

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, 23 June 2011.

PRESENT: Councillor N J Guyatt – Vice-Chairman in the Chair.

Councillors B S Chapman, B S Chapman, J A Gray, T V Rogers and T D Sanderson.

AN APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor J D Ablewhite.

14. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th May 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

16. CONSULTATION ON PLANNING FOR TRAVELLERS SITES BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT

By way of a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were invited to consider suggested responses to a series of questions posed in the Government's Planning for Traveller Sites' consultation paper.

Members were advised that the Government intends to replace the existing traveller planning circular with a new short, light-touch, single Planning Policy Statement for traveller sites and introduce measures to ensure "fair treatment" of those in traveller and settled communities.

In considering the deliberations reached by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) on the consultation paper Executive Councillors have concurred with the Panel that sustainability would differ between travellers' sites and other housing sites as travellers are a transient community.

In discussing the means by which the Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment would be undertaken, Executive Councillors have been acquainted with the challenge faced by the Planning Authority to define and assess local need and the problems experienced in the past with the robust evidence based approach.

Having noted that the Deputy Leader intended to personally respond to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on a number of related planning issues not covered by the consultation

paper, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted and the Council's response to the Government's proposals endorsed.

17. LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP - PROPOSED ENTERPRISE ZONE

With the assistance of a report by the Managing Director (Communications, Partnerships and Projects) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) Members were advised that the Greater Cambridge – Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) had selected the Alconbury Airfield site as their preferred option for an enterprise zone.

In acknowledging the benefits of having an enterprise zone in the District, Members were reminded that the site would be competing alongside 32 other national LEPs all hoping to be awarded one of the 10 zones being established by the Government.

The Cabinet were advised that should the bid be successful then its delivery would be aided by the use of a Local Development Order for the site, this would incentivise development in a way that met a range of locally specific policy objectives.

Finally having expressed their thanks to staff for their efforts in preparing the bid, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the contents of the report be noted and the selection of the Alconbury Airfield site as the preferred option for the Greater Cambridge, Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership area be supported; and
- (b) that the principle of preparing a Local Development Order for the site be supported and the Head of Planning Services requested to report back to a future meeting on the Order's content.

18. PRELIMINARY DRAFT COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY CHARGING SCHEDULE

By way of a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet was invited to consider the contents of a proposed Preliminary Draft Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule.

It was reported that the new scheme would put the Council in a more powerful position with regard to influencing where money from the CIL is spent. However, it would bring with it additional responsibilities including the establishment of an appropriate policy outlining the charges to be imposed, the process to be employed and monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure sound governance

arrangements. The draft schedule had been discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) arising from which had been suggested that a “plain English” version of the scheme be made available on the Council’s website.

In discussing the charging proposed, The Cabinet questioned the desirability of not charging for general industrial, storage and distribution. The Managing Director (Communities, Partnerships and Projects) advised Members that charges could only be set on the basis of viability and not policy and that the rates had been set after taking into account the viability of the business to pay the charge.

Having noted the timetable for consultation with the public, parish and town councils and other interested bodies and in agreeing that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) be given the opportunity to review the comments received prior to the final documents approval by the Cabinet, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the preliminary draft Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule be approved for consultation purposes; and
- (b) that the Head of Planning Services be authorised, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing, to make any minor consequential amendment to the text and supporting documentation.

19. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

Further to Minute No. 10/56 and by way of a report by the Head of Housing Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered the content of the draft Homelessness Strategy.

In so doing, Members were reminded of the statutory requirement under the Homelessness Act, 2002 for local authorities to carry out a review of homelessness within their areas and to formulate and publish a homelessness strategy based on the results of that review.

Having noted the main aims and objectives of the strategy, the inclusion of the financial resources to meet the action plan and the responses received to a consultation exercise on the document

RESOLVED

that full Council be recommended to endorse the Homelessness Strategy.

20. SHARED HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY SERVICES

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Housing Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered a proposal to establish a shared Home Improvement Agency (HIA) Service with Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire

District Councils.

Having considered the issues involved in managing the service, the scope for achieving efficiency savings and in noting that the report would be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) on 5th July 2011, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the establishment of a Shared Home Improvement Agency with Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils be approved in principle;
- (b) that the Managing Director (Communities, Partnerships and Projects) be authorised, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Resources and Customer Services and the Managing Director (Resources) to approve the establishment of the shared service; and
- (c) that any comments received from the Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) on the proposal be considered by the Executive Councillor for Resources and Customer Services.

21. ONE LEISURE FINANCE

A report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social and Economic Well-Being) was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which summarised the initial findings of the One Leisure Working Group established by the Panels to review the financial performance of One Leisure and to make recommendations on the services' future strategic direction.

Members were advised that although the study was in its early stages, certain issues regarding the rising cost of IT network and helpdesk services had been highlighted as requiring further discussion. Having acknowledged the various elements of the service provided by the IT division and its use in the day to day running of the leisure centres, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted and the Executive Councillor for Organisational Development be requested to undertake a review of the Council's IT costs, to include the basis upon which the IT Network Service is re-charged to users.

22. USE OF CONSULTANTS

Consideration was given to a report by the Working Group appointed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) to undertake a review and make recommendations on the Council's use of consultants including the criteria used in their appointment. A copy of the report is appended in the Minute Book.

In considering the content of the report and recommendations proposing improvements to the Council's current arrangements, the Cabinet defined the term consultant as being "someone who brings expertise into the organisation where it is lacking".

Having recognised that in some service areas the use of consultants was a necessity such as planning decision appeals, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the Managing Director (Resources), after consultation with the Executive Leader, Deputy Leader and the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being), be requested to oversee the implementation of the Panel's recommendations where practicable, and to report back thereon to a future meeting.

23. CONSULTATION PROCESSES

A report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which summarised the findings of their study on the Council's consultation and engagement policies, procedures and practices.

The Cabinet were informed that the study had emerged following concerns raised by Members of the public over the perceived weaknesses in the procedures employed by the Council during recent consultation and in response to a number of adverse reactions from the public to decisions taken following public consultation exercises. In considering a series of recommendations for each area assessed, the Cabinet emphasised the need to consider them carefully given their potential impact on staff time and resources. Having referred to the benefits of working with neighbouring authorities to build a consultation database of information, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted and the Managing Director (Resources) requested to undertake investigations as to how the current consultation and engagement process could be improved and to report back thereon to the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being).

24. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

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.

25. SENIOR OFFICERS' PANEL - CABINET NOTIFICATION

Councillor N J Guyatt reported on the outcome of a review of the senior management structure undertaken by the Senior Officers' Panel. In view of the impending retirement of the Chief Executive on 31st August 2011, the Panel had recommended that two new posts of Managing Director (Resources) and Managing Director (Communities, Partnerships and Projects) be established for a fixed period to March 2012, subject to a review of the progress of the new arrangements by the Executive Leader in October 2011.. Having been acquainted with the requirement of paragraph 4 (e) of the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Cabinet confirmed that there was no material or well founded objection to the Panel's proposals.

26. REPRESENTATION ON ORGANISATIONS 2011/12

Consideration was given to a report by Head of Legal and Democratic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the Council's representation on a variety of organisations/partnerships, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that, with the exception of the following, nominations be made to the organisations as set out in the Appendix to the report now submitted:

Councillor R West – Cambridgeshire's Older People's Partnership Board;

Councillor P M D Godfrey – Recycling in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Board; and

- (b) that, in the event that changes are required by the Council's representative in the course of the year, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, after consultation with the Deputy Leader and Vice-Chairman of the Cabinet be authorised to nominate alternative representatives as necessary.

Chairman