

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the The Civic Suite, 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, Cambs, PE29 3TN on Thursday, 19 July 2012.

PRESENT: Councillor J D Ablewhite – Chairman.
Councillors B S Chapman, J A Gray,
N J Guyatt, T D Sanderson and D M Tysoe.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors P J Downes and R J West for
item No 22.

20. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 21st June 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

21. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

22. NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUMS - PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF LOCAL JOINT COMMITTEES IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE - CONSULTATION RESPONSES

(Councillors P J Downes and R J West, (Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) were in attendance and spoke on this item.)

Further to Minute No. 11/112, the Cabinet considered a report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) outlining the responses received to the consultation on the proposed boundaries, composition, voting and constitution for new local Joint Committees (LJC's) in Huntingdonshire.

It was reported that the consultation exercise had involved Town and Parish Councils, District and relevant County Members, Partners of the existing Neighbourhood Forums and members of the public with an interest in the existing forums.

The Executive Leader outlined the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel in producing the report and invited Councillor Downes to speak on the proposals. In addressing the Cabinet, Councillor Downes expressed his view that the LJC's would be creating an additional, costly, undemocratic level of decision making and questioned what funding would be devolved and to whom the LJC's would be accountable.

Councillor West explained that the focus of the proposals was to build upon and enhance the existing Neighbourhood Forums and it was not the intention to introduce another level of council committees. He

stressed that by having all levels of local government present at the meetings there would be an opportunity for them to discuss joint working and to determine the most appropriate level for functions to be performed. Reference was made to a meeting between Officers and Members from both the County and District Councils on the proposals. Although some concern had been voiced over the level of officer support that would be required, the County Council had agreed to consider what County decisions could be delegated and had given their support to the new structure being trialled.

The Deputy Executive Leader then provided further information on a possible pilot in the Norman Cross County Division over a 12 month period. He explained that limiting the trial to a small area rather than the nine LJC's areas would be more manageable. It was his intention that the existing Neighbourhood Forums would continue during this period in those areas that had indicated a wish for them to remain but that their format would be reviewed.

Having expressed their thanks to the Working Group for their efforts in producing a thorough and comprehensive report, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Constitution for Local Joint Committees in Huntingdonshire attached as Appendix A to the report now submitted be adopted;
- (b) that the County Council and relevant Parish Councils involved in the Pilot scheme be consulted on adopting the constitution;
- (c) that a pilot Local Joint Committee be trialled in the Norman Cross County division for 12 months period;
- (d) that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) be requested to undertake a review of the pilot scheme during its twelve months of operation; and
- (e) that the Executive Deputy Leader be authorised to review urgently the format of the existing Neighbourhood Forums, with a view to them continuing during the trial in those areas that have expressed a wish that they remain.

23. NEW HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the intended consultation and engagement process for the preparation of the new Huntingdonshire Local Plan 2036. The report had been considered also by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) whose comments were relayed to the Cabinet.

Having welcomed an extended strategy and policy consultation period (stage 2) and in concurring with the Overview and Scrutiny panel that the Peterborough Evening Telegraph should be included in the list of

local media to be engaged to disseminate the proposals, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the progress made to date on preparing the new Local Plan, the nature of the summarised responses to the initial non-statutory Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation and the anticipated next steps in the consultation and plan making process be noted; and
- (b) that Officers be authorised to proceed to the Strategy and Consultation Stage, using appropriate consultation material the exact content of which to be agreed by the Head of Planning Services and Housing Strategy after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing.

24. VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING 2013/2014 ONWARDS

Further to Minute No. 11/78, consideration was given to a report by the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the allocation of funding to support the voluntary sector in Huntingdonshire from April 2013. The report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) whose comments were relayed to the Cabinet.

By way of background, the Cabinet were reminded of their previous decision to set an indicative voluntary sector budget of £273,000 for 2013/2014 and to make available a community chest of £27,000 to help local community projects.

Attention was drawn to the current procedure for agreeing financial support together with the planned criteria for determining future applications. The new funding model would be a grant based system, which would be more flexible than the previous commissioning model. In that respect, Executive Councillors supported a suggestion that future financial support should be tapered to ensure voluntary organisations find match funding for any grant that they receive from the Council in the final year of the three year period. Furthermore, Members were of the opinion that match funding should be extended to applications to the Community Chest award scheme subject to the amount requested being of such a value to attract such funds.

With regard to the allocation of Community Chest funds, Members reiterated that the process should be straight forward and applications limited to local organisations who require a small injection of revenue up to £5,000.

Members noted that the new funding process would be open to the whole voluntary sector and not just those organisations that currently hold commission agreements with the Council. Having acknowledged the work of the voluntary sector and in reiterating the Council's commitment to supporting them, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that a move to a three year period for funding voluntary sector organisations be supported;
- (b) that the determination of grant applications remain with the Executive Councillors for Healthy and Active Communities and Resources;
- (c) that provision be made to allow some applicants to make presentations in support of their submissions;
- (d) that a simple bid/check/allocation process be introduced for Community Chest funding;
- (e) that those in receipt of funds via the Community Chest be not eligible for reconsideration for a period of two years;
- (f) that a introduction of a tapering process and a requirement for match funding be supported; and
- (g) that the level of Community Chest funding be set at a maximum of £5,000 per application.

