

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 April 2015.

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

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor R Harrison.

79. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd April 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

80. MEMBERS INTERESTS

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary or other interests received at the meeting.

81. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2015/16

The Cabinet gave consideration to a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the Capital Programme for 2015/2016, having been reviewed by the Finance Governance Board.

It was explained that the Capital Programme was usually approved at the same time as the budget. However, following an audit report the Finance Governance Board was established to review the capital projects.

A new scoring mechanism, based on methodology from The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) had been used to assess all Capital Projects taking into account the impact of the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP).

The Cabinet were referred to the Appendices attached to the report which included the capital projects that had been submitted and assessed, those projects recommended for approval and the scoring matrix used to assess the bids.

The bids submitted for assessment totalled £11.065m and the Finance Governance Board had recommended that £9.637m of those be approved. The 2016/2017 approved budget included a MRP of £1.905m and the recommended Capital Programme had reduced the amount to £1.776m. Thereby creating a budget saving.

All capital funding had an effect on the revenue budget which was reflected in the budget as MRP and the cost of internal borrowing. It was therefore important that when approving any capital that there

was regard to both the MRP and the cost of internal borrowing. It was considered that the Capital Programme was affordable for 2015/2016 and supported the Council's Corporate Plan.

Some of the submitted bids considered by the Finance Governance Board had been returned to the relevant Head of Service due to insufficient information or were generic and did not refer to a specific scheme. Although other bids were considered a high priority, based on the evidence provided, it was decided that these could be reduced in order to provide potential in the Programme for priority in-year bids and still remain within the affordability envelope of the MRP.

The Executive Councillor for Resources explained that there was currently a review scheduled of the constitution and financial governance provisions where it would be proposed that a Member-led Treasury and Capital Management Group be established. The Executive Councillor for Resources requested, and the Cabinet agreed, that prior to the establishment of this Group in the interim when a business case was completed the officer was to seek the agreement of the relevant Executive Councillor prior to its submission to the Finance Governance Board.

In response to questions the Cabinet were informed that the Capital Programme did not provide approval to spend as each Project was subject to a business case. However, within the Capital Programme contained a list of 'existing commitments' which were committed projects that already had contracts.

The Cabinet were further advised that the Projects contained within the Capital Programme had already been assessed against the Council's Corporate Plan during the scoring stage.

Reference was made to the legal implications contained within the report and that the Council could be seen to not be fulfilling its legal duty in respect of funding the full requirement for Disabled Facility Grants. In response the Cabinet were assured that the Council was meeting the minimum legal requirement and that to satisfy the full demand for Disabled Facility Grants would prove difficult for the Council.

The Cabinet considered the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) and the Chairman of the Panel, having been invited to address the Cabinet, explained that at the Panels request the Members had received details of the scoring model used to assess the projects. Overall the Panel considered the new scoring method to be professional and complemented the Project Management model.

In conclusion the Cabinet,

RESOLVED

that the Capital Programme 2015/16 as attached to the officer's report be approved and until the Treasury and Capital Management Group is established that all business cases be agreed by the relevant Executive Councillor prior to

submission to the Finance Governance Board.

82. CORPORATE PLAN 2015/16

The Cabinet considered a report to update the Corporate Plan for 2015/2016 (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book). It was explained to the Cabinet that following the introduction of the Corporate Plan in 2014 there had been some confusion about the meaning of Strategic Themes, Outcomes and Priorities contained within the Plan. The content of the 2015/2016 Corporate Plan was broadly similar to the original version. However, minor amendments had been made. 'Strategic Themes' had been replaced with 'Strategic Priorities' (a strong local economy, enabling sustainable growth, working with our communities and ensuring the Council is customer focused and service led Council) and 'Outcomes' had been replaced with 'Objectives'. Other minor amendments had also been made to the text and format. The amendments were identified in the Appendix of the report.

The Cabinet were pleased to note that those surveyed via the Halifax Report ranked Huntingdon as the ninth best place to live in the country and the improvement compared to four years previously where Huntingdon was ranked 64th.

It was noted by a Member of the Cabinet that the current Customer Services Strategy was very detailed and as a result was under review. The Cabinet were informed that the revised Customer Services Strategy which was designed to be more achievable and include a single page explanation document would be presented later in the year to the Cabinet.

There was agreement amongst the Cabinet that key Performance Indicators were required and that the Executive Councillors should agree these with Officers. The Cabinet were advised that there was further performance monitoring work scheduled regarding service plans and departmental Performance Indicators.

Having noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) had not been presented with the revised Corporate Plan, a full review was scheduled next year and the Panel would be involved in this process which will continue to include Performance Indicators. The Cabinet amended the recommendation contained within the report, as the Corporate Plan was a document requiring approval by Full Council, and

RECOMMEND

That the content of the Corporate Plan 2015/2016 be approved by Full Council.

83. PROJECT MANAGEMENT SELECT COMMITTEE

The Cabinet gave consideration to a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the findings of the Project Management Select Committee of how project management could be further improved.

Following consideration of a project closedown report regarding the Multi-Storey Car Park in Huntingdon and the One Leisure St Ives Redevelopment by the Overview and Scrutiny (Economic Well-being) Panel, a Select Committee was convened to review the Council's new Project Management procedures.

The Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being), having been invited to address the Cabinet, explained the process of the Project Management Select Committee and presented the recommendations. It was noted that the Select Committee had been a positive and useful exercise. The Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) expressed appreciation to Officers for their co-operation throughout the process.

During discussions the Cabinet were informed that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) were satisfied with the amendments to the processes regarding scrutiny involvement in the financial control and governance of projects and that a review was scheduled in six and twelve months.

The Cabinet commended the work of the Project Management Select Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) and

RESOLVED

That:

- Overview and Scrutiny processes be reviewed following the Scrutiny away day, to include improved tracking of Overview and Scrutiny recommendations, improved information in reports to encourage challenge, and better decision making and analysis of Members' skills to make better use of individual Overview and Scrutiny Panel Members;
- Project management guidance be amended to require original Business Cases to be kept live and linked from the definition section of the Project Initiation Document (PID);
- A session with the Programme and Projects Manager be arranged to explain the purpose of this new role and what it will achieve;
- Project updates be included in the quarterly performance reports to Overview and Scrutiny Panels;
- A review by the Overview & Scrutiny (Economic Well-Being) Panel be arranged for 6 months' time to review steps followed in delivering the In-Cab Technology project and other projects currently in the delivery stage, including their procurement processes, and to assess how well the highlight reports for these projects are working;
- A review by Members of the Project Management Select Committee be arranged for 12 months' time to review financial reporting on projects and the post-delivery stage.

Chairman