of Commerce and Technology as described in paragraph 3.1 of the report now submitted be noted.

37. MEDIUM TERM PLAN REQUESTS FOR RELEASE OF FUNDS

The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Financial Services requesting the release of funding for identified schemes included in the Medium Term Plan. Copies of the report and associated justifications are appended in the Minute Book.

RESOLVED

that the release of the funding identified in Annex A to the report now submitted be approved.

38. BASE BUDGET REVIEW - PROGRESS

The Cabinet received a report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) concerning the base budget review. In response and in referring to their deliberations, recorded in Minute No. 04/35, on the potential options contained in the financial strategy, the forthcoming

reviews of the Medium Term Plan and charges for services, Executive Councillors concluded that it would not be essential to conclude the base budget review in the current year. However, it was recognised that, once the Cabinet had had the benefit of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's comments and the budget and Council Tax levels had been finalised for 2004/05 it would be important to set and to adhere to a programme for reviewing the base in conjunction with the outcomes of the residents' survey. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, the foregoing comments be conveyed to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) and the Panel's comments on the preferred financial strategy awaited.

39. ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Cabinet received and noted a report by the Head of Legal and Estates (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the Council's performance against National Property Performance Indicators, which were required by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the contents of the report be noted; and
- (b) that the performance indicator information contained in Appendix A to the report now submitted be endorsed for submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

40. TREASURY MANAGEMENT: INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE

A report by the Head of Financial Services was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which reviewed the respective levels of performance achieved during the quarter 1st April to 30th June 2004 by three external fund managers in the matter of investment of the Council's capital receipts.

RESOLVED

that the content of the report be noted.

41. COUNCIL FUNDING OF MANDATORY DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS

Further to Minute No. 03/194, the Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Housing Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the uptake of Disabled Facilities Grants during the first quarter of 2004 and requesting a supplementary capital estimate to allow applications to continue to be processed.

Members reiterated their concerns at the decision by the Government unilaterally to cap its contribution to these grants and thus impose additional financial liabilities on the Council and local tax payers. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the contents of the report be noted;
- (b) that a supplementary capital estimate of £492,000 be approved; and
- (c) that a further monitoring report be submitted in November 2004 to reflect the position at the end of the second quarter of the current financial year.

42. QUARTERLY SUMMARY OF DEBTS WRITTEN-OFF

The Cabinet received and noted a report by the Head of Revenue Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) summarising debt which had been written off as irrecoverable during the period April to June 2004.

43. WASTE PRIVATE FINANCE INITIATIVE (PFI): GOVERNANCE AND PROCUREMENT ISSUES

(Councillors I C Bates and R L Clarke declared personal interests in the following item as Members of Cambridgeshire County Council and remained in the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting thereon).

The Cabinet gave consideration to a report by the Head of Environment and Transport (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) containing an update on progress made by the waste disposal and collection authorities in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough towards delivering the Joint Municipal Waste Strategy. In the absence of evidence that the inclusion of the Council's waste collection services would produce service quality or financial benefits, it had been decided not to include those services in the PFI contract. However, in order to safeguard the Council's position, arrangements were to be made to produce a Statement of Understanding with the County Council for waste disposal and recycling, the terms of which were appended to the report. Accordingly, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the decision not to include the District Council's waste collection services within the proposed PFI arrangement be endorsed; and
- (b) that the Director of Operational Services, after consultation with the Leader of the Council on any textual changes, be authorised to sign the Statement of Understanding on behalf of the Council in relation to the partnership roles of collection and disposal authorities.

44. ENERGY EFFICIENCY:PARTNERSHIP PROPOSAL

Having considered the terms for a partnership with Enact Energy Management Ltd, to promote energy efficiency, which were set out in

a report by the Head of Environmental Health Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the establishment of the partnership be approved; and
- (b) that the Head of Environmental Health Services be authorised to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Enact Energy Management Ltd on behalf of the District Council.

45. DISTRICT COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS AND OTHER OFFICE ACCOMMODATION MEMBERS' ADVISORY GROUP

Reports of the meetings of the District Council Headquarters and Other Office Accommodation Members' Advisory Group held on 29th July and 23rd August 2004 were submitted.

RESOLVED

that the following principles for the Council's new or refurbished headquarters be adopted:

- ◆ the Chief Executive, Directors and their Personal Assistants will be provided with cellular offices, unless agreed otherwise by the Chief Executive;
- ◆ Heads of Service may select either a cellular office or open plan accommodation;
- ◆ below the level of Head of Service the Chief Executive may authorise the provision of cellular office accommodation in exceptional circumstances;
- ◆ 'hot desking' and home working will be actively pursued with appropriate arrangements being put in place to support participating employees;
- ◆ consideration will be given to relocating suitable activities/services to the new depot premises;
- ◆ the Call Centre will not be accommodated in the new headquarters building, but its location may be reviewed at a future date;
- ◆ no provision for smoking areas will be made in the new headquarters building;
- ◆ provision for video conferencing will be incorporated in the new headquarters building;
- ◆ the programme of electronic document management will be accelerated and expanded;
- ◆ catering facilities will be provided by a franchised private sector outlet open to the public and limited subsidy provided to employees initially;
- ◆ car parking will reflect normal standards of provision for office accommodation: there will be a reduction in the existing level of provision;
- ◆ the Customer Service Centre will be located within or in close proximity to the headquarters building, and
- ◆ no public access will be provided to the headquarters

building except to the Council Chamber and public meeting rooms.

46. HEADQUARTERS AND DEPOT FEASIBILITY STUDY

In response to a suggestion contained in a report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) that the Council should include relocation to an edge-of-town site among the options being considered for the Council's future headquarters, Executive Councillors –

- ◆ reiterated the reasons for pursuing the three town centre options for the feasibility study in terms of the impact on Huntingdon Town Centre and the convenience of its location to other parts of the District; and
- ◆ emphasised that the edge-of-town option had not been dismissed, but deferred and could be revisited later in the exercise if that course of action was considered appropriate.

RESOLVED

that the aforementioned views be conveyed to Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance).

47. A141 TRANSPORT CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS

The Cabinet received and noted a report by the Head of Environment and Transport (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on improvements planned by Cambridgeshire County Council to the A141 Huntingdon-March Transport Corridor.

48. HUNTINGDONSHIRE DESIGN GUIDE

Having noted responses to consultations on the draft Huntingdonshire Design Guide contained in a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which would form part of the Local Development Framework, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Huntingdonshire Design Guide, as amended by the textual changes referred to in Annex 1, be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Huntingdonshire Local Plan and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan; and
- (b) that authority to approve any minor consequential amendments to the text and illustrations that are deemed necessary as a result of the changes referred to in the preceding resolution be delegated to the Head of Planning Services, after consultation with the Executive Member for Planning Strategy.

49. HUNTINGDONSHIRE LANDSCAPE AND TOWNSCAPE ASSESSMENT

Having noted responses to consultations on the draft Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Assessment contained in a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which would form part of the Local Development Framework, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the revised Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Assessment, as amended by the textural changes referred to in Annex 1 be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Huntingdonshire Local Plan; and
- (b) that authority to approve any minor consequential amendments to the text and illustrations that are deemed necessary as a result of the changes referred in the preceding resolution be delegated to the Head of Planning Services, after consultation with the Executive Member for Planning Strategy.

Chairman