

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Thursday, 17 February 2011.

PRESENT: Councillor I C Bates – Chairman.

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

75. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 20th January 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

76. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillors I C Bates and K J Churchill declared personal interests in Minute No. 10/80 by virtue of their membership of Cambridgeshire County Council.

77. BUDGET 2011/12 AND MEDIUM TERM PLAN 2012 TO 2016

Further to Minute No. 10/53 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 the associated level of Council Tax for 2011/12, together with the deliberations of the Overview and Scrutiny (Economic Well-Being) Panel thereon.

In discussing the latest government grant figures, Members' attention was drawn to an increase in the Government Formula Grant (RSG) support of £73,000 in 2011/12 reducing to a loss of £8,000 in the 2012/13 provision. Members were advised that the New Homes Reward Grant for 2011/12 was £108,000 less than expected which was due to the Government not including the social housing supplement for the first year in advance of the use of more contemporary data.

With regard to the award of grants to voluntary organisations, Executive Councillors reiterated the Council's financial commitment to the voluntary sector until 2013/14. Members were advised that in the interim the Executive Councillor for Finance and Customer Services would be undertaking a review of the way in which the Council offers support to local voluntary organisations.

In discussing arrangements for CCTV, Members noted that immediate savings for 2011/12 could be achieved whilst still maintaining a substantial service and that discussions would continue

to seek to maintain the service in future years.

Following representations made to both the Council and Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) Members have been advised that by transferring resources from St Neots customer services centre during lower periods of demand, it would be possible to maintain a presence in Ramsey and Yaxley centres on two days per week.

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, the Cabinet

RECOMMENDED

- (a) that, subject to appropriate adjustments to Annexes B, C and D to reflect the final settlements for the Government Formula and New Homes Reward Grants, the proposed budget, Medium Term Plan and Financial Plan appended to the report now submitted be approved; and
- (b) that there be no increase in Council Tax for 2011/12, i.e. Band D charge will remain at £124.17.

78. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2011/12

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) and having considered a proposed Treasury Management Strategy for 2011/12, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the Council be recommended to approve:-

- the Treasury Management Strategy for 2011/12 as appended to the report now submitted; and
- the Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators for 2011/12.

79. ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN - ANNUAL REPORT

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 2009/10.

Members were advised that although energy and water costs were above average, these reflected the number of swimming pools managed by the Council. Achievements during 2009/10 had included completion of the Pathfinder House redevelopment and a further increase in the number of operational properties in the good category with 95% of the council's property assets graded as satisfactory or above compared to a national average of 70%.

RESOLVED

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

80. NEW LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN (LTP3)

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which described the key elements of Cambridgeshire County Council's proposed Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the period April 2011 onwards together with a statement specific to Huntingdonshire.

In discussing the contents of the report, Members have expressed concern over the County Council's ability to deliver and maintain the transport and highways infrastructure given the major reductions in integrated transport funding. Members' attention was drawn to the conclusions reached by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being). In that respect, the Cabinet shared the concerns of the Panel that investment in highway improvements was crucial to accommodate the anticipated growth in the District and to promote transport options in rural areas.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that Council be recommended to approve the District Statement for Huntingdonshire, as set out in the report now submitted, for inclusion in the Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan; and
- (b) that the Head of Planning Services be requested to inform the County Council of the District Council's concern with regard to the impact of reduced funding for the proposed LTP on the County's ability to deliver an improved transport infrastructure and of the need to pursue all possible alternative sources of funding including the Local Sustainable Transport Fund.

81. OPEN SPACE STRATEGY

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was attached a draft copy of the Open Space Strategy for Huntingdonshire 2011 – 2016 which had been produced to promote the environmental benefits of open space and would assist the planning process as an evidence based document when discussing section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy tariff with developers.

In discussing future priorities, the Executive Councillor for Environment and Information Technology reported that officers would be seeking to maximise opportunities for renewable energy on the

Council's land holdings, with the Strategy being used to inform future decisions.

Having noted the deliberations and conclusions reached by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) on the content of the strategy in relation to the maintenance of sites and the need to develop the concept of localism within the document, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the contents of the Open Space Strategy for Huntingdonshire 2011-2016 and supporting action plans be approved.

82. HUNTINGDON WEST AREA ADOPTION PROCEDURES

Following on from its submission to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) consideration was given to a report by the Head of Planning Service (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which summarised the Inspector's considerations and conclusions regarding the soundness of the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan (AAP).

The Cabinet were advised that the Inspector had issued his binding report which had found the AAP to be sound. The plan could therefore be adopted by Council as part of the Development Plan for the District. Having noted that the majority of changes to the plan had been proposed by the Council, either at the time of submission in April 2010 as a consequence of representations received or later following questions raised by the Inspector, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the Council be recommended to approved the Huntingdon West Area Action, as set out in the report now submitted, as part of the Development Plan for the district.

83. PLANNING CONSERVATION

(Councillor P M D Godfrey, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) and Councillor R J West, a Member of the Planning Conservation Working Group, were in attendance and spoke on this Item.)

A report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which summarised the findings of a study by the Panel's Planning Conservation Working Group regarding the performance of the Council's Planning Conservation Team.

With regard to the Panel's recommendations, the Cabinet noted that several of the proposals have been already implemented by the Planning Policy Service. In concurring with the Panel that the current process was working well, although some areas mostly relating to communication, pro-active support and, with the advent of the localism agenda, the potential roles that Members

themselves and town and parish councils can play in mediation and alerting the District council as to what is happening in their wards and parishes could be improved, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that, because of the particular importance of the listed buildings and the practicalities of their use as educational establishments, the Planning Division be requested to hold regular meetings with a representative of Hinchingsbrooke and Kimbolton Schools (and Abbey College, Ramsey if appropriate) with the aim of developing a good working relationship on conservation issues and planning future maintenance requirements and that Councillor R J West be nominated as an intermediary between the Division and each of the schools to attend (and potentially) chair those meetings;
- (b) that specific training be offered to town and parish councils in heritage and conservation issues to raise awareness locally on the subject and on the value of conservation character statements, buildings at risk register, etc.;
- (c) that town and parish councils be encouraged to work with the District Council on heritage and conservation issues by alerting the Council of any deterioration in the condition of listed buildings and unauthorised works to listed buildings or in conservation areas in their parishes;
- (d) that consideration be given to regular meetings between conservation officers and parish councils with a view to refreshing the training provided and in pursuance of recommendation (c) above;
- (e) that town and parish councils be encouraged where conservation groups or civic societies currently do not exist to seek the establishment of such bodies to promote an interest in the local heritage;
- (f) that ways of improving the District Councils website be explored to provide additional information on conservation issues and procedures;

- (g) that the Conservation Team be requested to publicise the availability of grants from potential sources to help owners of listed buildings fund the cost of maintenance and repairs;
- (h) that representations be made through the Local Government Association to alter the present arrangements for value added tax so that repairs and maintenance of listed buildings become zero rated, thereby reducing the cost of maintaining heritage assets; and
- (i) that officers be encouraged to use 'plain English' in their communications with the public to help in an understanding of complex conservation issues and explain what is required.

Chairman