

A meeting of the **CABINET** will be held in **CIVIC SUITE 0.1A, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN** on **THURSDAY, 21 MARCH 2013** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

APOLOGIES


**Contact
(01480)**

1. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 4)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 14th February 2013.

**Mrs H J Taylor
388008**

2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary, non-disclosable pecuniary or non pecuniary interests in relation to any Agenda item. See Notes below.

3. LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT 2012 - CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS (Pages 5 - 12)

To consider a report by the Head of Customer Services.

**Ms J Barber
388105**

4. HOUSING BENEFIT DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENT POLICY (Pages 13 - 22)

To consider the contents of a new Discretionary Housing Payment Policy.

**Ms J Barber
388105**

5. HUNTINGDONSHIRE INFRASTRUCTURE BUSINESS PLAN 2013/14 (Pages 23 - 32)

To receive an update on the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy in Huntingdonshire and to comment on the Huntingdonshire Business Plan 2013/14.

**Ms C Burton
388274**

(Copies of the Business Plan have been provided to Members of the Cabinet only).

6. DOCUMENT CENTRE REVIEW (Pages 33 - 38)

To consider a report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being).

**Mrs C Bulman
388234
A Roberts
388015**

7. SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP (Pages 39 - 44)

To receive the report of the Safety Advisory Group held on 27th

Mrs A Jerrom

February 2013.

388009

8. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

To resolve:-

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to the financial affairs of any particular person, including the authority holding that information and/or to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter.

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

To consider a report by the Managing Director and the Assistant Director, Finance and Resources – to follow.

**M Sharp
388300**

Dated this 13 day of March 2013



Head of Paid Service

Notes

A. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

(1) *Members are required to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and unless you have obtained dispensation, cannot discuss or vote on the matter at the meeting and must also leave the room whilst the matter is being debated or voted on.*

(2) *A Member has a disclosable pecuniary interest if it*

*(a) relates to you, or
(b) is an interest of -*

- (i) your spouse or civil partner; or*
- (ii) a person with whom you are living as husband and wife; or*
- (iii) a person with whom you are living as if you were civil partners*

and you are aware that the other person has the interest.

(3) *Disclosable pecuniary interests includes -*

(a) any employment or profession carried out for profit or gain;

- (b) any financial benefit received by the Member in respect of expenses incurred carrying out his or her duties as a Member (except from the Council);*
- (c) any current contracts with the Council;*
- (d) any beneficial interest in land/property within the Council's area;*
- (e) any licence for a month or longer to occupy land in the Council's area;*
- (f) any tenancy where the Council is landlord and the Member (or person in (2)(b) above) has a beneficial interest; or*
- (g) a beneficial interest (above the specified level) in the shares of any body which has a place of business or land in the Council's area.*

B. Other Interests

(4) If a Member has a non-disclosable pecuniary interest or a non-pecuniary interest then you are required to declare that interest, but may remain to discuss and vote.

(5) A Member has a non-disclosable pecuniary interest or a non-pecuniary interest where -

- (a) a decision in relation to the business being considered might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing of you or a member of your family or a person with whom you have a close association to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of the council tax payers, rate payers or inhabitants of the ward or electoral area for which you have been elected or otherwise of the authority's administrative area, or*
- (b) it relates to or is likely to affect any of the descriptions referred to above, but in respect of a member of your family (other than specified in (2)(b) above) or a person with whom you have a close association*

and that interest is not a disclosable pecuniary interest.

Please contact Mrs H Taylor, Senior Democratic Services Officer, Tel No. 01480 388008/e-mail Helen.Taylor@huntingdonshire.gov.uk /e-mail: if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Cabinet.

Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the District Council's website – www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk (under Councils and Democracy).

**If you would like a translation of
Agenda/Minutes/Reports or would like a**

large text version or an audio version
please contact the Democratic Services Manager
and we will try to accommodate your needs.

Emergency Procedure

In the event of the fire alarm being sounded and on the instruction of the Meeting Administrator, all attendees are requested to vacate the building via the closest emergency exit.

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, PE29 3TN on Thursday, 14 February 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 .

94. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 24th January 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

95. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

96. BUDGET 2013/14 AND MEDIUM TERM PLAN 2014 TO 2018

(Councillor T V Rogers, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel) (Economic Well-Being) was in attendance and spoke on this item).

Further to Minute No.12/72 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 Medium Term Plan, the budget and associated level of Council Tax for 2013/14.

Attention was drawn to the latest government grant figures, Executive Councillors noted that the level of Revenue Support Grant and retained Business Rates was as predicted but that two new specific grants have been awarded which would marginally increase the revenue reserves by £226k.

In discussing the contents' of the report, Members' attention was drawn to the conclusions reached by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being). In that respect, Members concurred with the Panel that Council Tax levels should be increased by £4.67p in order to meet unavoidable inflation and to preserve the Council's reserves and valued services as far as possible both this year and in the future.

Executive Councillors were advised that the overall budget was 4.8% higher than the original budget for 2012/13 as a result of multiple factors with inflation being a major contributor. Reference also was made to the introduction of more efficient working practices and the need to constantly strive to find efficiencies. In that respect, Executive Councillors were advised that the Panel would be

examining, in detail, the future budget process once the current budget has been completed.

Particular attention was drawn to the grant allocation to Town and Parish Councils towards their loss in income following the introduction of the Government's Local Council Tax Support Scheme. In noting the Panel's concerns over the abuse of the grant by some Councils, the Cabinet has reiterated that similar grants in future years could not be guaranteed.

In acknowledging the contributions of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and having thanked Councillor Rogers for his attendance, Executive Councillors suggested that the Chairmen of the relevant Panel be invited to attend future Cabinet meetings when an item from their Panel is being considered.

Having noted that the business community supported the proposed Council Tax increase at a recent consultation meeting, the Cabinet

RECOMMENDED

- (a) that, subject to appropriate adjustments to Annex D to reflect the final settlements in relation to special and specific grants, the proposed budget, Medium Term Plan and Financial Plan appended to the report now submitted be approved; and
- (b) that an increase of £4.67 in Council Tax, representing a level of £133.18 for a Band D property for 2013/14 be approved.

97. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2013/14

By way of a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet was invited to consider the contents of the Treasury Management Strategy for 2013/14. The Strategy had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) whose comments were relayed to the Cabinet.

Particular attention was drawn to a new element of the Strategy which allows the Council to provide loan finance to local organisations that can support Council services or to organisations where the Council may make a margin on the loan subject to adequate safeguards. Having been advised that discussion on the criteria for such loans would be considered at the Treasury Management Advisory Group and that each loan would require Cabinet approval, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that subject to appropriate adjustments to the Planned Borrowing Table as a consequence of the final settlement in relation to special and specific grants, the Council be recommended to approve:-

- ◆ the Treasury Management Strategy for 2013/14; and
- ◆ the Treasury Management Indicators and Prudential Indicators for 2013/14.

98. PROCURING A GREEN DEAL PARTNER RELATIONSHIP FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Further to Minute No. 12/40 and by way of a report by the Head of Environmental Management (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were acquainted with the background to a proposed Green Deal Partnership Scheme for Cambridgeshire aimed at improving the energy efficiency of homes and commercial buildings across the County.

The Executive Councillor for Environment explained that the Home Energy Act required all local authorities to actively promote and report on local Green Deal activity in their area whilst also playing a lead role in its delivery. Members were advised that the most effective way of achieving this locally would be through a single Cambridgeshire brand establishing a partnership relationship with a fully accredited Green Deal provider.

In discussing a business case for a countywide scheme, Members' attention was drawn to the conclusions reached by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) on the matter. In that respect, Executive Councillors concurred with the Panel that the Provider should be selected on the basis of their ability to deliver high quality energy serving measures in a responsible way that meets the needs of customers. Having also supported the Panel's view that safeguards need to be put in place to ensure that the scheme does not operate in a way that might damage the Council's reputation, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the establishment of a Green Deal Partnership Scheme for Cambridgeshire be approved subject to detailed approval of a Memorandum of Understanding between the local authorities involved at Public Service Board;
- (b) that a procurement exercise and the subsequent award of contract(s) to one or more Green Deal Providers be approved to be let on a Countywide basis and in collaboration with Cambridgeshire Local Authorities;
- (c) that the Head of Paid Service and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, be authorised to negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding governing joint working and to enter into a contract with the chosen Green Deal Provider, after consultation with Executive Councillor for the Environment; and
- (d) that the Head of Paid Service be requested to clarify the terms under which the Council could withdraw from

the Partnership should the implemented scheme not be meeting its objectives.

