

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, 12 February 2015.

PRESENT: Councillor J D Ablewhite – Chairman.

Councillors B S Chapman, D B Dew, J A Gray, R B Howe, T D Sanderson and D M Tysoe.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor S Cawley.

64. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd January 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

65. MEMBERS INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were received.

66. 2015/16 REVENUE BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Further to Minute No.14/63 and by way of a report by the Head of Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet gave further consideration to the draft Budget, Medium Term Financial Strategy and level of Council Tax for 2015/16.

Members' attention was drawn to the additional information, which was now available, including the outcome of consultation with the business community, the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) following its further deliberations on the report by the Head of Resources and the decrease in the forecast outturn in the last twelve months.

The Cabinet was acquainted with the terms of a proposed project to replace the 3G Sport Pitch at One Leisure St Neots, details of which are also appended in the Minute Book. The project would be part funded through a bid to Sport England and the facility would have a minimum life of seven years. Having considered the business case for the project, which showed that the Council's contribution would be paid back in four years, the Cabinet approved:

- the submission of a bid to Sports England for the One Leisure St Neots - 3G Sport Pitch (Replacement) Project, and
- a capital financial contribution to the One Leisure St

Neots - 3G Sport Pitch (Replacement) Project of £117,600 subject to the successful approval of the bid noted above (to a maximum of £125,734 reflecting a 10% contingency increase in the total cost of the project).

Having placed on record their gratitude for the work of the Executive Councillor for Resources and the Resources Team in responding to the financial challenges facing the authority, it was

RESOLVED

that the Council be recommended to approve the proposed Budget, as modified by the 3G Sport Pitch (Replacement) Project, and Medium Term Financial Strategy, including

- the additional savings that have been achieved (as shown on Table C in Appendix 1);
- the level of reserves currently modelled.
- a freeze in Council Tax for:
 - 2015/16, and
 - over the period covered by the Medium Term Financial Strategy (2016/17 to 2019/20).
- the capital programme and the Fees and Charges Schedule.

67. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2015/16

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which were appended the 2015/16 Treasury Management Policy and Statement and the Annual Minimum Revenue Provision Policy. The documents had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) whose comments were relayed to the Cabinet. Having been satisfied that both documents met the requirements of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Code of Practice and Government guidance, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the Council be recommended to approve the 2015/16 Treasury Management Policy and Statement and the Annual Minimum Revenue Provision Policy.

68. CORPORATE PLAN - PERFORMANCE MONITORING/QUARTER 3

With the aid of a report by the Corporate Team Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet reviewed and noted progress achieved against key activities and specified levels of performance contained in the Council's Corporate Plan over the period 1st October to 31st December 2014. In doing so, the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels were taken into consideration.

Members were informed that two indicators under the Strong Local Economy Strategic Theme had achieved an “amber” rating and that measures had been introduced to improve performance in these areas. The Cabinet then discussed staff sickness trends. Analysis had been undertaken and it was now better understood. The Employment Panel was taking action, in particular, to reduce rates of long-term sickness. It was likely that this would take some time to achieve.

Having commented on the format of the report, the Cabinet was assured that performance management was being developed within the Council based on best practice. The aim would be to collect measures for publication that were valued by residents and which could be aggregated to show the Council’s overall service capability.

RESOLVED

that the progress made against the Council’s Corporate Plan in the year to date be noted.

69. 2014/15 QUARTER 3 CAPITAL REVENUE MONITORING AND FORECAST OUTFURN

The Cabinet received a report by the Head of Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the projected outturn for 2014/15 for the revenue and capital budgets together with details of variations from previous forecasts. Both budgets were likely to be underspent.

The Executive Councillor for Resources drew Members’ attention to the fact that the Council Tax Support Scheme appeared to have been set at the right level. He also referred to the positive trends in delivering housing units, which would increase the level of income through the New Homes Bonus.

With regard to forthcoming decisions on the future of the Alconbury and Molesworth airbases, the Cabinet decided to establish a fund using savings in the current year to support these communities when the decisions were announced. The intention was have a range of options ready on which these communities could be consulted. The Executive Councillor for Resources placed on record his support for the new fund. It was, therefore:

RESOLVED

that the following be approved:

- the forecast Revenue Budget of £20.012m, giving a forecast outturn underspend of £0.858m;
- the forecast Capital Budget of £3.693m, and
- the allocation of £100,000 of the forecast outturn underspend to a new Earmarked Reserve, entitled “Alconbury and Molesworth Support and Challenge Fund”.

70. REVIEW OF SAFER HOMES SCHEME FUNDING

The Cabinet gave consideration to a report by the Housing Strategy Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), which identified a range of options for the future of the Safer Homes Scheme. The Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing informed Members that the preferred option would lead to an improved Scheme, which would also reduce its cost to the Council. This would be achieved because a range of other organisations benefited from the scheme and they would in future be making a greater contribution on a Countywide basis. The scheme had positive benefits in terms of preventing injuries and reducing the need for Disabled Facilities Grants but these effects had not yet been quantified. It was intended to start collecting this information over the next two years.

It was suggested that eligibility for the service should be means tested. Having been advised that contributions were already sought but that a more formal system was under consideration, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that Option 2 be approved:

- investment by the Council of £25k in 2015/16 and £10.4k from 2016/17 - 2018/19;
- a new Countywide service jointly commissioned with partners, and
- a review the Council's funding position during 2016/17 to consider whether to fund the Scheme after the end of the contract.

Chairman