

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the Aquarius Room, St Ivo Leisure Centre, Westwood Road, St Ives on Thursday, 29 January 2009.

PRESENT: Councillor I C Bates – Chairman.

Councillors P L E Bucknell, K J Churchill,
D B Dew, A Hansard, C R Hyams,
Mrs D C Reynolds, T V Rogers and
L M Simpson.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors J T Bell, S J Criswell, J J Dutton
and P G Mitchell.

104. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 18th December 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

105. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor K J Churchill declared a personal interest in Minute Nos 116 and 121 and a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute No 118 all by virtue of his appointment as the District Council's representative on Luminus Homes. Councillor Churchill left the room for the duration and voting for Minute No 118.

106. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING - 2008/09

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) highlighting variations to the approved capital programme in 2008/09 and the consequential estimated revenue impact. It was

RESOLVED

that the report be received and the variations detailed at Annex A appended thereto noted.

107. FINANCIAL MONITORING - REVENUE BUDGET

The Cabinet received and noted a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) detailing expected variations in revenue expenditure in the current year.

Having considered the information contained therein, together with the total amounts of payments written-off in the year for Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the spending variations in the Revenue Budget as at 31st December 2008 be noted.

108. FINANCIAL STRATEGY, MEDIUM TERM PLAN AND BUDGET

Further to Minute No. 08/90 and by way of a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were acquainted with a number of variations to the assumptions made previously for the purpose of preparing the draft Financial Strategy, Medium Term Plan (MTP), the Budget and associated level of Council Tax for 2009/2010.

In discussing spending adjustments in the Medium Term Plan, Members' attention was drawn to the conclusions reached by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) on the matter. In that respect, Members concurred with the Panel that given the current economic climate and the need for budgetary flexibility there would be merit in establishing a working group to assist Executive Councillors in their continuing review of the budget and financial strategy.

Having noted comments arising from the consultation with the business community on expenditure proposals and in acknowledging the contribution of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel for their considerations, the Cabinet

RECOMMENDED

- (a) that the proposed Budget, Medium Term Plan and Financial Strategy appended to the report now submitted be approved; and
- (b) that an increase of £5.76 (4.99%) in Council Tax, representing a level of £121.15 for Band D properties for 2009/10 be approved.

109. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2009/10

With the aid of a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered the content of a proposed Treasury Management Strategy for 2009/2010.

In discussing the Strategy's objectives, Members' attention was drawn to the conclusions reached by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) that, subject to appropriate safeguards, the Strategy be amended to provide the opportunity to invest in corporate bonds. Whereupon, it was

RECOMMENDED

that the Treasury Management Strategy for 2009/10, as amended, be approved.

110. ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Cabinet received a report by the Head of Legal and Estates (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the Council's management of assets against national property performance management indicators for 2006/07 and 2007/08.

Having noted that work to update the Council's land ownership records was continuing with a new computerised data base having been acquired to incorporate all information relating to property ownership and asset management, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted, together with performance management indicator information contained in Appendix A.

111. HOMELESSNESS AND THE HOUSING MARKET

(Councillor S J Criswell, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) was in attendance and spoke on this item)

The Cabinet received and noted a report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) concerning the current national and local economic factors affecting the housing market and the associated level of demand for social rented housing. In so doing, Executive Councillors were advised that a number of initiatives were currently in place to ameliorate the effects of economic downturn in terms of preventing repossessions and homelessness and to help those experiencing financial difficulties. In the ensuing discussion, the Executive Councillor for Housing and Health reported that a further increase in demand for housing services was likely and that the situation would be monitored closely.

112. DISABILITY ACCESS STUDY

(Councillor S J Criswell, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) was in attendance and spoke on this item)

A report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which summarised the findings of a study by the Panel on disability access across the District.

The Cabinet were informed that the study reviewed access for those with disabilities to premises, facilities and other sites in the District, excluding those provided by the District Council.

In so doing, the Panel collected a wide range of evidence and consulted interested parties including Cambridgeshire County Council, the Papworth Trust, Hunts Forum of Voluntary organisations, Town and Parish Councils. Executive Councillors were advised that the study had revealed the need to promote awareness of and bring together the organisations able to offer advocacy/advice services to those with disabilities. Having considered the Panel's recommendations and in discussing issues relating to the disabled parking bays and blue badge parking, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

(a) that the contents of the report now submitted be noted;

- (b) that representations be made to Cambridgeshire County Council to ensure that the enforcement of blue badge parking in any new arrangements for decriminalised parking be recognised;
- (c) that the Council continues to undertake enforcement of parking in disabled bays in the car parks it manages; and
- (d) that Council organises discussions on the potential for comprehensive joint advocacy/advice services and the other opportunities for joint working between these organisations supporting people with disabilities.

113. SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF ALCOHOL ABUSE

(Councillor J D Bell, Vice-Chairman of the Licensing and Protection Panel was in attendance and spoke on this item)

A report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which summarised the findings of a study by the Panel regarding the impact of alcohol consumption on levels of anti-social behaviour and alcohol related crime within the District.