99. DELEGATED POWERS - ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT

The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding a series of proposed amendments to the powers delegated to Officers in respect of the enforcement of environmental crime such as littering, fly tipping and abandoned vehicles.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the proposed delegated powers for environmental enforcement, appended to the report now submitted be approved and the scheme of delegation amended accordingly.

100. ST NEOTS RAILWAY STATION FOOTBRIDGE

(The Chairman announced that he proposed to admit the following urgent item in accordance with Section 100B (3) and (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 given the need to ensure the contract for the provision of the footbridge at St Neots Railway Station can proceed)

By way of a report by the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were acquainted with the background to a request for a capital contribution towards the costs of a new footbridge at St Neots Railway Station.

Members were advised that the proposed footbridge was a critical element of the new infrastructure for St Neots, providing an important link for pedestrians and cyclists travelling between the St Neots Expansion area, the railway station and the rest of the town. It was reported that a renegotiation of the BCIS index had resulted in a reduction in the Section 106 funding and the cost of the original project, initiated in 2005/06 had increased. In order for the project to proceed any additional funding would need to be financed by the District Council as the contributions from the County Council and the developer, Network Rail, were fixed. Given that no specific schemes have been identified to proceed from the Town Centre Developments capital provision of £290,000 and a number of efficiencies have been identified in the 2013/14 revenue budget for Planning Services, the Cabinet

RECOMMENDED

that the Council approves a capital contribution of £316,069 towards the St Neots Rail Footbridge project to be funded by way of a transfer of £290,000 from the capital provision for Town Centre Developments and £26,000 from the Planning Services revenue budget.

Chairman

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
(ECONOMIC WELL-BEING)
CABINET**

7 March 2013

21 March 2013

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT 2012
CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS
(Report by Head of Customer Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Cabinet recently approved the introduction of the local Council Tax Support scheme and technical reforms to the Council Tax exemption arrangements. Following further updates of legislation through statutory instruments, members need to consider some consequential amendments to these schemes.
- 1.2 There is a requirement to introduce a Council Tax discretionary relief policy, amend the Council's Fraud arrangements and make a slight amendment to the Council Tax technical reforms.

2 COUNCIL TAX DISCRETIONARY RELIEF POLICY

- 2.1 The Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 2012, gives local authorities the discretion to reduce the amount of Council Tax a person has to pay. This is different legislation to that which requires an authority to implement a local Council Tax Support scheme from April 2013.
- 2.2 However, as part of the requirements for introducing a localised Council Tax Support scheme, each local authority must state the procedure by which a person can apply for a discretionary relief under Section 13A (1) (c) of the 1992 Act.
- 2.3 The cost of any reductions made under Section 13A (1) (c) are fully borne by Huntingdonshire District Council and not the precepting authorities.

3 AIMS OF THE POLICY

- 3.1 The new Council Tax Support scheme introduced from April 2013 is similar to the previous Council Tax Benefit scheme in that awards are means tested and based on the applicant's income, capital and family make up.
- 3.2 A reduction under Section 13A (1) (c) is completely discretionary and any reduction allowed will be determined on a case-by-case basis taking into account the individual circumstances of the tax payer.
- 3.3 A Section 13A reduction would be considered only in exceptional circumstances where the tax payer is unable to meet the legal obligation to pay their Council Tax liability and they have taken all reasonable steps to resolve the situation themselves.
- 3.4 The policy, shown at Appendix A, has been designed to ensure that the decision making process will be consistent and fair.

4 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT – FRAUD INVESTIGATIONS & PROSECUTIONS

- 4.1 The Council's Fraud Team currently investigate all matters of reported Council Tax Fraud as part of the Councils function as an agent for the Department for Work Pensions in the administration of this benefit. These investigations relate to offences contrary to the Social Security Administration Act 1992 as amended and the Act also provides for authority to obtain information from various information sources such as employers, utility providers and the banking sector.
- 4.2 From April 2013 with the introduction of a localised Council Tax Support scheme the offences and authority to investigate Council Tax Benefit will end. The Government has provided legislation and regulations to substitute offences and authority to investigate and obtain information in relation to Council Tax Support to replace those previously provided under the Social Security Administration Act 1992.

5 THE NEW FRAUD REGULATIONS

- 5.1 The Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Detection of Fraud and Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2013 provides details on the new types of offences that may occur under the localised Council Tax Support Scheme operated by HDC, and the authority for HDC to investigate and prosecute those matters. The regulations also allow for the imposition of a range of financial penalties as well as prosecution.
- 5.2 The estimate of loss of around £60k per annum in fraud from the localised scheme, even taking into account the 10% reduction in expenditure, will still need to be addressed and investigated.
- 5.3 Cabinet needs to formally adopt the new Regulations to enable the Fraud Team will to have effective authority to investigate alleged fraud and allow the criminal remedy to prosecute or impose penalties where fraud is identified.

6 COUNCIL TAX REFORMS - AMENDMENT

- 6.1 Under the Council Tax Exemption rules, the current process allows a Class C exemption for unoccupied properties for six months. Should the property be occupied for a period of six weeks, and subsequently becomes vacant, a new six month exemption may be applied.
- 6.2 Members approved a local discretionary discount scheme to reduce the void period to one month. However, as part of the discretionary discounts scheme we need to set a timescale corresponding to the previous rules to ensure that renewal applications for discount are only able to be considered after an occupation period of six weeks. Otherwise, people might occupy for just one night and be able to qualify for another month's discount.

7 RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 That Members:
- (a) Note the contents of this report;
 - (b) Adopt the Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy with effect from 1 April 2013 and authorise the Head of Customer Services to determine claims

under the policy and the Council's scheme of delegation be amended accordingly.

- (c) Adopt the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Detection of Fraud and Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2013 to allow for the investigation, prosecution and recovery of alleged Council Tax Support fraud when these Regulations become law and the Head of Customer Services be authorised to investigate fraud and implement these regulations and the Council's scheme of delegation be amended accordingly.
- (d) Amend the Council Tax Local Class C discounts scheme to provide for a renewal application to require at least six weeks occupation before a new Class C discount can be awarded.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Local Government Finance Act (LGFA) 1992 as amended by the LGFA 2012.
Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Detection of Fraud and Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2013 (Draft)
The Social Security Administration Act 1992
HDC Benefits Fraud Prosecution Policy 2010
Cabinet reports 13 December 2012

Contact Officer: Julia Barber – Julia.Barber@Huntingdonshire.gov.uk
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HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL COUNCIL TAX DISCRETIONARY RELIEF POLICY

1. Background

- 1.1 Section 13A(1)(c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 2012 gives Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) discretionary powers to reduce the amount of Council Tax a person has to pay. It can be used for individual cases or classes of case. HDC has not specified any class of case in which liability is to be reduced, but will consider claims on an individual basis.
- 1.2 The cost of awarding any such discounts is fully borne by HDC.

2. Statement of objectives

- 2.1 The Council will only consider an application to use its discretionary powers to reduce the amount of Council Tax due, in exceptional circumstances. In doing so, regard will be given to the following:
- financial and/or personal circumstances
 - steps taken by the applicant to resolve the situation themselves

3. Applying for a discretionary reduction

- 3.1 All applications must be made in writing, or by electronic communication, by the taxpayer or someone authorised to act on their behalf. This should set out all of the circumstances on which the application is based.
- 3.2 Applications may be accepted in the current financial year and up to three months after, or within three months of an amended bill being issued as a result of a change in valuation band.
- 3.3 The Council may request any reasonable evidence in support of the application.

4. Awarding a discretionary reduction

- 4.1 The amount of reduction will be determined by a Council officer based on the amount of Council Tax owed and the individual circumstances of the taxpayer and is entirely at HDC's discretion.

4.2 The amount of the award may be adjusted, at any time, following a change to the applicant's circumstances.

4.3 A decision will be made after considering the following:

- there must be evidence of financial hardship or personal circumstances that justifies a reduction in Council Tax
- the taxpayer must satisfy the Council that they have taken all reasonable steps to resolve their situation prior to making an application
- the taxpayer must have made an application for Council Tax Support, if appropriate
- the taxpayer must have applied for any appropriate discount or exemption
- whether the taxpayer has access to other assets that could be used to pay the Council Tax, and,
- the amount of Council Tax outstanding must not be the result of refusal to pay or a fraudulent act.

