

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, 19 March 2015.

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

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor D M Tysoe.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor R Harrison

71. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12th February 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

72. MEMBERS INTERESTS

During Minute No. 76 – One Leisure Update Report – Councillor Sanderson declared a non-statutory disclosable interest by virtue of his membership of Huntingdon Town Council who owns the land where One Leisure Huntingdon is sited.

73. EAST COAST MAINLINE - LEVEL CROSSING CLOSURES FEASIBILITY STUDY

The Cabinet received a progress report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the proposed closure of all crossing points on the East Coast Main Line throughout Huntingdonshire. A total closure of 73 level crossings between London Kings Cross and Doncaster were proposed.

The purpose of the work being undertaken by Network Rail is part of an ongoing commitment to deliver a safer, more efficient and reliable railway.

As a result of local representations a draft revised plan for the Offords was proposed and tabled at the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) meeting held on 10th March 2015, which involved re-siting the roundabout to the north of the village further away from residential properties.

In order to progress the project Network Rail will be required to submit a Transport and Works Act Order in the future.

There was agreement amongst the Cabinet that Network Rail had endeavoured to undertake public consultation to establish local needs

and that the proposed improvements would benefit both passengers and motorists. Cllr Howe noted that he had attended at least three Parish Council Meetings where Network Rail had been in attendance.

The concerns expressed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) regarding the closure of level crossings could lead to increased road traffic were highlighted and it was noted that these concerns had been dispelled at the Panel meeting.

The Cabinet expressed full support for the investment in infrastructure. However, it was noted that there remained an investment deficit in infrastructure, particularly to the rail network in this part of the country, which the Cabinet requested be included in the resolution. It was further noted that widening of the Hatfield Viaduct was an essential improvement to the rail network and the Cabinet urged East Coast Main Line to swiftly resolve the issue.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet:

Notes the work undertaken to date and the proposed improvements the scheme would deliver to the rail network including the removal of all crossing points whilst providing alternative access for vehicular, pedestrian, cyclist and equestrian traffic.

Welcomes the investment in infrastructure. However, notes that investment is lacking in terms of rail infrastructure in this part of the country.

Supports the proposed scheme as detailed in Appendix B of the officer's report, including the revision detailed in Appendix C of the officer's report, leading to the submission of a Transport and Works Act application.

74. A14 CAMBRIDGE TO HUNTINGDON IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

Prior to the consideration of the report, the Chairman referred Members to a typographical error on the front page of the report, which listed the report as not being a key decision. The Chairman noted the item was a key decision.

The Cabinet received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding progress on the development and delivery of the A14 project, following the submission of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS). The application had been accepted by PINS which indicated the start of the formal examination process.

The Council is a Tier 1 stakeholder and the deadline for Council's Relevant Representation to be submitted to the PINS was 12th March, prior to the meeting of the Cabinet, and was presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) for comment and signed-off by the Executive Councillor.

Regarding noise impact, statistics indicated that as a result of the project 2800 dwellings would benefit and 330 dwellings would be affected. The Executive Councillor confirmed that this was correct and that it was important that appropriate mitigation measures be put in place for those dwellings that will be most affected by noise.

It was noted that both Huntingdonshire District Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council have made a significant financial commitment to the scheme and disappointment was expressed that Cambridge City Council, who will benefit greatly from the scheme, had yet to make a financial commitment.

In considering the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) new bridges will be designed to accommodate future development and the provision of adequate signage is an ongoing matter.

RESOLVED:

The Cabinet agreed:

That the Council continues to engage in the Development Consent Order process relating to the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme, and seeks to reach an agreement on the remaining outstanding matters as highlighted at Appendix C of the officer's report.

The Relevant Representation attached as Appendix B of the officer's report, as endorsed by Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-Being) Panel and signed-off by the Executive Councillor for Planning and Housing Strategy and the Corporate Director (Delivery) for submission to Planning Inspectorate by the stated deadline of 12th March 2015.

75. REQUEST FOR DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO PROCURE A NEW SOFTWARE SYSTEM FOR THE HOME-LINK SCHEME AND HOUSING ADVICE AND OPTIONS SERVICE

The Cabinet gave consideration to a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the procurement of a new software system for the Home-Link Scheme.

