

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, 21 March 2013.

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: Councillor T V Rogers and A H Williams.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor I C Bates for Minute No. 109.

101. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 14th February 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

102. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor B S Chapman declared a non pecuniary interest in Minute No.103 as a Director of the Chapman Property Partnership.

103. LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT 2012 - CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Further to Minute Nos. 76 and 77 and by way of a report by the Head of Customer Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were acquainted with further changes to legislation resulting in the need to consider amendments to the schemes for Council Tax Support and Council Tax exemption arrangements. Particular attention was drawn to the need to introduce a Council Tax Discretionary Rate Relief Policy, amend the Council's fraud arrangements and the Council Tax technical reforms by 1st April 2013.

The document has been discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) arising from which some concern had been expressed over the 6 weeks occupation period for renewal applications for Class C discount. Executive Councillors were of the opinion that there was no evidence to support an increase to 3 months. Mention was made of the reoccupation rules for other discounts all of which had been set at 6 weeks. Having stressed the need to encourage empty properties back into use as quickly as possible, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that with effect from 1st April 2013, the Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy be adopted and the Head of Customer Services authorised to determine claims under the Policy;
- (b) that the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Detection of Fraud Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2013 be adopted to allow for the investigation, prosecution and recovery of alleged Council Tax Support fraud and the Head of Customer Services authorised to investigate fraud and implement these regulations;
- (c) that the Council Tax Local Class C discounts scheme be amended to provide for a renewal application to require at least 6 weeks occupation before new Class C discount can be awarded; and
- (d) that the Council's Scheme of Delegation be varied to reflect the above.

104. HOUSING BENEFIT DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENT POLICY

By way of a report by the Head of Customer Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Cabinet was invited to consider the content of an updated Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) Policy. The Policy had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) whose comments were relayed to the Cabinet.

Having been advised that the Policy had been updated to take into account recent welfare reforms and an increase in the level of grant awarded to each local authority by the Department for Work and Pensions, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the Discretionary Housing Benefit Policy, as appended to the report now submitted, be approved and implemented with effect from 1st April 2013.

105. HUNTINGDONSHIRE INFRASTRUCTURE BUSINESS PLAN 2013/14

Further to Minute No. 12/51 and by means of a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were acquainted with progress being made with the implementation of a Community Infrastructure Levy for Huntingdonshire and a proposed Infrastructure Business Plan. The Plan had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) whose comments were relayed to the Cabinet.

In so doing, Members attention was drawn to the list of infrastructure projects identified within the report and the multi-area projects necessary to deliver the Core Strategy. Members discussed the

classification of projects particularly in relation to education and cemetery provision. In response to which the Cabinet were advised that the Business Plan identified the infrastructure requirements required to support all growth within the District to 2026. Projects would subsequently be prioritised with funding being targeted to those projects identified as critical.

Having been advised that there would be an annual review of the process, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Business Plan 2013/14 be approved;
- (b) that the Assistant Director, Environment, Growth and Planning, in conjunction with the Executive Councillor for Planning and Housing Strategy, be authorised to make any minor amendments necessary to the plan prior to publication on the Council website;
- (c) that the banking of CIL receipts during 2013/14 financial year be approved with the exception of funding the Huntingdon West Link Road scheme;
- (d) that the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy be requested to liaise with the Heads of Finance and of Legal & Democratic Services to agree a 'service level agreement' for utilising on release of any CIL receipts for infrastructure project delivery; and
- (e) that the draft Regulation 123 List for public consultation, as outlined in the report now submitted, be approved subject to any minor amendments necessary as authorised by the Assistant Director, Environment, Growth and Planning in conjunction with the Executive Councillor for Planning and Housing Strategy.

106. DOCUMENT CENTRE REVIEW

(Councillors T V Rogers and A Williams (Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) were in attendance and spoke on this Item.)

A report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which summarised the findings of an extensive review by a Panel Working Group into the operation and financial costs of the District Council's Document Centre. The Study had involved discussions with Officers from Legal and Democratic Services, IMD, One Leisure Service and the Planning Division.

In considering the information in the report, Executive Councillors were of the opinion that some of the Panel's recommendations

including the use of multi-functional devices, printing requirements, Councillors' mail and the progress of the Electronic Document Management project were managerial issues and should be dealt with as such. Other matters discussed included marketing of the service with other public service authorities and procurement procedures which Members felt were being adhered to.

Having expressed their thanks to the Working Group for their efforts in producing a thorough report and in noting the appointment of Councillor A H Williams as the Panel's Document Centre Champion, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the report of the Working Group be received and the Managing Director, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Resources and the Panel's Document Centre Champion, be requested to consider the Group's recommendations.

107. SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP

The report of the Safety Advisory Group held on 27th February 2013 was received.

108. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information which is subject to an obligation of confidentiality.

109. SETTLEMENT OF OUTSTANDING LEGAL PROCEEDINGS RELATING TO A STAFFING MATTER

Consideration was given to a report by the Managing Director and the Assistant Managing Director, Finance and Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Annex to the Minute Book) regarding the settlement of outstanding legal proceedings relating to a staffing matter. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the action taken be endorsed.

Chairman