4.4 The Council will notify the taxpayer in writing within 28 days setting out the reasons for the decision.

4.5 Any reduction will then be applied to the Council Tax liability and a revised bill will be produced and sent.

5. Review of decision

5.1 If the taxpayer is dissatisfied with the Council's decision, they can request a review of that decision by a senior officer.

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**LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT 2012 CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS
(Report by the Overview & Scrutiny (Economic Well-Being))**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 7 March 2012, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has been informed that as a result of further changes to legislation, there is a need to consider amendments to the schemes for Council Tax Support and Council Tax exemption arrangements. Specifically Members' attention has been drawn to the need to introduce a Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy, amend the Council's fraud arrangements and amend the Council Tax technical reforms before 1st April 2013. This report summarises the Panel's discussions.

2. THE PANEL'S DELIBERATIONS

- 2.1 In considering the proposal to introduce a Discretionary Relief Policy for Council Tax, the Head of Customer Services has explained that there is now a legislative requirement to state the procedure through which a person can apply for discretionary relief. Members have noted that the cost of any applications granted under the scheme would need to be met in its entirety by the Council. In contrast, should the Head of Customer Services choose to use alternative powers to write-off Council Tax debts, the cost would be shared between the precepting authorities.
- 2.1 With regard to the provisions within the Discretionary Relief Policy, the Panel has suggested that it should specify a period in which the Council will notify the taxpayer of its decision in writing. Members are of the view that this should be within a period of 28 days and the Head of Customer Services has agreed to amend the Policy accordingly. In response to a question regarding the appeals process for dissatisfied applicants, the Panel has been informed that as this is a discretionary matter there is no independent statutory route of appeal. It will, however, be possible to have a decision reviewed via the Council's Complaints process.
- 2.2 The Panel has discussed the proposal to amend the Council Tax Local Class C discounts scheme. The draft scheme suggests that renewal applications for Class C discount are only considered after an occupation period of six weeks. However, Members are of the opinion that 3 months might be a more appropriate timescale.

.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Cabinet is recommended to
- a) adopt the Council Tax Discretionary Relief Policy with effect from 1 April 2013 and authorise the Head of Customer Services to determine claims under the policy;

- b) adopt the Council Tax Reduction Schemes (Detection of Fraud and Enforcement) (England) Regulations 2013 to allow for the investigation, prosecution and recovery of alleged Council Tax Support fraud when these Regulations become law and authorise the Head of Customer Services to investigate fraud and implement these regulations;
- c) amend the Council Tax Local Class C discounts scheme to provide for a renewal application to require at least 3 months occupation before a new Class C discount can be awarded; and
- d) authorise the amendment of the Council's Scheme of Delegation accordingly.

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL
(ECONOMIC WELL-BEING)
CABINET**

7 March 2013

21 March 2013

**HOUSING BENEFIT
DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENT POLICY
(Report by Head of Customer Services)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Under the Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001, local authorities receive an annual grant from the Department for Work and Pensions to help people who are in receipt of Housing and/or Council Tax Benefit with assistance with their housing costs not met through the benefit scheme. Delegate authority to determine applications already exists.
- 1.2 Although the term 'housing costs' is not defined in legislation, it generally means rental liability. And on the whole, Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's) are used to help meet the difference between someone's Housing Benefit and the rent due to their landlord, usually for a limited period to enable tenants to adjust their financial circumstances or change their accommodation.
- 1.3 The Government's Welfare Reform programme means that for many people, the amount of Housing Benefit they receive has reduced. To mitigate the effects of these changes, from April 2013, the DWP has increased the level of grant awarded to each local authority and reviewed the DHP Guidance Manual and Local Authority Good Practice Guide.
- 1.4 Officers have taken this opportunity to carry out a review of the Council's local DHP policy to ensure that it adheres to best practice and that the relatively small budget will be spent to help the most vulnerable benefit customers.
- 1.5 As Council Tax Benefit is being abolished from April 2013, DHP's can no longer be made towards council tax liability. There is an item elsewhere on the agenda in relation to future provision for Council Tax Support.

2. IMPACT OF THE WELFARE REFORM CHANGES

- 2.1 The DWP's annual funding for DHP's has increased each year since 2011 to help local authorities deal with the impact of the welfare reforms.

Year	Total national DHP budget	HDC allocation	Number of awards made
2010 – 11	£20m	£31,832	188
2011 – 12	£30m	£41,422	187
2012 – 13	£60m	£56,646	211*
2013 – 14	£155m	£169,561	N/A

* as at 11 February 2013

- 2.2 The increase in the funding for 2013 -14 takes account of the latest round of welfare reform changes including the under-occupation rules for working age people living in social housing and the £500 per week benefit cap.
- 2.3 The demand for DHP's has increased but less than initially anticipated in light of the fact that people living in the privately rented sector have faced cuts in their benefit entitlement since 2011.

3. AIMS OF THE DHP POLICY

- 3.1 The HDC policy sets out the aims of awarding a DHP. Each case is considered on its own merit and takes account of a range of factors that allow Officers to make fair and consistent decisions.
- 3.2 A DHP is awarded to help make up some or all of the shortfall between a person's Housing Benefit entitlement and their rental liability in order for the benefit claimant to be able to maintain their tenancy. Payments are normally made on a short term basis.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 That Members:
- (a) note the content of this report;
 - (b) adopt the DHP Policy with effect from April 2013.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001
Department for Work and Pensions DHP Guidance Manual including Local Authority Good Practice Guide
DWP Subsidy Circular S1/2013

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**HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

**DISCRETIONARY HOUSING
PAYMENT POLICY**

APRIL 2013

DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENT POLICY

1. Background

- 1.1 Local authorities have the power to make discretionary payments to help relieve financial hardship with housing costs through The Discretionary Financial Assistance Regulations 2001.
- 1.2 Broadly speaking, housing costs mean rent, rent deposits, rent in advance and other costs associated with a housing need.
- 1.3 The scheme is discretionary and Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) determines how to operate the scheme for its residents.
- 1.4 HDC is allocated a budget for funding Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's) by central government on an annual basis.
- 1.5 The amount that HDC can pay out is cash limited by the Secretary of State at 2.5 times the contribution from central government.
- 1.6 Any unspent funding is returned to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) at the end of each year.
- 1.7 Although DHP's are not payments of benefit, the customer must be in receipt of Housing Benefit (HB) or Universal Credit (UC) to be able to make a claim.

2. Aims of the scheme

- 2.1 The aims of awarding a DHP may be based on the following considerations:
 - to alleviate poverty
 - to encourage and sustain people in employment
 - to maintain tenancies and prevent homelessness
 - to safeguard residents in their homes
 - to help those who are trying to help themselves
 - to keep families together
 - to support domestic violence victims who are trying to move to a place of safety
 - to support the vulnerable or the elderly in the local community
 - to help claimants through personal and difficult events
 - to support young people in the transition to adult life
 - to promote good educational outcomes for children and young people

This list is not exhaustive.

2.2 Claims will be treated on their own merits and customers will be treated equally and fairly.

3. Process

3.1 The legislation gives very broad discretion over the application of the scheme but decisions must be made in accordance with good decision making principles. HDC has a duty to act fairly, reasonably and consistently. In doing this, reference is made to the Department for Work and Pensions' DHP Guidance Manual.

3.2 Although applications for DHP's are administered by the Council's Benefits Section, there is liaison with the Housing Section and other partners on cases they may have an involvement with.

3.3 Claims for a DHP are made on an application form provided by the Benefits Section. The application form asks questions about the customer's circumstances and financial situation that are used to build up a picture of why the customer requires additional help with their housing costs.

3.4 A senior Benefits officer deals with DHP claims to ensure decision are made consistently and fairly. A proforma is completed setting out what information has been used to make the decision. This is then passed to a second officer to check and countersign.

3.5 The customer is notified in writing of the outcome of their claim. The letter details the weekly amount and length of award. If the claim has been unsuccessful, the letter sets out how the customer can ask for the decision to be looked at again.

3.6 Where possible, DHP payments are made in line with the HB/UC payment cycle.

4. Awarding a DHP

4.1 It must first be established that:

- the customer is entitled to Housing Benefit
- further financial assistance is required
- there is sufficient money left in the DHP budget to make an award.