It was explained that the current Housing Need Team's IT system was due for renewal and the Home-Link Partnership has begun a joint tendering exercise with the four district authorities in Cambridgeshire plus Cambridge City Council as well as two authorities in West Suffolk.

The current contract has previously been extended and the Partnership now wished to test the market to explore other potential options. If following the procurement exercise a new supplier was the preferred bidder additional costs were expected to be incurred. There would be no additional costs if there was no change to the supplier.

In response to questions the Executive Member explained that the software system was a web-based system and an annual licence fee

was payable. The new contract will be for a 7 year period and there will not be a break in service between the expiry of the existing contract, which was due to end in April 2016, and commencement of the new contract.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet authorise the Head of Customer Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Customer Services, to accept the successful tender and sign the contract with the software provider.

If a new supplier is the successful bidder additional capital implementation costs in the region of £30,000 are likely to be incurred, in which case options will be explored to fund this necessary expenditure.

At the conclusion of the above item, at 7.41pm, Cllr Cawley entered the meeting.

76. ONE LEISURE UPDATE REPORT

By way of a report from the Head of Leisure and Health (a copy of which is appended to the Minute Book) Cabinet received an update on the performance of One Leisure which informed of the strategic direction One Leisure is taking in order to address the financial deficit. The report explained how One Leisure is being restructured and how it intended to achieve realistic growth objectives with a reduced cost base without significant reduction to service levels.

Councillor Harrison entered the room at this point of the meeting, at 7.50pm.

A net deficit of up to £125k is estimated for this financial year and Cabinet acknowledged that the operating loss is an improvement of £250-£300k over the previous financial year.

To assist in meeting the budget deficit the Cabinet were informed that Managers at the One Leisure sites have been informally notified of an impending management restructure and the formal consultation process would commence late March/early April. The review is required to create an effective and focussed management structure, designed to take the One Leisure business forward and will also contribute to the £81k savings identified within the 2015/16 budget.

Cabinet were advised that as of 1st April 2015 the 'Advantage' membership would cease, which had been in existence for 13 years. Instead four different membership packages had been created so that new members only paid for what they used at a fairer and more competitive price.

A question was asked regarding the expansion of One Leisure Huntingdon. The Head of Leisure and Health explained that, subject to a full business case, the fitness studio was to be expanded into the fun zone room. This was as a result of customer feedback that memberships were not being re-newed as the fitness studio was too

busy.

During discussions Councillor Sanderson declared a non-statutory disclosable interest by virtue of his membership of Huntingdon Town Council who owns the land where One Leisure Huntingdon is sited.

In response to a question the Head of Leisure and Health explained that 9½ months was currently the average length that a person continued membership with One Leisure, which was satisfactory as it was above the national average. However, with the introduction of the new membership packages it was expected that this would increase.

In considering future improvements it was requested that customer input be sought in addition to relying on statistics.

The Cabinet recognised that the 2015/16 budget will be challenging and there were risks attached to achieving the financial objectives. However, there were already signs of positive improvement and growth in the district which would assist in achieving the targets.

The Cabinet expressed appreciation to officers and Members for the improvements that had already been made.

The report was not accompanied by a recommendation, which the Cabinet amended. The Cabinet noted the update report and its contents and requested that a further report be presented in six months. The Cabinet also requested that the report be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being).

RESOLVED:

That the update report and its contents be noted.

That a further report be presented to the Cabinet in six months.

77. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

78. PATHFINDER HOUSE: BEST USE OF SPACE AND EXTERNAL LETTINGS

The Cabinet gave consideration to a confidential report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) requesting approval for delegated authority in regard to letting office space within Pathfinder House and approval regarding the use of space and external lettings at Pathfinder House.

Delegated authority existed for the Managing Director in consultation

with the relevant Portfolio Holder to approve commercial leases and the same delegation was sought in respect of long-term lettings of office space within Pathfinder House (Operational Estate).

Prior to the exercise of any delegated authority on such matters, the Cabinet expected the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) to be consulted.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) noted that the Panel supported the proposal and looked forward to receiving the framework that would apply to any delegated decision relating to letting office space within Pathfinder House. Provided the framework was applied Cllr Harrison did not expect the Panel to have any issue with such decisions.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet instructs the Managing Director in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources to proceed on the basis as contained within the confidential report and approves the recommendations as contained within the confidential report

Chairman