

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, 16 July 2015.

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

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors R C Carter and D B Dew.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor G J Bull (part)

17. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18th June 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

18. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

19. HUNTINGDONSHIRE MARKETING STRATEGY

The Cabinet received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the Marketing Strategy and Branding profile for the promotion of Huntingdonshire.

The Cabinet had previously approved the Huntingdonshire Economic Growth Plan 2013 - 2023 in July 2013 and one of the key short-term actions was the development of a Marketing Strategy for the promotion of the District as a location of choice to live, work and invest.

Prior to the meeting of the Cabinet comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) had been circulated to the Cabinet.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being), having been invited to address the Cabinet, explained that the Panel had endorsed the Marketing Strategy with the suggested following additional recommendations, which were accepted by the Cabinet -

- progress on the implementation of the Marketing Strategy to be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being Panel) at six monthly intervals; and
- an annual report on the impact of the Marketing Strategy work programme to be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel

(Economic Well-Being).

The Cabinet accepted that external expertise had been procured to assist with the development of the Strategy, branding, a website and marketing materials but questioned the choice of depictions contained within the Strategy.

Referring to the SWOT analysis, the Cabinet expressed concern at the inclusion of 'Low Aspirations' and felt the issue was a shortage of skills rather than low aspirations. The Cabinet therefore agreed to remove 'Low Aspirations' as contained within the 'Weaknesses' section of the SWOT analysis and amend 'Deprivation' to 'Concentrated pockets of deprivation in some key areas with some skill shortages'.

It was explained that once the Strategy was approved by the Cabinet, preparation of the external facing marketing materials and branding profile would commence with the assistance of the Executive Councillor for Strategic Economic Development and Legal. However, the Cabinet stated that development of the website with input from current and potential businesses in the District was crucial.

It was emphasised to the Cabinet that the Strategy was an internal document for use by Officers in promoting the District and was not for circulation externally. In light of the level of production costs the Cabinet suggested that the document could be easily amended and produced as an external document.

A Cabinet Member explained that for the Strategy to be successful an effective events calendar detailing target dates for the introduction of promotional material was essential. The Strategy was light on case studies and the Cabinet requested that current businesses be represented in the document as well as other businesses that had benefitted from being located in the District.

In conclusion the Cabinet,

RESOLVED

- i. to endorse the implementation of the Marketing Strategy and Branding profile for the promotion of Huntingdonshire subject to removal of 'Low Aspirations' and the relating text from the 'Weaknesses' section of the SWOT analysis, and 'Deprivation' be amended to:

'Concentrated pockets of deprivation in some key areas with some skill shortages';

- ii. that progress on the implementation of the Marketing Strategy be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being Panel) at six monthly intervals;
- iii. that an Annual Report on the impact of the Marketing Strategy work programme be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being).

20. REVIEW OF THE RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Cabinet considered a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to approve the Risk Management Strategy following its annual review.

The Cabinet was advised that the Corporate Governance Panel previously approved the Strategy but following a review of the Panel's effectiveness it was decided that it was not the appropriate forum to consider the document.

It was explained to the Cabinet that the Risk Management Strategy formerly included two risk appetite statements – one that referred to the appetite surrounding health and safety risks and a second 'catch-all' statement for all other areas. However, in order to better reflect the Corporate Plan the two former risk appetite statements were to be deleted and replaced with seven individual statements, each of which reflected the different types of risk which the Council could face and which could impact on its ability to meet both its statutory requirements and strategic outcomes.

The seven risk areas related to Transformation; People and Culture; Financial; Operational/Service; Reputation; Compliance and Regulation; and Health and Safety. The Cabinet were referred to the risk appetite levels for each of the areas and were informed that work would commence on mapping all of the risks in the Risk Register against the seven risk areas. Whereupon the Cabinet,

RESOLVED

to approve the Risk Management Strategy.

21. SHARED SERVICES OVERVIEW

The Cabinet gave consideration to a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) containing a number of recommendations regarding the first phase of the partnership arrangement between Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC), South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) and Cambridge City Council (CCC) for ICT, Legal Services and Building Control shared service proposals.