4.2 A DHP can cover shortfalls between the rent and amount of benefit award including:

- a Rent Officer restriction or where the Local Housing Allowance rate does not meet the rent
- where the rent used in a claim for a person renting from a social landlord has been restricted due to the household under-occupying the property,

with particular regard to disabled people living in significantly adapted accommodation and foster carers

- where Housing Benefit has been reduced due to a household's income exceeding the benefit cap levels
- where non dependant deductions are applied
- where income tapers reduce entitlement
- rent deposits
- rent in advance

4.3 A DHP cannot cover:

- ineligible service charges
- increases in rent due to outstanding rent arrears
- certain sanctions and reductions in benefit
- any shortfall between Council Tax Support entitlement and Council Tax liability

4.4 Although the level of DHP awarded cannot exceed the weekly eligible rent, the amount of the award is not fixed.

4.5 DHP's are generally awarded from the Monday after receipt of the DHP application but backdated awards are considered depending on the individual circumstances of the claim.

4.6 There are no specific guidelines over the length of the award, but DHP's are not generally paid indefinitely. Due to the limited budget, this allows as many people to be helped as possible. In addition, frequent reviews ensure that the claimant's circumstances still warrant a DHP payment.

4.7 All decisions are made taking into account the claimant's individual circumstances including, but not restricted to:

- the conditions of the tenancy
- the household's financial circumstances
- the household's medical circumstances
- the reasonableness of the customer's expenditure
- the shortfall between the rent liability and HB entitlement.

4.8 Supporting evidence is requested where appropriate.

5. Overpayments

- 5.1 A customer is required to notify the Benefits Section of any change in circumstances that may affect their entitlement to a DHP.
- 5.2 If as a result of a change in circumstance, an overpayment of a DHP occurs, the customer is notified of the amount and the reason for the overpayment.
- 5.3 HDC will seek to recover any overpaid DHP. Repayment is usually made by payment against an invoice.

6. Disputes

- 6.1 There is no formal right of appeal against a decision not to award a DHP.
- 6.2 However, the customer can request a review of the original decision which is carried out by a senior officer.
- 6.3 After the internal dispute process is exhausted, the customer would need to request a judicial review to take their case further.

7. Monitoring

- 7.1 Details of each award made are recorded for monitoring purposes.
- 7.2 Submissions have to be made to the DWP on a six monthly basis detailing overall expenditure and the reasons for each award broken down into four categories:
 - to support a customer affected by the benefit cap
 - to support a customer affected by the social sector size criteria
 - to support a customer affected by the Local Housing Allowance reforms
 - any other reason
- 7.3 The return to the DWP must be signed by the Council's Section 151 Officer.

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**HOUSING BENEFIT – DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENT POLICY
(Report by the Overview & Scrutiny (Economic Well-Being))**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 7 March 2012, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) considered the contents of a new Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) Policy for the Authority. This report summarises the Panel's discussions.

2. THE PANEL'S DELIBERATIONS


- 2.1 The Panel has been advised that the District Council has had a Discretionary Housing Payment Policy in place since 2001. To mitigate changes to Housing Benefit the DWP has increased the level of grant awarded to each local authority. Officers have taken the opportunity to review the Council's DHP policy to ensure that it adheres to best practice and that the relatively small budget will be spent to help the most vulnerable benefit customers.
- 2.2 In considering the contents of the report, Members have discussed households who are willing to move to avoid the new bedroom tax but are unable to do so because of a shortage of smaller properties. The Head of Customer Services has explained that the District Council has been working with Registered Social Landlords: however, with the exception of encouraging property exchanges, there is little that the District Council can do. Clarification has also been provided on the position of foster children who are currently not counted as part of the household for benefit purposes.
- 2.3 Members have noted that the District Council has been allocated £169,561 for discretionary housing payments in 2013/14. Although it is possible to pay up to 2.5 times more than this amount, any additional costs would need to be met by the District Council. Members have commented that although the annual funding from the DWP has increased year on year since 2010-11, the District Council's proportion of the total national DHP budget has reduced year on year. In response, further information on the allocation of funds has been circulated to Panel Members by email.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Cabinet is invited to adopt the Discretionary Housing Benefit Policy.

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COMT
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY (ECONOMIC)
CABINET

25 FEBRUARY 2013
17 MARCH 2013
21 MARCH 2013

HUNTINGDONSHIRE INFRASTRUCTURE BUSINESS PLAN 2013/14

(Report by Head of Planning Services)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the implementation of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for Huntingdonshire and the endorsement of the Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Business Plan 2013/14.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The CIL is a mechanism, introduced by Government in 2010, to allow local planning authorities to raise funds from development to pay for the infrastructure that is, or will be, needed as a result of new development. Cabinet has been kept informed of the development of the CIL Charging Schedule and its adoption by HDC Council in April 2012 with an implementation date of 1st May 2012.
- 2.2 The CIL Charging Schedule is complementary to the 'Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document' (SPD) which was adopted by Cabinet in December 2011. The SPD and the CIL operate along side each other with S106 requirements still applying to development specific infrastructure and mitigation as outlined in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1

Development Specific (Non-CIL funded) infrastructure	Remaining Infrastructure (CIL funded)
Local site-related road / transport requirements	Remaining Roads and other transport facilities
Large scale major ⁽¹⁾ development specific school provision contributions	Remaining Schools and other educational facilities
Large scale major ⁽¹⁾ development specific health provision contributions	Remaining Health facilities
Large scale major ⁽¹⁾ development specific sport and recreational facilities contributions	Remaining Sport and recreational facilities
Development specific provision of informal and formal green space land requirements	Remaining Green infrastructure open spaces / facilities
Large scale major ⁽¹⁾ development specific library provision and community facilities contributions	Remaining Social infrastructure
Local site-related economic inclusion requirements	Remaining Economic regeneration
Large scale major ⁽¹⁾ development specific police provision	Remaining Emergency services

Development Specific (Non-CIL funded) infrastructure	Remaining Infrastructure (CIL funded)
contributions	
Local site-related utility requirements	Remaining Utilities
Local site-related flood risk solutions requirements	Remaining Flood defences
(1) DCLG Development Control PS 1/2 statistical definition 2007/8	

2.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (2012), published following the introduction of CIL in Huntingdonshire, sets out the three dimensions to sustainable development - an economic role, a social role and an environmental role - and outlines the presumption in favour of sustainable development:

- an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, **including the provision of infrastructure**;
- a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with **accessible local services** that reflect **the community's needs** and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and
- an environmental role – contributing to **protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment**; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, **minimise waste** and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a **low carbon economy**.

These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles which clearly identify the importance of infrastructure.

3. CIL IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 CIL was set up to provide a simpler and fairer system of developer contributions for developers to understand their financial obligations related to development - an amount to pay per square metre of development. Nevertheless this is a new system and there are complexities within the legislation which have had an impact on the collection process. A number of Developer and Agent Forums have been held to ensure developers are aware of these complexities in order for delays to be avoided and a further one was held in February 2013.

3.2 Since 1st May 2012, when CIL came into force in Huntingdonshire, over 125 developments have been shown to be liable for CIL. It is important to remember that some developments are liable but will not be required to pay any levy, such as those associated with a use that has a £0 levy rate. Those that do have a financial chargeable amount will not be required to pay this until the development granted permission actually commences and then this is linked to an instalment policy. This can permit between 120 and 720 days for full payment. The Council has only started to receive payment this month.

4. GOVERNANCE

- 4.1 On 18th October 2012 (item 51) Cabinet approved the proposed CIL Governance structure and the progression of further work with partners through the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership (HSP) to develop the framework and draft business plan, to take forward the next stages required in the Governance process. A further report would then be submitted to Cabinet. This report aims to cover this point. At its meeting on 23rd November 2011, the HSP Board also indicated its support for the proposed CIL Governance Structure.
- 4.2 It was agreed that the HSP Growth and Infrastructure Group would be restructured and take on the role for developing the Infrastructure Business Plan. This restructuring of membership was finalised in the autumn 2012 with amended Terms of Reference being agreed. The Group has worked together across a wider partnership to develop the Infrastructure Business Plan 2013/14.
- 4.3 It is important to note that the 'meaningful proportion' of the CIL collected that will be allocated to the area in which the development is occurring to spend on infrastructure has yet to be confirmed. However, recent announcements have suggested that Parish / Town Councils with an adopted Neighbourhood Plan will receive 25% of the funding whilst those without will receive 15% of the funding capped to £100 per existing council tax dwelling. In light of this it will be critical for those Towns and Parishes to be fully aware of the implications on infrastructure delivery and work with the LSP in order that we can appropriately work together to plan for the provision of new local community facilities. Amendment Regulations have now been laid before parliament.

