

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, 18 June 2015.

PRESENT: Councillor J D Ablewhite – Chairman.
Councillors R B Howe, R C Carter, S Cawley,
D B Dew, R Harrison, J A Gray and
D M Tysoe.

ALSO IN Councillors G Bull and T Hayward OBE
ATTENDANCE: (part).

9. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20th May 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

10. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Harrison declared a non-statutory disclosable interest as his wife had been directly involved in the development of the A14 project.

11. A14 CAMBRIDGE TO HUNTINGDON IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

The Cabinet received a further update report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on progress with the development of the A14 on matters surrounding the Examination in Public and documentation that the Council will submit to the Examination.

The Council had consistently supported the need for the improvement of the A14 since the Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-Modal Study recommendations in 2001, as an upgraded A14 was vital to the continued economic prosperity of Huntingdonshire.

The Cabinet was advised that the formal Examination in Public had commenced for a six month duration and the Joint Local Impact Report of the Council, together with other Tier 1 stakeholders, had been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate by the deadline of 15th June 2015. Prior to the meeting of the Cabinet the Joint Local Impact Report submitted to the Planning Inspectorate had been circulated to the Cabinet. It was noted by the Transport Team Leader that there were no substantive changes between the version attached as Appendix D in the agenda and version submitted to the Planning Inspectorate other than formatting and typographical amendments.

Officers had continued to negotiate on outstanding matters and whilst progress had been made on many, others remained outstanding and had yet to be resolved. The Cabinet were referred to Appendix B of the officer's report which listed the outstanding issues.

It was highlighted to the Cabinet that noise continued to be an

outstanding issue, as suitable noise mitigation measures were required for those properties adversely affected by noise. A further outstanding issue related to the future long-term maintenance plan of the Borrow Pits.

The Scheme now proposed continued to include the overall improvements that had consistently been sought, including the removal of the A14 Viaduct within Huntingdon. The Council therefore must continue to engage in the Examination process and in order to do this the Cabinet were requested to approve the Joint Local Impact Report, the draft Statement of Common Ground and the Written Representation by the Council to the Planning Inspectorate.

In the interests of expediency, the Cabinet were also requested to delegate authority to the Managing Director and the Executive Councillor for Planning and Housing Strategy regarding any minor amendments required to the documents.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Hayward was invited to address the Cabinet. Councillor Hayward explained that his presence at the meeting was not of a personal nature, but to offer alternative suggestions to the A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme from Buckden Parish Council. The alternative suggestions included a solution to negate the need for Borrow Pits to enable the re-alignment of the A1, a footpath to Grafham Water, extension of the cycle lane and footpath from Mere Lane to Brampton Wood and retention of the viaduct. At the conclusion of his presentation the Cabinet asked questions of Councillor Hayward.

In further response the Transport Team Leader explained that within the Cambridgeshire County Council Mineral and Waste Plan, material from the Borrow Pits had been allocated to the A14 project, although not all of the material required for construction would be able to be obtained from the Borrow Pits. Alternative routes had been considered and the current option was regarded as the best option. The condition of the viaduct had been part of the evidence submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. Traffic figures had not been supplied by Cambridgeshire County Council for alternative schemes but would be made available if the Planning Inspectorate requested the information. The Cabinet were referred to Table 1 within Section 8 of the Joint Local Impact Report which provided a forecast of the traffic flow on various locations of the A1 and A14 in 2035 both with and without the A14 improvements.

The Transport Team Leader noted that the A14 was a significant contributory factor to the air quality issue in Huntingdon. The removal of the A14 viaduct would result in an improvement to air quality and reduce the vehicle movements through Godmanchester. Currently Godmanchester received 18,000 vehicles per day and with the viaduct removed this would decrease to 9,000 vehicles per day. Cambridgeshire County Council had formally resolved that it would not proceed with the A14 improvements without the removal of the viaduct.

During its debate the Cabinet enquired whether further expansion would be possible, it was explained that no expansion was designed within the proposed scheme other than at Bar Hill.

