

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, 21 July 2016.

PRESENT: Councillor R B Howe – Chairman.

Councillors R C Carter, R Harrison, J A Gray, D M Tysoe, G J Bull, S J Criswell, D Brown and J M Palmer.

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

23. (a) MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

(b) MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

24. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

25. VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING 2017/18 TO 2019/20 - A REPORT OF THE MEMBER TASK AND FINISH GROUP

By way of a report by the Head of Community in partnership with the Chairman of the Member Task and Finish Group, Cllr Hayward, (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Cabinet received the conclusions and recommendations following a review of the Council's funding arrangement for the voluntary sector, having previously agreed the formation of a Member Task and Finish Group at its meeting in January 2016.

The Council had historically supported the voluntary sector across Huntingdonshire through revenue grant funding. The existing funding arrangements had ended on 31 March 2016 and the Cabinet resolved in January 2016 to extend the funding arrangements, in defined cases, to 31 March 2017; to establish a Task and Finish Group to review the arrangements for allocating Council funding to the voluntary and community sectors; and to propose any changes to funding arrangements to take effect from 1 April 2017.

The Group obtained evidence from representatives within the voluntary sector and Cambridgeshire County Council, and had undertaken further desk-top research with other local authorities. In

making its recommendations to the Cabinet, the Group recognised the Cabinet resolutions from January 2016, guidance from the National Association of Voluntary and Community Action, and the Council's Corporate Plan 2016-18.

The Group considered options, as detailed in paragraph 3 of the report, from the continuation of the existing funding arrangements through to the creation of a single contract for the whole of the sector, as well as the option of terminating funding to the sector. In considering the options for the funding of the voluntary and community sector, the Group recommended Option 4 – the award of two contracts for the provision of advice to Huntingdonshire communities, and the provision of infrastructure and support to the Huntingdonshire voluntary and community sector.

Regarding the duration of contracts, the Group considered options including Council procurement until 31 March 2020, of seeking alignment with the current funding arrangements of Cambridgeshire County Council, and of extending the Council procurement until 31 March 2021.

To provide further stability in the Huntingdonshire advice service, and voluntary and community infrastructure services, the Group recommended that the contracts should be awarded until 31 March 2021, which would avoid the year of District Council elections.

By extending the duration of contracts to 31 March 2021 the Cabinet noted this would provide a five year contract, which it considered was too extensive. Therefore, the Cabinet amended the Officer's recommendation as contained within the report, so that the contract term and funding was until the 31 March 2020.

In January 2016, the Cabinet agreed to taper the reduction in funding to the voluntary sector over the period 2016/17 to 2019/20. The Group had reconsidered this in light of evidence obtained from its review. The Cabinet agreed with the recommendation, that in order to ensure stability and confidence for long-term planning within the sector, Option 3, as detailed in the first Table in paragraph 4.4 of the report, be the preferred funding option with the reduction of funding in 2016/17, and then the award of a static annual contract value until 2019/20.

The Task and Finish Group had considered the present split of funding across the five contracts currently awarded voluntary and community sector funding, and the likely pressures on the sectors over the contract term. The Cabinet agreed with the Group's recommendation of a 65%/35% split in favour of the advice based contract with the flexibility through negotiated contract award of 10%.

The Cabinet requested reassurance that those organisations being awarded voluntary sector funding would be challenged on performance and that there be consequences for underachieving. In discussing this matter, the Cabinet agreed that the existing Task and Finish Group be retained and that it work with the Executive Councillor for Community Resilience to develop contract terms including performance metrics and reporting frameworks.

The Cabinet were keen for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel to continue to be involved in the process of scrutinising the performance to those awarded contracts.

Having expressed appreciation to the Task and Finish Group and commended the community based approach, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- i. to approve the award of two contracts, one for advice based services and the other for infrastructure services, as detailed as Option 4, paragraph 3.5 of the report;
- ii. that the contract term and funding be until the 31 March 2020;
- iii. that the overall budget model be Option 3 (amended) as detailed in the first Table in paragraph 4.4 of the report;
- iv. approves the funding split for the contracts as 65% to 35% in favour of advice based services but with flexibility through negotiated contract award of 10% either way; and
- v. that the existing Task and Finish Group be retained and to work with the Executive Councillor for Community Resilience to develop the contract terms including performance metrics and reporting frameworks.

26. HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE PROPOSED MERGER OF THE TRUSTS RUNNING HINCHINGBROOKE AND PETERBOROUGH AND STAMFORD HOSPITALS

The Cabinet considered a report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which outlined a response to the proposed merger of the Trusts running Hinchingsbrooke, Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals prepared following the Special Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Environment) on 28 June 2016. The Cabinet was requested to consider and endorse the response.

The Cabinet suggested that it was more appropriate for the response to be sent directly from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and preferred to refrain from any opinion until the full business case was presented. The Cabinet agreed that it was a good piece of scrutiny work. However, noted that the letter needed amendment to remove reference of it being a response of the Council and being endorsed by the Cabinet. Whereupon, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- to commend the letter and that an amended version be sent from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Communities and Environment).

27. REPRESENTATION ON ORGANISATIONS

Consideration was given to a report by the Democratic Services Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the Council's representation on a variety of organisations/partnerships.

A review of the organisations and partnerships had been undertaken and the consultation responses were attached as Appendix 2 of the report. Following the review those that the Cabinet were requested to no longer appoint to were indicated as 'Do Not Appoint' on the schedule attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

Appendix 1 of the report had been amended to that published in the Agenda and circulated to the Cabinet prior to the meeting, to include the proposed District Councillor names for 2016/17.

To improve the monitoring of how the organisations and partnerships contributed to the Council and its Corporate Objectives it was proposed that appointed Members be required to report on a quarterly basis, in writing, to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel. This would enable Members to provide an update about the respective organisation/partnership.

In response to a question it was confirmed that the Council still required a District Councillor presence on the Local Water Forum.

Having considered the schedule of organisations/partnerships and commended the thorough review that had been undertaken, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- i. to nominate to the organisations and partnerships referred to in Appendix 1, as amended and circulated prior to the meeting;
- ii. to agree to not appoint representatives to those organisations/partnerships as indicated in Appendix 1;
- iii. that appointed Members be required to report on a quarterly basis, in writing, to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel; and
- iv. in the event that changes or new appointments are required to the District Council's representation during the course of the year, the Corporate Team Manager be delegated, after consultation with the Deputy Executive Leader, to nominate and authorise alternative representatives as necessary.

28. 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.

29. REVIEW OF BENEFITS RISK BASED VERIFICATION POLICY

Having received a recommendation from the Corporate Governance Committee at their meeting on 20 July 2016, the Cabinet considered a confidential report (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the revised Risk Based Verification (RBV) Policy.

The RBV was a method of risk scoring claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support so that additional checks and resources were targeted at cases most likely to contain fraud and/or error prior to putting the claim into payment.

The RBV was introduced for new benefit claims in March 2013 and was reviewed in July 2015 to allow the RBV to be applied to changes of circumstance in addition to new claims. A further review of the Policy had been conducted to implement a different type of check, which would enhance and streamline the existing process to ensure the gateway to the benefit system remained secure.

Guidance from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) required that where a local authority implemented RBV, a Policy must be produced, receive Member approval and be reviewed annually.

Having noted the comments of the Corporate Governance Committee, circulated to the Cabinet prior to the meeting, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

to approve the revised Risk Based Verification Policy.

Chairman