

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 November 2013.

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors K J Churchill, J W Davies, R S
Farrer, R Fuller and Mrs D C Reynolds.

44. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 17th October 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

45. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillors R Fuller and N J Guyatt declared non pecuniary interests in Minute Nos. 50 and 52 by virtue of their appointment as District Council's representatives on Luminus Homes.

46. FINANCIAL MONITORING - REVENUE BUDGET 2013/14

The Cabinet received a report by the Assistant Director, Finance and Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the projected budget outturn for 2013/14 together with details of variations from the previous forecast.

Members were advised that the expected outturn of revenue expenditure was £21.8m which represented a saving of £1.5m in that previously forecasted. It was reported that the New Homes Bonus for 2014/15 would be based on the increase in houses in the year ending September 2013. Although the authority was behind its target by 7%, which would reduce next year's NHB by £41k, this would be more than offset by the growth in affordable homes and a risk contingency of £50k.

It was also pointed out that the cost of Council Tax Support was expected to be lower than that budgeted, income from Business Rates would be lower and that Sundry Debtors remained consistent with previous collection rates.

Having noted the position on debts collected and written off during the period July to September 2013, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the spending variations in the Revenue Budget be noted.

47. FINANCIAL MONITORING - CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2013/14

By means of a report by the Assistant Director, Finance and Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were acquainted with anticipated cost variations and timing changes in the Capital Programme for 2013/14 financial year.

Members were advised that the construction costs for the Huntingdon multi-storey car park and the One Leisure St Ives Redevelopment Schemes were expected to be higher than that budgeted for, a report on which would be presented at a future meeting of the Cabinet. Having noted that an Officer Governance Board and six themed Working Groups had been established by the Chief Officer Management Team to raise awareness of the importance of good governance, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the report be received and the expected variations noted.

48. TECHNICAL REFORM OF COUNCIL TAX - LOCALLY DEFINED DISCOUNTS

Further to Minute No. 12/76 and by way of a report by the Head of Customer Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered a proposal to reduce the Council Tax discount awarded for properties which are inhabitable and requiring/undergoing structural alteration or major repair to 0%.

Executive Councillors were reminded that the authority's current Council Tax Policy allowed for 100% discount for such properties. Having been advised that the change would encourage owners to re-occupy properties, remove financial incentives to do otherwise and achieve both income generation and efficiency savings in terms of administrative burdens, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the discount for uninhabitable dwellings requiring or undergoing structural alteration or major repair (Class D) be reduced to 0%, with effect from 1st April 2014.

49. SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP

The report of the Safety Advisory Group held on 11th September 2013 was received and noted.

50. SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEME AT LANGLEY COURT AND LANGLEY CLOSE, ST IVES

(The Chairman announced that he proposed to admit the following urgent item in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local

Government Act 1972 given its referral from Council, which met after the Cabinet agenda was despatched, and the scope to link to the Loan request from Luminus (Minute No. 52 refers)).

(Councillors J W Davies, R Fuller and Mrs D C Reynolds, local Ward Members, were in attendance and spoke on this item.)

The Cabinet gave consideration to a petition presented to Council on 13th November 2013, concerning the potential closure of the Sheltered Housing Scheme at Langley Court and Langley Close, St Ives together with a Motion by Councillor K J Churchill on the matter which had been referred, by the Council to the Cabinet. (the text of the petition and motion is reproduced in the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services appended in the Minute Book).

By way of introduction, the Executive Leader explained that he and local ward members had met with residents of Langley Court to discuss their concerns over proposals by Luminus to demolish the building in order to build an extra-care facility. At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillors Davies, Fuller and Mrs Reynolds addressed the Cabinet. They expressed reservations over the contents of the Motion given the need for extra care facilities in the town and the measures being offered by Luminus to support those affected. The local Ward Members acknowledged that improvements could have been made in the way the scheme was communicated to residents. As a result, residents had been left confused and anxious about their future. However, it was now Members' understanding that existing residents would be rehoused locally and given the opportunity to return to the new facility. Furthermore, it was suggested that the majority of Langley Court residents have now indicated their willingness to move.

In considering the information before them, Executive Councillors concurred with the views of the Ward Councillors and stressed that the new facility would provide additional care provisions for the district including specialist accommodation. Having noted that the other element of the Motion would be addressed when considering a later item of business (Minute No.52 refers) and on the basis that the following does not prejudice the formal determination of the planning application for the development should one be forthcoming, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

the Council is recommended:

- (a) that paragraph (a) of the Motion be noted;
- (b) that, having regard to the advice of Councillors representing St Ives and to evidence which suggests that the majority of Langley Court residents have clearly indicated their willingness to move, it is in the best interests of the residents to ensure that necessary steps are taken, at the earliest possible opportunity to resettle them; and
- (c) that, following investigations, Langley Court is considered

to be the most appropriate site for the extra care home.

51. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person including the authority that holds that information.

52. LOAN TO LUMINUS

(Councillor R Fuller, local Ward Member and District Council representative on Luminus, was in attendance and spoke on this item.)

With reference to a report by the Assistant Director, Finance and Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered a request by Luminus for a loan to enable them to develop a new extra care scheme for frail older people at Langley Court, St Ives.

Executive Councillors discussed the significant housing, health and social care benefits the scheme would give to the area. In expressing their support for the scheme, the Cabinet stressed that:

- no residents should be asked to leave until planning permission for the scheme is granted;
- any provision allows any resident that wishes to return after the new build is finished, can;
- every possible effort be made to ensure that any resident that wishes to return is temporarily housed in St Ives; and
- the Luminus Board reconsiders its attitude to District Council appointed Members to ensure full engagement and transparency.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

(a) that a loan be provided to Luminus of up to £5.5m over 30 years to fund the new extra care home, subject to confirmation of the various legal, procedural and security issues highlighted in the report and agreement of the interest rate; and

(b) that the Assistant Director, Finance and Resources, be authorised to make the loan following consultation with the Executive Councillor for Resources on these issues, subject to the Executive Councillor having the right to require agreement of the details to be determined by Cabinet.

Chairman