Reference was made to the Joint Local Impact Report regarding developments at Alconbury Weald and Wyton Airfield. The A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon improvement scheme would provide some relief to traffic problems in Huntingdon, Godmanchester, Brampton and St Ives but new transport links would still be required to cater for the level of new development. Therefore the Cambridgeshire Long-Term Transport Strategy would need to ensure infrastructure was in place to accommodate new development.

It was agreed that the current A14 improvement scheme was better than previously proposed. The Cabinet considered the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) and it was further noted that the Cabinet would be updated when information was available regarding the transportation route that construction traffic would use.

In conclusion the Cabinet,

RESOLVED

To approve:

- i) The Joint Local Impact Report of the Council together with other Tier 1 stakeholders, namely Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council,
- ii) The (Draft) Statement of Common Ground between the Council and Highways England,
- iii) The Written Representation of the Council to be submitted to the A14 Examination in Public,
- iv) That, in the interests of expediency, delegated authority be given to the Managing Director and the Executive Councillor for Planning and Housing Strategy relating to the agreement of any required minor amendments to the Joint Local Impact Report, the (Draft) Statement of Common Ground and the Written Representation and other such documents as necessary.

At the conclusion of the above item, at 8.05pm, Councillor Hayward left the room and did not return to the meeting.

12. CORPORATE PLAN - PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Cabinet considered a report regarding progress against the Key Activities and Corporate Indicators listed in the Council's Corporate Plan for 2014/15 for the period 1st January 2015 to 31st March 2015.

Progress against the Corporate Plan objectives was reported quarterly. Performance data had been provided in the form of a narrative of achievement accompanied with a Red/Amber/Green status against each Key Action in the Corporate Plan.

The Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being), having been invited to address the Cabinet, explained that the Panel recognised that performance monitoring was work in progress and that it was an improvement on previous reporting. One issue that the Panel were concerned about was staff sickness levels.

Whilst considering the progress made against the Key Activities and Corporate Indicators the Cabinet made comments on its aspirations for future performance monitoring.

The Cabinet welcomed the report and acknowledged that significant improvements were evident and that a link to the Corporate Plan and Performance Indicators was important. However, the Cabinet suggested that further work was required to provide an instant snapshot of the current progress against the Key Activities and Corporate Indicators.

The Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) noted that a review of Overview and Scrutiny was being conducted to realign scrutiny with the Corporate Plan.

It was noted that there had been a decrease in sickness absence during the last quarter with a significant reduction in long-term sickness absence in particular. The Cabinet stated that it would be preferable if the performance could be measured against other local authorities.

It was suggested that other service organisations be used for comparison when establishing the performance indicators as well as considering the target audience.

Having noted the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels, it was

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet considered and commented on the progress made against Key Activities and Corporate Indicators in the Corporate Plan, as summarised in Appendix A and detailed in Appendix B of the officer's report.

13. CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY 2015-2018

The Cabinet gave consideration to a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute book) on progress with the revised Customer Service Strategy. A summary 'Plan on a Page' document of the Customer Service Strategy was presented to the Cabinet for comment prior to a final version of the Strategy being presented to Members later in 2015.

It was explained that the Customer Service Strategy was a key corporate document which established how customer service was delivered across the Council.

The Cabinet were referred to the timetable for implementation of the Strategy as contained within paragraph 6.1 of the Officer's report. Consultation had already taken place with Officers, Members and the

public. However, a further consultation exercise was scheduled.

The Cabinet stated that it was important for the revised Strategy to be of importance to all Officers and during the recruitment process officers should consider the attitude as well as the skills of any applicants to ensure that new Officers were customer focused.

There was a consensus amongst the Cabinet that the strategic direction being adopted within the revised Customer Service Strategy was accurate. However, there should be a corporate template to ensure all 'Plan on a Page' documents were consistent. In conclusion it was,

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet provided feedback on the summary document, prior to a full Customer Service Strategy being produced later in 2015.

14. DISPOSAL AND ACQUISITIONS POLICY: LAND AND PROPERTY

The Cabinet gave consideration to a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the new Disposal and Acquisitions Policy which provided a framework through which the Council was able to manage its estate of land and buildings within a commercial environment.