5. INFRASTRUCTURE BUSINESS PLAN 2013/2014

- 5.1 The Infrastructure Business Plan (IBP) 2013/2014 (copy attached) is the first piece of work to be delivered by the re-structured HSP Growth and Infrastructure Group. This is a key document for all partners to fully understand the infrastructure needs from the economic growth of the district, timings, phasing and funding requirements. It also looks at the potential income from CIL receipts and how projects should be prioritised for receiving this limited funding having taken into account development trajectory, infrastructure need and other potential funding options. It is critical to note that CIL is a funder of infrastructure but not the sole funder.
- 5.2 Section 6 of the IBP shows the resulting CIL Implementation Action Plan, which focuses on the initial three years of short (2013/14) to medium term projects (2014/16). It is clear to see from this and the cash flow funding analysis that:
- there is still a significant funding gap, and this will always be the case;
 - limited CIL receipts are expected in the 2013/14 financial year; and
 - further prioritisation will need to be undertaken.

As such greater project detail will be required from infrastructure providers in the future in order to aid decision making for the next business plan.

- 5.3 In light of the above paragraph, the IBP 2013/14 recommends that CIL receipts received in 2013/14 are only spent on the only short-term critical infrastructure

of the Huntingdon West Link Road and, if there are any additional monies, this is 'banked'.

6. REGULATION 123 LIST

- 6.1 The CIL Regulation 123 restricts the use of planning obligations for infrastructure that will be funded in whole or in part by the CIL, to ensure no duplication between the two types of developer contributions (CIL and S106 agreements). Further detail regarding Section 106 requirements can be found in the Developer Contributions SPD – this was consulted on alongside the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule in 2011 and adopted in December of the same year.
- 6.2 A CIL charging authority is expected to publish on its website a list of infrastructure (commonly referred to as the Regulation 123 List) that it intends will benefit from CIL. Huntingdonshire District Council (as CIL Charging Authority) had its current Regulation 123 list published for 1st May implementation date and agreed this could be reviewed at least once a year as part of its CIL governance process.
- 6.3 On the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy across Huntingdonshire on 1st May 2012, section 106 requirements were scaled back to those matters that are directly related to a specific site, and are not set out in the regulation 123 list. Huntingdonshire District Council was clear in its evidence at the examination of the Charging Schedule how S106 would operate in accordance with the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended) and the newly adopted Huntingdonshire Developer Contributions SPD. As noted at the examination, “The principle is that all eligible developments must pay towards CIL as well as any development specific requirement to be secured through Section 106 Agreements.” Large scale major developments ¹, usually also necessitate the provision of their own development specific infrastructure, such as schools. These are dealt with more suitably through a Section 106 agreement, in addition to the CIL charge. It is important that the CIL Charging Schedule evidence, and now the IBP 2013/14, differentiate between these infrastructure projects to ensure no double counting takes place between determining those Section 106 funded development specific infrastructure projects and the remaining district wide CIL funded infrastructure projects. It is also important to note that the Infrastructure Project List (November 2011), in line with the appropriate guidance, and the IBP 2013/14 are stated not to be a definitive list but an indication of the likely infrastructure required by new development, taking account of any known surpluses.
- 6.4 The latest published Guidance states that “Where a regulation 123 list includes project-specific infrastructure, the charging authority should seek to minimise its reliance on planning obligations in relation to that infrastructure.” The Council has worked from the offset of this work to do just that by clearly stating in all documentation, including the introduction of a new Developer Contributions SPD, that S106 contributions would still apply to large scale major developments.

¹ DCLG Development Control PS 1/2 statistical definition 2007/8

- 6.5 The Government published a new Community Infrastructure Levy Guidance document in December 2012. This guidance does not apply to Huntingdonshire Charging Schedule as it was already in place on publication.
- 6.6 A revised Regulation 123 List has been compiled in light of the new Infrastructure Business Plan 2013/14. The draft list is attached. One of the changes in the latest guidance is to state that when charging authorities wish to revise their regulation 123 list in this way, they should ensure that these changes are clearly explained and subject to appropriate local consultation. Whilst this is not a necessity for this authority it is felt that, in order to continue the partnership working, a local consultation on the proposed Regulation 123 List revision would be appropriate.
- 6.7 It is not considered that the proposed change to the regulation 123 list would have a significant impact on the viability evidence that supported examination of the charging schedule and, as such, it is proposed that a 6 week consultation takes place. If the draft list is approved, the consultation is likely to commence in April or May 2012. The list would be made available on the Council's website and at local libraries and community access points


7. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 7.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
- a) Approve the Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Business Plan 2013/14;
 - b) Authorise the Assistant Director, Environment, Growth and Planning in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing Strategy to make any minor amendments necessary to the plan prior to publication on the Council website
 - c) Approves the banking of CIL receipts during 2013/14 financial year with the exception of funding the Huntingdon West Link Road scheme;
 - d) Requests the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy to liaise with the Head of Finance and the Head of Legal to agree a 'service level agreement' for utilising on release of any CIL receipts for infrastructure project delivery; and
 - e) Approve the draft Regulation 123 List for public consultation as outlined above, subject to any minor amendments necessary as authorised by the Assistant Director, Environment, Growth and Planning in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Housing Strategy.

Background Papers:

- Core Strategy 2009
- CIL Examination documents, which can be found on the HDC website at <http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/Planning/Community%20Infrastructure%20Levy/Pages/CommunityInfrastructureLevyExamination.aspx>
- Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Business Plan 2013/14
- Draft Regulation 123 List

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Huntingdonshire Community Infrastructure Levy: Regulation 123 Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) List

CIL Regulation 123 restricts the use of planning obligations for infrastructure that will be funded in whole or in part by the Community Infrastructure Levy, to ensure no duplication between the two types of developer contributions. Further detail regarding Section 106 requirements can be found in the Developer Contributions SPD (adopted December 2011).

A CIL charging authority is expected to publish a list of infrastructure that it intends will benefit from CIL on its website. Huntingdonshire District Council (as CIL Charging Authority) can review this list at least once a year as part of its monitoring of CIL collection and expenditure.

The CIL Infrastructure Project List that was subject to a Public Examination in March 2012 contained a broad range of projects and project types across the District that could be eligible for CIL funding in the period to 2026. The current indicative range of infrastructure projects is derived from the HDC Infrastructure Business Plan 2013/14 (or successor documents). It must be noted that the HDC Infrastructure Business Plan (IBP) is not an exhaustive list of the infrastructure that will be required and additional items are likely to be identified at a later stage that could necessitate CIL, S106 or other funding. The IBP continues to look at the infrastructure needs from development growth to 2026, but has noted certain categories including certain development specific infrastructure on large scale major developments to be secured by S106 obligations and items required by condition. The table below outlines the infrastructure funding split from the project list in order to ensure that no double counting has or will take place. It should be noted that this is not an exhaustive list of infrastructure types.

Development Specific (Non-CIL funded) infrastructure	Remaining Infrastructure (CIL funded)
Local site-related road / transport requirements	Remaining Roads and other transport facilities
Large scale major ⁽¹⁾ development specific school provision contributions	Remaining Schools and other educational facilities
Large scale major ⁽¹⁾ development specific health provision contributions	Remaining Health facilities
Large scale major ⁽¹⁾ development specific sport and recreational facilities contributions	Remaining Sport and recreational facilities
Development specific provision of informal and formal green space land requirements	Remaining Green infrastructure open spaces / facilities
Large scale major ⁽¹⁾ development specific library provision and community facilities contributions	Remaining Social infrastructure
Local site-related economic inclusion requirements	Remaining Economic regeneration
Large scale major ⁽¹⁾ development specific police provision contributions	Remaining Emergency services
Local site-related utility requirements	Remaining Utilities
Local site-related flood risk solutions requirements	Remaining Flood defences
⁽¹⁾ DCLG Development Control PS 1/2 statistical definition 2007/8	

The Huntingdonshire CIL Charging Schedule became effective on 1st May 2012, and as CIL is also not payable until after development commences, it is recognised that there will be limited CIL receipts in the first few years of operation. In view of this, it has been agreed by Cabinet on XXXXX that CIL receipts in 2013/14 will be banked for expenditure at a later date except for funding towards the Huntingdonshire West Link Road.