In considering the Panel's conclusions, Executive Councillors noted that while problems with alcohol related anti-social behaviour and criminal activity were evident within the District they were at the lower level than in many parts of the Country. Having noted the initiatives being undertaken to address the issue, in particular the development of a countywide alcohol strategy and the extent of enforcement , the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the actions being taken by the various agencies in an attempt to reduce the impact of excessive alcohol consumption on levels of anti-social behaviour and alcohol related crime within the District be welcomed and encouraged;
- (b) that the principles of the Cambridgeshire Alcohol Strategy 2008-2011 be supported;
- (c) that the Head of Administration be requested to liaise formally with the enforcement agencies to encourage them to make full use of the powers available to them to tackle the effects of alcohol misuse and resultant public disorder and to carry out this work in a more co-ordinated way; and
- (d) that where appropriate the Council's Licensing Section be requested to ensure that local residents are aware of the opportunities available to them under the Licensing Act 2003 to initiate reviews of premises licences and club premises certificates where they were experiencing problems caused by public disorder emanating from these premises.

114. GRANT AID WORKING GROUP

(Councillor P G Mitchell, Member of the Grant Aid Working Group, was in attendance and spoke on this item)

The Cabinet received a report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) summarising the findings of their study on capital and revenue grant aid schemes operating across the Council.

Executive Councillors were acquainted with the key findings of the Group in relation to the Council's corporate priorities, the criteria for each scheme, the methods adopted to publicise the availability of grant funding, the application process, officer/member involvement and the level of external funding brought into the District. Given the involvement of the Executive Councillors for Finance and Transportation and for Housing and Public Health in the Council's grant processes, Members felt that it would be appropriate for them to discuss issues highlighted by the Working Group, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the Working Group be invited to meet with the Executive Councillors for Finance and Transportation and for Housing and Public Health to discuss further the finding of their study and to report thereon to a future meeting of Cabinet.

115. ICT STRATEGY 2009-11

By way of a report by the Head of Information Management (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet reviewed the content of an ICT strategy and the supporting action plan for a three-year period 2009-2011.

Having noted the main aims and objectives of the document, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the ICT Strategy 2009-2011 be approved.

116. LAND AT THE WHADDONS, MAYFIELD DRIVE, HUNTINGDON

(Councillor J J Dutton, Member for Huntingdon North was in attendance and spoke on this item)

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was attached a schedule of responses received to the consultation on the Urban Design Framework for land around Butts Grove Way, The Whaddons and Suffolk House, Huntingdon and suggested amendments as a consequence thereof.

Having considered the views of Councillor J J Dutton, a local ward member, on the proposals, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the contents of the Urban Design Framework for land around Butts Grove Way, The Whaddons and Suffolk House, Huntingdon, as amended to reflect the content of the Annex to the report now submitted, be approved; and
- (b) that the Head of Planning Services be authorised to approve any minor consequential amendments to the text and illustrations after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transportation.

117. LAND SOUTH OF HIGH STREET RAMSEY

The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) outlining the responses received to consultation on the Urban Design Framework for land south of High Street, Ramsey.

Having considered the schedule of responses and amendments outlined in the appendices to the report, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the contents of the Urban Design Framework for land south of the High Street, Ramsey as amended to reflect the content of the Annex to the report now submitted, be approved; and
- (b) that the Head of Planning Services be authorised to approve any minor consequential amendments to the text and illustrations after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transportation.

118. LUMINUS GROUP - PROPOSED CHANGES TO MEMORANDUM AND ARTICLES

With the aid of a report by the Head of Legal and Estates consideration was given to a request from the Luminus Group to amend the Memorandum of Articles of Luminus Homes and Oak Foundation, to allow for the potential remuneration of Board Members.

Having noted the contents of the report, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the proposed amendment to Memorandum and Articles of Luminus Homes and Oak Foundation, to permit remuneration of Board Members, be approved in principle, subject in the case of the Oak Foundation to the consent of the Charity Commissioners also being obtained and in both instances to the precise wording being agreed by the Head of Legal and

Estates; and

- (b) that the determination of any future proposed amendments to the Memorandum and Articles of companies within the Luminus Group be delegated to the Head of Legal and Estates, after consultation with the Head of Housing and the Executive Councillor for Housing and Public Health.

119. PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE & METHOD OF OPERATIONS - COUNTRYSIDE GROUP

Further to Minute No. 07/114, the Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was attached proposed revised terms of reference and method of operation for a Countryside Joint Group.

Having considered the issues surrounding the proposals and in given the need to consider the outcome of a review of management arrangements for Leisure Centre Management Committees currently being undertaken and the need to achieve consistency between the arrangements, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that consideration of the matter be deferred pending further consideration in conjunction with arrangements for leisure facilities.

120. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to the financial affairs of a particular person (including the Authority holding that information).

121. NEW ACCOMMODATION - BUILDING A - OPTIONS REVIEW

Further to Minute No. 08/51 and with the assistance of a report by the New Accommodation Project Co-ordinator (a copy of which is appended in the Annex to the Minute Book) the Cabinet were updated on progress of the delivery of the new accommodation project.

Having considered options for the redevelopment of an area of land fronting St. Mary's Street and in noting the deliberations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) on the matter, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the disposal of a leasehold interest in Council owned land fronting St Mary's Street, Huntingdon to the Luminus Group for the provision of affordable housing be approved in principle; and

- (b) that the Chief Executive, after consultation with the Leader, be authorised to agree the final terms and conditions for the disposal.

Chairman