It was explained that the former thresholds and procedures within the Constitution were considered too restrictive and to enable a more commercial approach to the management of the Council's property portfolio, a new Disposal and Acquisitions Policy and governance arrangements was recommended to the Cabinet.

The formation of a Treasury and Capital Management Group was recommended whose functions would be:

- Treasury Management investment decisions (including the acquisition and disposal of all types of assets);
- the Capital Programme and undertaking of all capital development, including the approval of Business Cases;
- comment on Treasury Management performance; and
- to call Officer's to account in respect of performance relating to capital projects.

The Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being), having been invited to address the Cabinet, explained that there had been a good debate at the meeting regarding the governance arrangements and procedures to ensure that decisions were transparent. The Panel had suggested recommendations which were listed within the officer's report.

In response to a question it was confirmed that within the revised Policy purchases up to a value of £500,000 would be delegated to the Managing Director (as Head of Paid Service) and Head of Resources (as Section 151 Officer), following consultation with Executive Councillor for Resources.

The Cabinet agreed that the suggested amendments by the Overview

and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) should be incorporated into the new Policy and it was,

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet approve the:

- i. Disposal and Acquisitions Policy including the new monetary thresholds, subject to the inclusion of the following recommendations by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being):
 - Where disposal and acquisition decisions are made, that these be retrospectively reported to the Panel.
 - The new financial thresholds are reviewed 12 months following approval.
- ii. Creation of the Treasury and Capital Management Group.

RECOMMEND

To the Corporate Governance Panel that it approves all required changes to the Constitution (including the Code of Financial Management) to reflect the requirements of the Disposal and Acquisitions Policy.

15. PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2014/15 (REVENUE AND CAPITAL)

The Cabinet received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) with an analysis of the outturn against the original budget for the financial year ending 31st March 2015.

The Cabinet were pleased to note the positive report and expressed appreciation to the Executive Councillor for Resources and to all Officers involved in generating the level of savings achieved.

It was noted that a Commercial Investment Strategy reserve was being established in order to provide a source of funding for the development of the Council's Commercial Investment Strategy and to remove the New Homes Bonus from the Council's core funding stream.

Some of the savings generated had been via vacant posts and it was noted that this should not be to the detriment of the respective service area. Whereupon the Cabinet

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet:

- i. Note, in respect of the 2014/15 provisional outturn the:
 - revenue net expenditure of £18.171m;
 - reasons for the £2.699m variance on the original service budgets (listed in Table 1 of the Officer's report);
 - capital expenditure of £2.999m; and

- reasons for the £0.489m variance on the capital programme (listed in Table 5 of the Officer's report).
- ii. Approve, in respect of the revenue provisional outturn noted in (i) above the transfer to Earmarked reserves of:
- £0.100m - Alconbury and Molesworth Support and Challenge reserve;
 - £0.261m - Carry forwards to the 2015/16 service revenue budget;
 - £0.443m – Transformation Challenge Award Funding for Shared Service reserve;
 - £0.500m - Chequers Court Development reserve; and
 - £2.728m - Commercial Investment Strategy reserve.
- iii. Approve, in respect of the capital and provisional outturn noted in (i) above, the carry forward of committed expenditure on capital projects of £0.271m.
- iv. Approve a delegation for the Head of Resources to adjust the revenue contributions noted in (ii) above, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Resources and the Managing Director, if the actual outturn varies to that noted in (i) above by more than 2.5%.

16. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2014/2015

A report by the Head of Resources was presented to the Cabinet (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which reviewed the treasury management performance for the 2014/2015 financial year.

The Council's Treasury Management processes were underpinned by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Code of Practice on Treasury Management. The Code required the Council to produce an annual Treasury Management Strategy and recommended that Members were informed of treasury management activity at least twice a year. The report presented to the Cabinet was the biennial report.

It was noted that paragraph 2.4 of the Officer's report summarised the treasury management transactions undertaken during the 2014/2015 financial year.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet note the 2014/15 Treasury Management performance.

Chairman