It was explained that the Councils intended to share services as there were significant risks in doing nothing. Each Council had to identify significant savings as well as protecting and preserving services and retaining skilled staff in a competitive market place. Shared services offered a way of mitigating these risks.

The Cabinet were referred to the main risks associated with sharing services across the three Councils as highlighted in the Officer's report.

A Lead Authority model was being used for the shared service arrangements since it best reflected the current vision for shared services and the starting position of each partner Council.

It was explained that a Joint Committee with no delegated powers or

functions was to be established to oversee the operation of shared services, supported by an Officer Board. The remit of the Joint Committee was to provide advice, oversight, challenge and endorsement of the shared service business plans and budget. The Joint Committee would receive regular updates on the operation of the shared services and would take reports and recommendations for decision to their respective Executives (and Full Council, if appropriate), at agreed points with the engagement of each Council's Scrutiny Committees. Membership would consist of the Leaders of each Council with a nominated Deputy attending in their absence. The Cabinet appointed Councillor Howe to deputise for the Leader on the Joint Committee.

The Cabinet endorsed the Sovereignty Guarantee to give confidence to individual Councils' Executives that they would retain sovereignty of their organisations, as well as Executive decision-making powers.

The Cabinet expressed appreciation to the Managing Directors and Management Team of the three respective Councils and to the Leaders of Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council for their assistance throughout the process.

Prior to the meeting of the Cabinet a summary of the comments from the South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council Scrutiny Committee meetings following consideration of the ICT, Legal Services and Building Control shared service proposals had been circulated to the Cabinet. The comments of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Panels (Economic Well-Being) and (Environmental Well-Being) had also been circulated to the Cabinet prior to its meeting.

In considering the additional recommendations by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) the Cabinet suggested that the three respective Executive Councillors responsible for ICT should convene regularly to discuss the matter and that the Overview and Scrutiny Panels should receive update reports from the respective Councils' Scrutiny Panels to scrutinise topics related to shared services.

In conclusion the Cabinet,

RESOLVED

- 1) to endorse the approach to shared services outlined in the Officer's report;
- 2) to approve the establishment of a Joint Committee without delegated powers to oversee the delivery of shared services;
- 3) to appoint the Executive Leader as the Council's representative to the Joint Committee and Councillor Howe as the deputy appointment;
- 4) to approve the Sovereignty Guarantee detailed in Section 8 of the Officer's report;
- 5) to agree the approach to cost sharing principles and

partnership agreement as outlined in Section 9 of the Officer's report;

- 6) to approve that the final partnership agreement be delegated to the Managing Director, in consultation with the Executive Leader of the Council;
- 7) that formal consultation commence with Staff Council and affected staff on 24th July 2015, closing on 1st September 2015.

22. LEGAL SHARED SERVICES BUSINESS CASE

Following the report outlining the overall approach that had been taken to develop the first phase of the partnership arrangement between Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC), South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) and Cambridge City Council (CCC) for ICT, Legal Services and Building Control shared services, the Cabinet received a further report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to approve the business case to establish a Legal shared service.

It was explained that there were strategic and financial benefits for all three partners to create a Legal shared service and the Officer's report included a detailed financial model to show how savings would be achieved against the baseline budget.

In discussing the financial detail it was noted that external legal costs were not incorporated into the level of spend figures and recharges were yet to be incorporated into the financial information.

The Cabinet noted that the Authority had learnt from the CCTV shared service experience and in order to maintain good relations between the Partners that financial projection figures over a 5 year period were necessary so that all Partners fully understood the financial commitments.

It was explained that the three Councils had been awarded funding from Government via the Transformation Challenge Award to support the work towards a range of shared service arrangements.

During the Cabinet's debate Councillor Bull left the room and did not return to the meeting.

During the Cabinet's discussions it was emphasised that the Council had already experienced a significant amount of staff changes and incurred expense via redundancies and that the Council would not incur further expense as a result of any redundancies in the Partner Authorities. Whereupon the Cabinet,

RESOLVED

to approve the Business Case and delegate authority to the Managing Director, in conjunction with the Executive Councillor for Strategic Economic Development and Legal, to make decisions and to take steps that are necessary, conducive or incidental to the establishment of the Legal shared service in accordance with the detailed business case.