The IBP 2013/14 (or successor documents) contains a broad range of projects and project types across the District that could be eligible for CIL funding in the period to 2026. This can be viewed at [INSERT WEB LINK](#).

The inclusion of a project or type of infrastructure in IBP 2013/14 (or successor documents) does not signify a commitment from the Council to fund (either in whole or in part) the listed project or type of infrastructure through CIL.

DRAFT

**HUNTINGDONSHIRE INFRASTRUCTURE BUSINESS PLAN 2013/14
(Report by the Overview & Scrutiny (Economic Well-Being))**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 At its meeting held on 7 March 2012, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has received an update on the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy in Huntingdonshire and considered the contents of the Huntingdonshire Infrastructure Business Plan for 2013/14. This report summarises the Panel's discussions.

2. THE PANEL'S DELIBERATIONS

- 2.1 In considering the contents of the report, the Panel has enquired about the cost of producing the Business Plan and have been informed that the District Council operates a framework agreement with the necessary consultants which enables the Authority to make some savings. In addition, the Council is able to recover some of the administrative costs from the CIL fund.
- 2.2 In terms of the list of infrastructure projects identified within the report, Members have enquired why reference is made to the Grid at Eaton Socon. In response, the Panel has been advised that the Business Plan identifies all the infrastructure requirements required to support all growth within the District. These will subsequently be prioritised. The Panel has been assured that although this project has been identified as critical, it is not being put forward for CIL funding. Members have noted that at this point the Huntingdon West Link Road is the only proposed recipient of CIL receipts for 2013/14. As further funding becomes available work will be undertaken to identify additional projects for funding.
- 2.3 Comment has been made that the list of infrastructure projects does not include any projects to support the Environment Agency in addressing the potential impact of climate change and the infrastructure deficit in the District's waterways. Members have been informed that the list of projects is based upon the infrastructure requirements which have been suggested by members of the Growth & Infrastructure Group. The Environment Agency has been involved with the Group. The Panel has also noted that the Plan is based on Infrastructure needs arising from growth and is not intended to fund infrastructure deficits.
- 2.5 The Panel has discussed the governance structure, which has previously been approved by the District Council's Cabinet. In doing so, Members have received an explanation of the process for preparing the Business Plan which will be submitted to the Cabinet on 21st March 2013. If it is not approved, it will be referred back to the Growth & Infrastructure Group for further consideration.
- 2.6 With regard to the governance structure, the Panel has enquired at what point the local community will become involved in the process. Members have

previously suggested that there should be representation from parishes and the rural areas on the Growth & Infrastructure Thematic Group. In response, Members have been informed that the need to engage and work with the town and parish councils has been recognised, particularly in light of recent announcements with regard to the 'meaningful proportion' that will be allocated to the area in which the development is occurring. It has been explained that for the preparation of the next plan, there will be a longer time-frame to engage with local communities and it will be important to understand the requirements of individual parishes. In this respect, Members have emphasised the need to engage and involve parishes at an early stage especially if they wish them to contribute to major projects.

- 2.7 In response to a question regarding the baseline data which had been used within the Plan, Members have been informed that CIL funding needs are based on the current charging schedule. Members were of the view that it should be made clear that the Plan is based on current values and that they will be indexed in the future. Comment has also been made that elements such as targeted growth funds and the Priority Schools Building programme are missing from the Plan. It should be updated to include an exhaustive analysis of funding opportunities.
- 2.8 In addition and having recognised that there would be an annual review, concern has been expressed that the Growth & Infrastructure Group, which drives CIL expenditure is also responsible for the monitoring arrangements. The Panel has been advised that monitoring will be undertaken within the District Council and an investigation of possible software packages is currently being undertaken. There will be a requirement to produce and provide monitoring reports on progress on a regular basis. The Panel will wait to see the monitoring proposals before making a further recommendation on this matter.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Cabinet is invited to consider the discussions of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) as part of their deliberations on this item and to note specifically their comments on the need to:-
- ❖ involve town and parish councils and minor villages within the process;
 - ❖ index base costs
 - ❖ investigate channels of additional funding; and
 - ❖ develop a more detailed and robust monitoring plan.

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CABINET

21 MARCH 2013

DOCUMENT CENTRE REVIEW (Report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being))

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 On 3rd November 2011, the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) established a Working Group to review the costs of the District Council's Document Centre and to form a view on its efficiency and cost effectiveness. Councillors G J Bull, S Greenall, R B Howe, A MacKender-Lawrence, T V Rogers, and A H Williams were appointed to the Working Group.
- 1.2 For the purposes of undertaking the review and to establish a trial methodology for future reviews, the Working Group agreed to form two teams to investigate:-
- ❖ the financial costs of the service; and
 - ❖ the operation of the service.
- 1.3 This report contains a summary of the work carried out and the Panel's subsequent findings and recommendations

2. THE DOCUMENT CENTRE

- 2.1 The Document Centre was established in 2007 as part of the review of the Council's Headquarters and other accommodation. Its main roles are:
- ❖ Production and Procurement of printed matter;
 - ❖ Cheque Management;
 - ❖ Design and artwork;
 - ❖ Bulk despatches of mail;
 - ❖ Multi-Functional Devices;
 - ❖ Receipt, sorting, scanning and distribution of incoming post;
 - ❖ Preparation and despatch of outgoing post;
 - ❖ Courier service;
 - ❖ Procurement & provision of postal services; and
 - ❖ Generating external income.
- 2.2 The Financial Position of the Centre as at December 2011 is set out below:
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| • Original Budget | £605k |
| • Latest Budget (2011/12) | £487k |
| • Savings Achieved Early | £14k |
| • External Income (to date 11/12) | £16k |
- 2.3 The current number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Staff is 12.08. This represents a reduction of 0.73 FTE since 2007.
- 2.4 An update financial summary of revenue expenditure is attached at Appendix A.
- 2.5 The Centre has a target to achieve £75,000 in efficiency savings by 2015/16 and is currently ahead of target.

3. INVESTIGATIONS

3.1 To assist them with their investigations, the Working Group has met with:-

- ❖ Mr A Lusha, Document Centre Manager;
- ❖ Mrs L Jablonska, Central Services Manager;
- ❖ Mr Colin Meadowcroft, Head of Legal & Democratic Services;
- ❖ Mr Nigel Green, Principal Accountant;
- ❖ Councillor J D Ablewhite, Executive Leader;
- ❖ Mr C Hall, Head of IMD; and
- ❖ Mrs S Campbell, Document Centre Team Leader.

3.2 The Group has also met with representatives from the One Leisure Service and the Planning Division. A tour of the Document Centre and its facilities has been undertaken. The Panel is grateful to the staff for being open and accommodating and assisting them with their work.

4. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

4.1 Overall, the Panel is very impressed with the way the Document Centre is run and they are of the opinion that it operates effectively and efficiently. They recognise that the cost of running the Centre has been reduced by 10% in the last 3 years, that the level of operation has increased and they are not aware of any capacity issues. The Panel has formed the view that there is scope to improve the financial performance of the Document Centre and a number of options have been considered through which this might be achieved. These are discussed in more detail below. However, in order to achieve this improvement in financial performance, significant levels of investment will be required.

