

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the Civic Suite 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Thursday, 23 October 2014.

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

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor J A Gray.

43. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 11th September 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

44. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received from the Members present.

45. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY ADVISORY GROUP

Given a vacancy following the recent death of Councillor Mrs P J Longford, it was

RESOLVED

that Councillor Mrs L Kadic be appointed to the membership of the Development Plan Policy Advisory Group for the remainder of the municipal year.

46. SHARED SERVICES

By way of a report by the Managing Director (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Cabinet considered an update on the progress of the project to work in partnership with Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils to deliver shared services.

The Executive Leader explained that a number of general principles had emerged in discussion with partner Councils and that one of these involved the selection of a lead or host authority who would take responsibility for progressing the business case for each new shared service. Whilst noting that Huntingdonshire had assumed the project lead for ICT, in the first instance, it was understood that this would not necessarily indicate the location of the service in the future. This would be an operational decision having considered each business case and the strategic accommodation priorities of each Council.

Members received details of the current approach in terms of HR, accommodation capacity and the savings that it was envisaged would

be achieved under the project and were assured that an evaluation process had been put in place by DCLG to ensure that the Transformation Challenge Grant Fund awarded to the authority would be used appropriately. In this regard, the Managing Director undertook to forward a copy of the project management plan to Cabinet Members.

Having discussed the potential timescale for achievement of each shared service project, noted that the effective target date would be 1st April 2015 and welcomed the support of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well Being) for the recommendations in the report, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the progress achieved to date by three partner Councils working together to deliver shared services be noted and endorsed;
- (b) that the general principles for progressing the project in relation to the proposed lead, location and cost sharing proposals be approved;
- (c) that a phased approach to the development of ICT and Legal Shared Services be adopted with interim project support appointed to assist with the process and to help develop full business cases; and
- (d) that a post of Business and Legal Practice Manager be established in advance of the proposed shared legal service to assist with the transformation programme and development of the shared service.

47. BUDGET MONITORING 2014/15 (REVENUE & CAPITAL) AND AN UPDATE ON ZERO BASED BUDGETING

The Head of Resources presented a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) updating the Cabinet on the present position with regard to the 2014/15 revenue and capital budget and progress on the zero based budgeting exercise.

In terms of budget monitoring, Members noted an estimated variation or underspend of £171,000 and £689,000 in the revenue and capital budgets respectively and a projected increase in New Homes Bonus arising from the completion of 137 additional properties more than originally forecast. It also was explained that the Zero Based Budgeting (ZBB) exercise would examine certain 'heavy' services in great detail and others with a lighter touch.

Following discussion on the methodology adopted for the ZBB exercise and concern at the timescale for its completion given how intrinsically it was linked to the Shared Services and 'Facing the Future' projects, the Managing Director undertook to consider ways and the capacity of the organisation to expedite the process. Having received the views of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well Being) and expressed its appreciation to the Corporate Management and Accountancy Teams for their efforts thus far, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the forecast revenue and capital budgets of £20.699m and £5.879m respectively and the proposals for undertaking the Zero Based Budget exercise in preparation for the forward budget be noted; and
- (b) that the Managing Director be requested, after consultation with the Executive Leader and Executive Councillor for Resources, to report to the Cabinet by March 2015 on a budgetary plan which would assign a timescale to the completion of the ZBB exercise.

48. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the press and public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority and the employees of, or office holders, under, the authority.

49. OPTIONS FOR FRAUD INVESTIGATION POST SFIS

Having regard to a joint report by the Corporate Fraud Manager and the Head of Customer Services (a copy of which is appended in the annex to the Minute Book), the Cabinet considered the future of the District Council's fraud team in view of the establishment by the Government of a Single Fraud Investigation Service designed to investigate all welfare fraud under the control of the Department of Works and Pensions.

Having been appraised of the extent of the proposed service from 2015 and on the recommendation of the Corporate Governance and Overview & Scrutiny (Economic Well Being) Panels, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that proposed Option 4 which would ensure that the Council retains a fraud presence post SFIS be adopted but that Officers continue to pursue consideration of shared service options with partner authorities by 2016.

Chairman