23. ICT SHARED SERVICES BUSINESS CASE

Following the report outlining the overall approach that had been taken to develop the first phase of the partnership arrangement between Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC), South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) and Cambridge City Council (CCC) for ICT, Legal Services and Building Control shared services, the Cabinet received a further report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to approve the business case to establish an ICT shared service.

It was explained that there were strategic and financial benefits for all three partners to create an ICT shared service and the Officer's report included a detailed financial model to show how savings would be achieved against the baseline budget. It was expected that savings beyond those contained within the report would be achieved.

It was explained that each Authority would be the Lead Authority for a shared service and HDC was acting as the Lead Authority for the ICT shared service.

The Cabinet noted that one of the key assumptions and pre-requisites of the business case was based upon the need to increase resilience, improve the quality of service to clients, become more efficient and increase capacity within the service to drive innovation and technology enabled change across all three Councils.

During discussions the Cabinet was interested to note that 50% of the savings generated via the ICT shared service would not be as a result of staffing but other sources such as shared cost of licences. Whereupon the Cabinet,

RESOLVED

to approve the Business Case and delegate authority to the Managing Director, in conjunction with the Executive Councillor for Customer Services, to make decisions and to take steps that are necessary, conducive or incidental to the establishment of the ICT shared service in accordance with the detailed business case.

24. BUILDING CONTROL SHARED SERVICES BUSINESS CASE

Following the report outlining the overall approach that had been taken to develop the first phase of the partnership arrangement between Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC), South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) and Cambridge City Council (CCC) for ICT, Legal Services and Building Control shared services, the Cabinet received a further report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to approve the business case to establish a Building Control shared service.

It was explained that there were strategic and financial benefits for all three partners to create a Building Control shared service and the Officer's report included a detailed financial model to show how savings would be achieved against the baseline budget.

The Cabinet were informed that due to changes in EU Procurement Rules it was possible that an advert might be required in the Official Journal of the European Union. Further legal advice was being sought and if this was the case the Cabinet would be informed. Whereupon the Cabinet,

RESOLVED

to approve the Business Case and delegate authority to the Managing Director, in conjunction with the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing, to make decisions and to take steps that are necessary, conducive or incidental to the establishment of the Building Control shared service in accordance with the detailed business case

25. BUDGET MONITORING 2015/16 (REVENUE AND CAPITAL)

The Cabinet received a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to be acquainted with the revenue and capital forecast outturn for 2015/16 based on information available at the end of May 2015.

Prior to the meeting of the Cabinet comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) had been circulated to the Cabinet.

The Cabinet were not surprised to note, given the current difficulties in the housing market, that at the end of May 2015 there were 374 new homes which was 186 down on the target of 560 for the same period.

It was explained that as at the end of May, the year-end forecast outturn was £0.681m less than planned and to date little had been spent from the capital programme. Whereupon the Cabinet,

RESOLVED

to note the financial performance to date.

26. REPRESENTATION ON ORGANISATIONS 2015/2016

Consideration was given by the Cabinet to a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the Council's representation on a variety of organisations/partnerships, and it was

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet approve the appointments/nominations in relation to representation on a variety of organisations/partnerships as appended to the report and authorise the Corporate Team Manager, after consultation with the Deputy Executive Leader of the Council, to make any changes that may be required throughout the year.

27. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

28. REVIEW OF BENEFITS RISK BASED VERIFICATION POLICY

The Cabinet gave consideration to a confidential report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) requesting approval of the revised Risk Based Verification Policy.

The Cabinet had previously approved a Benefits Risk Based Verification Policy which was applied to new claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support. The Policy had been revised to extend to changes of circumstance in addition to new claims.

Since the introduction of the Risk Based Verification Policy it had proven successful in focusing resources at claims for benefit most likely to contain fraud and/or error.

The Cabinet was pleased to note that the fraud and error detected by the Council was exceeding the baseline established by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Having acknowledged that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) was supportive of the Policy the Cabinet,

RESOLVED

to approve the revised Risk Based Verification Policy.

Chairman