(a) Internal Printing and Design

- ❖ The Panel has recognised that to achieve further efficiency and cost savings, Document Centre facilities need to be used more by Council departments. The Centre is a more cost effective way of completing design and print jobs and all departments ought to be compelled to use their facilities for their design and printing requirements wherever possible. The Panel has noted that there are a number of departments within the Council who were not fully utilising the Document Centre's facilities. Whilst there is already a Corporate Policy, the Panel is of the view **that there is a need to establish a corporate mandate for all officers to use the services provided, as opposed to using MFDs and other commercial agencies.** The use of commercial agencies is something that will be referred to later. Greater use of the design service will ensure that the Council's corporate branding is consistently employed.
- ❖ It was evident that a number of individuals are making tens of thousands of copies on their MFD's which is not cost or time effective. **The Panel has concluded that the number of Multi-Functional Devices per floor in Pathfinder House should be reduced to encourage more use of the Document Centre service.**
- ❖ From their discussions with representatives from the One Leisure Service it has been apparent that the Service is not aware of the Document Centre's capabilities and the Panel has asked the Document Centre Manager to meet with One Leisure representatives to discuss their printing requirements. In a similar light it was suggested that the Document Centre Manager should contact the NHS occupants of the Civic Suite to ascertain whether they might make use of any of the services provided by the Document Centre. However

the Panel has subsequently been made aware that there may be issues with patient confidentiality. **More generally, the Panel is of the opinion that the Document Centre needs to clarify and advertise the services it can provide to internal users and that Council officers need to be educated on the use and cost of using ink colours in their printing requirements.**

- ❖ The Working Group has queried why the GIS department are in possession of their own wide format printer and whether this is cost effective.
- ❖ In terms of the preferred list of suppliers who are invited to undertake specialist printing work for the District Council, the Panel has expressed concern that this might not be the most cost effective way to select an external supplier. **The list of suppliers should be subject to a rigorous procurement process.**
- ❖ **It is recommended that an investigation be undertaken to establish what marketing material is despatched from other services to establish whether higher quantities can be pooled together for printing at a lower rate.**

(b) Post, Mail Handling & Scanning

- ❖ The Panel is content that overall the mail handling facility is working well and provides a cost effective service. **However Members are of the view that the existing arrangements for issuing Councillors' Mail should be reviewed.** For example Members have commented that a number of the letters they currently receive could be issued by email and that they often receive more than one individual posting on the same day.
- ❖ The Panel has noted that there were only 6 departments currently involved within the Electronic Document Management project. It is not as far advanced within the District Council as might be expected and a significant number of licences are still available. (Annex A EDM Service Status Update provides further information). **The Panel is of the opinion that the progress of EDM should be the subject of a separate investigation.**
- ❖ The Panel has identified a potential issue which might hinder the roll out of EDM. MFD's cannot scan into Anite. At the time the MFD's were purchased this was not an option due to incompatibility issues. An update to Anite has since made this possible, however this option was not pursued due to MFD limitations e.g. there are no screens for checking scanned images. This would have an impact on the high degree of checking and verifying scanned images against original documents carried out as part of the strict control measures identified in Document Centre protocols.
- ❖ The Panel has also noted that the Leisure Centres still have their own franking machines and that this was not a cost effective way of distributing mail. **Members are of the opinion that this could form part of the review of the postal arrangements referred to previously.**

(c) External Printing / Business Development

- ❖ The Panel has formed the opinion that the Document Centre has the capacity to develop significantly its financial performance. This is discussed further in the following bullet points. For example the printers only operate during normal working hours and there is considerable scope to undertake out of hours work. **To do this, the Council needs to determine whether it has the**

appetite to undertake significant levels of investment to develop the service. The Council could provide a printing service to other public sector organisations, including other public sector authorities, charities, schools and voluntary organisations. In this respect, Members have noted the progress which has already been made in negotiations with Cambridge City Council to provide their printing services. They are optimistic that an agreement will be reached soon which will provide additional income for the Service.

- ❖ The Panel has recognised that if it is to adopt this approach then the Council would need to produce a marketing plan for the service and to market it more proactively, though it is acknowledged that there is some scope to expand the service within existing resources. The service would also need to benchmark its costs against the commercial sector to determine its pricing strategy. The Centre will require its own Business Plan to establish a Strategic Long Term Vision for the service which will require the procurement of external commercial business development expertise.
- ❖ To this end certain members of the Group are willing to assist Management with the development of the Business Plan.
- ❖ The Panel has recognised that assistance would be required to oversee such a programme and have suggested that the Council should establish a Management Board for this purpose. Given the current staffing arrangements, this proposal will also require additional resources to generate and follow-up sales opportunities. The Panel has suggested that this will require a dedicated sales and marketing manager.
- ❖ In respect of the One Leisure Service, the Panel has noted that 80% of their printing requirements are for litho printing and **has suggested that the Council should give consideration to the purchase of a Litho printer to enable the Document Centre to handle more of their workload.** It would also expand the range of services that the Document Centre is able to offer to other services.
- ❖ **The Panel has suggested that there may be some merit in nominating a councillor ‘champion’ for the Centre** and Councillor A H Williams has volunteered for this purpose.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is

RECOMMENDED to

- (a) **request the Managing Director to issue a corporate mandate to all officers to use the services provided by the Document Centre, as opposed to using MFDs and other commercial agencies;**
- (b) **request the Assistant Director (Finance & Resources) to examine the case for reducing the number of Multi-Functional Devices per floor in Pathfinder House;**
- (c) **request the Document Centre Manager to clarify and advertise the services the Document Centre can provide to internal users and provide further education to Council officers on the use and cost of using ink colours in their printing requirements;**

- (d) request that the Document Centre Manager undertake an investigation to establish what marketing material is despatched from services to establish whether higher quantities can be pooled together for printing at a lower rate;**
- (e) request the Democratic Services and Document Centre Managers to review the existing arrangements for issuing Councillors Mail and the continued use of franking machines within the Council's Leisure Centres;**
- (f) note the intention of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) to investigate the progress of EDM;**
- (g) determine whether the Council has the appetite to undertake significant levels of investment to develop the service;**
- (h) subject to the approval of recommendation (g), request the Head of Legal & Democratic Services to arrange for the development and implementation of a Business Plan and associated Marketing Plan for the Document Centre;**
- (i) authorise the Head of Legal & Democratic Services, in consultation with the relevant Executive Councillor to give consideration to the purchase of a Litho printer as required by the terms of the terms of the business plan;**
- (j) note that the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) had endorsed the appointment of Councillor A H Williams as its Document Centre Champion.**

**Contact Officers: A Roberts, Tel 01480 388015
 C Bulman, Tel 01480 388234**

Appendix A

Document Centre - Revenue Expenditure History

	Actual 2008/09	Actual 2009/10	Actual 2010/11	Actual 2011/12	Forecast 2012/13
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Employees (Pay NI Pension)	309	323	331	318	326
Transport	3	3	4	3	4
Supplies & Services - Maintenance	121	134	87	86	90
Supplies & Services - Materials	33	39	35	32	37
Supplies & Services - Subcontractors	78	70	31	32	36
Supplies & Services - Copyright					
Licence	3	3	3	3	3
Supplies & Services – Other	15	12	6	12	5
Income from External Work	(2)	(13)	(6)	(34)	(27)
Total Controllable Cost	560	571	491	452	474
Depreciation	73	51	52	64	78
Support Costs	125	113	127	142	129
Total Full Cost	758	735	670	658	681

Agenda Item 7

SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP

WEDNESDAY, 27 FEBRUARY 2013

CIVIC SUITE 1A, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON PE29 3TN

ACTION SHEET

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Management Side:

Councillor Mrs B Boddington
Councillor A Hansard (Chairman)

Employee Side:

K Lawson
Mrs S McKerral
C Sneesby
G Vince

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms J Barber
B Bentley
T Bowmer
Ms K Domingo
D Harwood
S Howell
Mrs A Jerrom

APOLOGIES:

Councillor J W Davies
Councillor Mrs P A Jordan
Mrs G Smith

ITEM NO.	SUBJECT	ACTION BY
1	<p>Report of the Advisory Group</p> <p>The report and action sheet of the meeting of the Advisory Group held on 29th November 2012 was received and noted.</p> <p>In answer to a question regarding the action associated with item 3 of the report, Mr Bowmer advised that he was not aware of any action that had been taken with regard to the requirement for detailed training analysis.</p> <p>With regard to item No 4 of the report, B Bentley undertook to investigate an apparent misdial when FIRE was typed into the phones.</p>	B Bentley

ITEM NO.	SUBJECT	ACTION BY
2	<p>Humidity Issues</p> <p>With the aid of a joint report by the Environmental Health Commercial Team Leader, Student Environmental Health Officer and Facilities Team Leader, the Group considered the results of an investigation into humidity issues associated with Pathfinder House that had been brought to the attention of the Group at its meeting on 12 September 2012. Mr Lawson advised that the Chief Officers Management Team had been briefed on the contents of the report prior to its presentation to the Safety Advisory Group.</p> <p>As part of her work based learning, student EHO Miss K Domingo had been assessing the nature and extent of the problem since October 2012. A total of 77 measurements had been taken at 23 locations throughout Pathfinder House between November 2012 and January 2013. Following a request by the Group at their November meeting measurements had been extended to include Eastfield House.</p> <p>Mr Lawson explained that humidity levels reported in Pathfinder House routinely fell below the minimum level recommended in the guidance produced by the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE). Consequently this indicated that the Council was in breach of regulations 5 and 6 of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992, which in turn constitutes a breach of section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 by failing to provide a working environment that was, so far as was reasonably practicable, safe and without risks to health.</p> <p>The Group considered the range of remedial measures available and were advised that Mr Bentley had received an initial estimate of the likely cost of installing an engineering solution. Having been advised that humidification appeared to have been excluded from the original build specification the Group agreed that Mr Bentley should request advice from an independent expert and submit a possible choice of solutions to a future meeting of the Group.</p> <p>With regard to whether employees should be informed of the current situation Mr Lawson recommended transparency. The Group was advised that the report of the meeting would be available to staff on the Council's Health and Safety Intranet page.</p> <p>Thanks were expressed to Ms Domingo by the Group for her work in support of the investigation.</p>	B Bentley/ K Lawson
3	<p>Insurance Claims and Health & Safety Management</p> <p>With the aid of a report by the Internal Audit and Risk Manager the Advisory Group were provided with a summary of insurance claims linked to health and safety management practices.</p> <p>The report followed a meeting in November 2012 between the Chairman</p>	