25. LOCALISATION OF BUSINESS RATES

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 background to the introduction of the rates retention scheme designed to encourage Councils to be self-sufficient and to help them support local jobs, growth and protect the most vulnerable places.

Members were informed that the proposals focus on the distribution of business rate income rather than changes to the system of business rate taxation. It was reported that the localisation of business was not intended to change the resources available to authorities in 2013/2014 but it would, over time, result in a higher proportion of resources going to growth areas.

Attention was drawn to an option in the scheme for local authorities to come together to form local pools for business rates income. In considering the benefits of forming a local pool with the County Council and other Cambridgeshire districts, Members agreed that any arrangements should be based on ensuring that no authority loses out. Having noted the deliberations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) thereon, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the planned basis for the localisation of Business Rates be noted; and
- (b) that the Department for Communities and Local Government be advised of the Council's interest in pooling with the County Council and other Cambridgeshire Districts on the understanding that the governance arrangements is based on no Authority

losing from pooling and noting that there would be the opportunity to review that decision later in the year.

26. REVENUE MONITORING: 2011/12 OUTTURN AND 2012/13 REVENUE BUDGET

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 final outturn for revenue expenditure for 2011/12 and the variations between the original outturn budget for that year.

Executive Councillors were pleased to note that as a result of under spending the Council had been successful in saving an additional £2.5 million in revenue reserves. The reduction was mainly due to service managers implementing saving plans and holding posts wholly or partly vacant where feasible. Having expressed their thanks to staff for their efforts in achieving the budgetary outcomes, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the spending variations for the revenue budget 2011/12 be noted;
- (b) that the present position in terms of the 2012/13 outturn be noted; and
- (c) that the position on debts collected and written-off as set out in Annex C to the report now submitted be noted.

27. CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2011/12 OUTTURN AND 2012/13 BUDGET

A report by the Head of Financial Services was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) detailing the outturn for capital expenditure in 2011/12 and adjustments for 2012/13 budget.

Having noted the variations in the programme and in seeking clarification over the circumstances surrounding the loss of Section 106 agreement income for the One Leisure St Ives Outdoor Centre, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the report be received and expenditure variations noted.

28. WASTE COLLECTION POLICIES

The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was attached a proposed waste collection policies document which brings together the Council's 29 policies relating to waste into a single document.

The document has been discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) arising from which some concern had been expressed over the prohibition of stickers on the bin given

the opportunity to convey messages such as local speed restrictions. In stressing that they were not in favour of notices being attached to bins, Executive Councillors acknowledged that a local speedwatch group were currently trialling a pilot initiative in Huntingdonshire and that their findings would be reported to the Waste Collections Working Group.

In response to the Overview and Scrutiny's comment over the use of purple stickers on wheeled bins to identify properties where residents require assistance, Executive Councillors were of the opinion that there was no evidence that this identifies vulnerable residents. Furthermore, work would be commencing soon on the introduction of in-cab technology to enable collection crews to identify such properties so the need for purple stickers would be removed.

Having noted that the Panel would be considering ways of improving general communications in relation to waste collection, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the contents of the Waste Collection Policies Document be endorsed.

29. GROWING AWARENESS - A PLAN FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT ANNUAL REVIEW 2011/12

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Environmental Management (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Cabinet considered the annual review of the Council's Environment Strategy for Huntingdonshire – "Growing Awareness – A Plan for Our Environment". The Strategy sets out a framework for the Council to make continual, measurable progress in reducing its own resource use and in stimulating environmental improvement for the wider District.

Members were reminded of the various energy saving schemes completed in 2011/2012 including the installation of Photovoltaic (PV) solar panels at Eastfield House and were advised of the project's planned to 2012/13.

Having noted the views expressed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) on the document and in congratulating Officers for the work to date on the Environment Strategy, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the contents of the report and the significant progress towards the implementation of growing awareness be noted;
- (b) that the role of the Strategy as the main means for the Council to monitor and improve its own environmental performance, whilst acting as a community leader, to encourage improved environmental practice in the District as a whole, be supported.

30. RISK REGISTER

By way of a report by the Audit and Risk Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet was reminded that a register had been developed to identify corporate risk. Six risks had been identified as very high or red which needed to be brought to the attention of the Cabinet under the Risk Management Strategy.

In considering the information contained in the report, Executive Councillors were advised of the options available to manage the risks to reduce their likelihood and severity.

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted and the action proposed approved within existing resources.

31. POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

By way of a report by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were acquainted with the background to the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

Members were advised that the Act would introduce significant changes in police governance and accountability, in particular replacing the Police Authorities with directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners. An essential part of this would be the establishment of a Police and Crime Panel primarily to scrutinise the commissioner.

In reviewing the Panel's arrangements and terms of reference, Executive Councillors noted that the Panel would consist of representatives from the seven Cambridgeshire Local Authorities plus one co-optee. Having noted the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) on the latter, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the establishment of the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel as a Joint Committee of the local authorities, as defined in Section 28 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 be supported;
- (b) that the Executive Leader be appointed as the District Council's representative on the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) as his substitute;
- (c) that the Panel arrangements appended to the report now submitted be approved and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services authorised to finalise the precise wording as necessary.

Chairman