

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the Civic Suite 0.1A, the Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Thursday, 16 September 2010.

PRESENT: Councillor L M Simpson – Vice – Chairman in the Chair.

Councillors K J Churchill, D B Dew, J A Gray, A Hansard, C R Hyams, Mrs D C Reynolds and T V Rogers.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor I C Bates.

33. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 22nd July 2010 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

34. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Churchill declared a personal interest in Minute No 37 by virtue of his membership of Cambridgeshire County Council.

35. FINANCIAL STRATEGY

(Councillor J A Gray took his seat at 7.10pm during discussions on this item)

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 the present position in relation to the Council's financial forecast for the period up to 2018/2019 together with the deliberations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) thereon.

In considering the information contained in the report, Members have been informed of the need for sizeable reductions in the scale of spending and as a consequence potential changes to services. Members were further advised that the Council's financial position remains uncertain due to a number of factors including the level of reduction in government funding, the size of the Council's current deficit in relation to reducing revenue reserves and low Council Tax.

If no action were to be taken it was acknowledged that the total gap between income and expenditure could rise to over £8 million by the financial year 2014/15, Executive Councillors shared the view that radical decisions would need to be taken which would affect all services in some way and would change fundamentally the Council.

In discussing a timetable for preparing the budget and savings plans, Executive Councillors recognised the need to produce detailed objectives, consider the views of local residents, engage with Town and Parish Councils and involve the Overview and Scrutiny Panels and members generally in the process.

Having noted that the timetable for adoption and implementation of an updated Redundancy Policy and Voluntary Release Scheme and consequential technical issues relating to the Council's budget and accounts would be considered at next meeting of the Employment Panel, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the annuity basis for the calculation of Minimum Revenue Provision as set out in Annex C to the report now submitted be approved; and
- (b) that Council be requested to consider the contents of the report now submitted and the challenges that need to be addressed over the coming months.

36. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

(At this stage of the meeting Councillor J A Gray left the meeting – 7.30pm)

The Cabinet received and noted a report by the Head of People, Performance and Partnerships, (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which reviewed the Council's performance against the targets within the Corporate Plan. The report which included data and narrative on the achievement against targets for each of the Council's priority objectives had been considered also by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels whose comments were relayed to the Cabinet.

37. THE REVOCATION OF THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY - IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ADOPTED HUNTINGDONSHIRE CORE STRATEGY 2009 AND THE JOINT CAMBRIDGESHIRE APPROACH TO STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the recent revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy and the implications for the Council's Adopted Core Strategy.

Members were reminded that on 6th July 2010, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government had announced that Regional Strategies would be revoked with immediate effect. The revocation statement had been accompanied by new national planning guidance which clarified the status of adopted Local Development Documents. The guidance strongly advocated that planning authorities should continue to prepare and bring forward appropriate development plan documents (DPDs) and confirmed that adopted DPDs would continue to provide the statutory planning framework. In that respect, Members noted that the adopted Huntingdonshire Core Strategy would remain as the Council's primary

planning policy document.

Whilst the guidance stressed that local councils were best placed to assess the needs of Gypsies and Travellers and having referred to a recent consultation exercise forming part of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), Members noted that no decision would be made on the possible location of any potential future sites until further clarification had been received from the Government regarding the applicable legislative framework.

In discussing the implications for the County, Executive Councillors were advised of the work undertaken by the Cambridgeshire Authorities to review the current strategic policy position. Having considered the contents of a joint statement which sets out the authorities current position and the effects of the recession on the delivery of key development sites, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Government's revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy, its intention with regard to the revision of policy and its clear guidance regarding the need for Local Planning authorities to continue to prepare appropriate Development Plan Documents be noted.
- (b) that the retention of the adopted Huntingdonshire Core Strategy 2009 as the Council's primary planning policy document, in accordance with Government's guidance, be noted; and
- (c) that the joint statement made by the Cambridgeshire authorities with regard to the interim planning policy position for the Cambridge Sub-Region be endorsed.

38. FORMAT OF THE COUNCIL'S EXECUTIVE - THE CHOICE OF EXECUTIVE LEADER OR ELECTED MAYOR

The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) concerning the choice of executive arrangements for the District Council.

By way of background, Members were advised that the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 had introduced significant changes to the Leader and Cabinet system and had narrowed the choice of executive arrangements open to local authorities to -

- ◆ an elected Mayor and Cabinet appointed by him; or
- ◆ an Executive Leader appointed by the Council from its membership and a Cabinet appointed by that Leader.

Having been advised of the outcome of a consultation exercise on the choice of Leader or Mayor, which indicated a clear preference for an Executive Leader and in noting the views of the Democratic Structure Working Party on the matter, the Cabinet

RECOMMEND

that Council approves the proposals for a change in governance arrangements to an Executive Leader and Cabinet Executive, as set out in Appendix B of the report now submitted and in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

39. SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME

By way of a report by the Head of People, Performance and Partnerships (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were updated on progress made to date on the delivery of actions and targets set out in the Corporate Equality Policy Action Plan.

Having considered the information contained in the report, the content of a Single Equality Scheme, which combines the Council's equality scheme and policy and statutory schemes into one document and streamlines performance monitoring, and the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) on the matter, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the progress made with the Corporate Equality Action Plan be noted;
- (b) that the Single Equality Scheme and action plan as set out in the appendix to the report now submitted be approved; and
- (c) that the findings from the Equality Impact Assessments conducted in 2009/2010 summarised in appendix G be noted.

40. DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE WORKING GROUP

A report by the Structure Review Working Group was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) summarising the findings of a review by the Group on the membership of the Employment Panel and a proposal to introduce the title of Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen to past members of the Council and Honorary Freemen and Freewomen to local citizens.

In considering the Group's conclusions, Executive Councillors noted that the present arrangements for the Employment Panel and ELAG were cumbersome and offered reduced opportunity for constructive dialogue and concurred with the Group that they would benefit from a change in scheduling to introduce a period of 4 weeks between the meetings.

With regard to the introduction of honorary titles, the Cabinet were reminded that there was no formal recognition of the contribution that recipients have played in public service in Huntingdonshire. Having recognised the benefits of such awards, Executive Councillors saw no reason why they should not be introduced. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted and the recommendations of the Democratic Structure Review Working Group endorsed for submission to the Corporate Governance Panel.

Chairman