ITEM NO.	SUBJECT	ACTION BY
	<p>of the Safety Advisory Group, the Council's Health and Safety Advisor and the Internal Risk Manager to discuss the possible opportunity to obtain reductions in insurance premiums through reducing insurable losses arising from health and safety incidents.</p> <p>Having provided details of the applicable premiums paid for the main insurance risks relating to health and safety in 2012/13 Members were advised that insurance premiums across the four main areas, employers liability, public liability, personal accident and motor vehicles, had reduced by almost 50% since 2005 as a result of improving risk management practices and re-tendering. The Group was advised that the reduction in premiums also reflected the Council's exceptional history of health and safety management and relatively low level of claims. It was therefore suggested that current health and safety initiatives would need to be maintained, and the cost of any future initiatives would need to be considered against any potential benefits.</p> <p>In discussing the need to maintain the Council's excellent record the Chairman undertook to assist in any way he could with Mr Harwood's plans to re-invigorate the officer led Risk Management Group under the new management structure.</p> <p>Mr Bowmer suggested that employees' attention should be drawn to facilities such as the 'driver's handbook' which was available on the intranet, it was suggested that this could be mentioned during staff appraisals and team meetings.</p>	<p>Cllr Hansard</p> <p>HoS</p>
4	<p>Violent Incident Panel</p> <p>By way of a report by the Head of Customer Services, the Group noted the progress that had been achieved by the Violent Incident Panel over the previous 12 months.</p> <p>The Advisory Group was reminded that the Violent Incident Register had been introduced in 2007 in order to alert employees and elected members to significant risks to their personal safety by providing up to date and timely information about known incidents of violence and aggression. The Register was managed by a Panel of officers comprising the Head of Customer Services (Chairman), Street Scene Manager, Corporate Systems and Information Manager, Solicitor, the General Manager, Leisure and the Corporate Health and Safety Advisor, following a stringent management regime.</p> <p>The Advisory Group was advised that there had been 10 incidents of violence directed towards Council employees in the 12 months to December 2012 all of which had been added to the Register. This was available to all staff via the GIS system on the Council's intranet site, allowing an informed decision to be made and appropriate action to be taken by employees or elected Members prior to a visit to a known aggressor.</p> <p>Concern was raised over access to the system by some staff in the</p>	

ITEM NO.	SUBJECT	ACTION BY
	<p>Operations Division, who appeared to have limited use of the Intranet. Mrs Barber undertook to liaise with Mrs Hansen regarding communication of information to operations staff and to look at increasing awareness of the Register to all employees.</p>	J Barber/S Hansen
5	<p>First Contact Update</p> <p>With the aid of a report by the Head of Customer Services, the Group was updated on the work of the First Contact Service.</p> <p>Mrs Barber reminded the Group that the First Contact Service had been introduced in 2001 as part of the Council's overall stress management arrangements when it had been agreed that there should be an additional alternative means of support to employees which would provide a confidential listening service. Mrs Barber explained that there were currently 11 First Contacts all of whom are Council officers that have volunteered their time and undertaken appropriate training. Employees could also be referred to the Council's external counselling services, Cambridgeshire Consultancy Service and Richmond Fellowship by HR where appropriate.</p> <p>The Advisory Group was advised that there had been 169 formal and 94 informal approaches from employees to the Service to date and 40 referrals to the professional counselling service. During the period January 2012 to January 2013 19 formal, 3 informal approaches and 6 referrals to counselling had been made. Mrs Barber attributed the rise in approaches associated with work during the previous quarter to staff concerns over the pay review and job security. In response to a comment regarding the lack of volunteers from One Leisure, Mrs Barber advised Members that despite not having a representative on the service, staff from One Leisure had made use of it.</p> <p>The Chairman expressed thanks on behalf of the Group to Mrs Barber and the First Contact Team for their continued work.</p>	
6	<p>Health and Safety Training Provision</p> <p>Following a request at the previous meeting, the Advisory Group noted a report by the Council's Corporate Safety Advisor updating them on health and safety training courses provided by Organisational and Workforce Development (OWD), a division of Local Government Shared Service (LGSS) who were now responsible for the Council's HR and learning and development provision.</p> <p>Mr Bowmer reported that the LGSS website provided a variety of information on the courses available, however the majority of these courses related to office based employees rather than technical or operational staff. Mr Bowmer stressed that it was important to make use of the 500 places that were available each year, the cost of which had</p>	HoS

ITEM NO.	SUBJECT	ACTION BY
	<p>been included in the overall contract agreed by the Council and LGSS. Choice was not restricted to the courses listed and bespoke courses could be provided on request but all were offered on a first come first served basis.</p> <p>Mr Bowmer advised that as the Council's training provider, LGSS should always be given the option of providing additional courses that may be required. Mr Howell advised that some training provision was included within procurement costs of new vehicles. The Group was advised by an Operations Division employee that some staff felt that they were unlikely to be invited to attend training courses due to staff shortages and had had little access to training in the past. Mr Bowmer responded that this would need to be investigated, particularly in light of the fact that training reports brought to the Group previously had indicated that a full programme existed.</p> <p>With respect to e-learning provision, employees had access to two sources, Safety Media, a system purchased several years ago which was independent of LGSS and remained largely unused and Learning Pool which required Managers to create their own presentations and share relevant content, which would be dependent on time available. Once again the issue of accessibility of the Intranet and associated e-learning modules for employees working at Eastfield House was raised as a cause for concern.</p> <p>Mr Bowmer reported that between October 2011 and the end of October 2012 he had provided courses covering the Council's Health and Safety Policy, accident and hazard reporting procedures and an IOSH course on elected members' responsibilities. A variety of first aid courses had also been completed.</p>	<p>S Howell/E Kendall</p> <p>E Kendall</p>
7	Quarterly Accident /Incident Reports	
	<p>(a) Pathfinder House</p> <p>The Group received and noted a report by the Corporate Health and Safety Advisor giving details of the accidents or incidents reported in offices and during active lifestyles activities since the last meeting of the Group. The accidents/incidents that had been reported had been of a relatively minor nature, there had been no statutorily reportable RIDDOR accidents involving employees and a total of 4 non – RIDDOR accidents and incidents reported in Pathfinder House.</p> <p>The Sub-Group agreed with a suggestion by the Corporate Health and Safety Advisor that an additional category be included in future reports which would list 'first aid incidents.' This would provide a mechanism for first aiders to report everyday rough and tumble incidents that had</p>	

ITEM NO.	SUBJECT	ACTION BY
	<p>required first aid.</p>	
	<p>(b) Operations Division</p> <p>Members noted a report by the Operations Division Health and Safety Co-ordinator giving details of the 15 employee and 1 non-employee related accidents that had been reported during Operations Division activities since the last meeting of the Group.</p> <p>Of the accidents a total of 7 had been the result of slips during icy weather conditions and Mr Howell was in the process of investigating the possibility of providing non-slip attachments for footwear, 2 accidents had been reported under the requirements of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR). All accidents had been reviewed at Operations Management Team meetings and remedial action taken was detailed in the report.</p>	
	<p>(c) One Leisure</p> <p>The Group also received a report by the One Leisure Quality, Facilities and Safety Manager detailing accidents which had been reported since the last meeting. 7 employee related accidents and 103 non-employee accidents, had been reported, 8 of which were not caused as a direct result of taking part in an activity, remedial action had been taken.</p>	
8	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting of the Group was scheduled for 4th June 2013.</p>	