

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, 22 September 2016.

PRESENT: Councillor – Chairman.

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

APOLOGY(IES): Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors R B Howe, D Brown, S Cawley, S J Criswell and J M Palmer.

(a) MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

(b) MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 August 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

34. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

At the commencement of Minute No. 40 Councillor D Tysoe declared a non-statutory disclosable interest having recently submitted a planning application.

At the commencement of Minute No. 45 Councillor D Tysoe declared a non-statutory disclosable interest by virtue of being the Parish Clerk to Ellington Parish Council.

35. INTERIM HEAD OF OPERATIONS - MR ALISTAIR MERRICK

Prior to the commencement of the remainder of the formal business the Cabinet expressed their appreciation to the Interim Head of Operations, it being his last meeting prior to his departure from the Council, Mr Neil Sloper having been appointed as the new Head of Operations.

The Cabinet welcomed Mr Sloper who they hoped would continue the good progress made by Mr Merrick.

The Cabinet acknowledged the commitment and achievements of Mr Merrick and the partnership working that had been developed with the Executive Members. The Cabinet wished Mr Merrick the very best for the future.

36. HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP

RESOLVED

that Councillors R C Carter, Ms A Dickinson, T F Hayward and R J West be appointed to serve on the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

37. ONE LEISURE HUNTINGDON SPORTS CENTRE JOINT COMMITTEE

RESOLVED

that Councillors J M Palmer, T D Sanderson and Mrs J Tavener be appointed to serve on the One Leisure Huntingdon Sports Centre Joint Committee for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

38. REVIEW OF RISK STRATEGY MANAGEMENT

By way of a report by the Internal Audit and Risk Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered the outcome of the Annual Review of the Risk Management Strategy.

It was explained that the Risk Register required all risk to be assigned a risk level – either a Corporate or Operational risk. Risks were also required to be allocated to one of 13 risk areas. The risk areas provided a framework for identifying and categorising the risks faced by the Council. Upon choosing the risk area, due to the current parameters within the risk management software, the risk was automatically assigned to either Corporate or Operational level.

The majority of the 13 risk areas naturally assimilated to either a Corporate or Operational level. However, some risks could fit within either level. The Strategy now allowed Managers to select, within parameters, whether a risk was allocated to a Corporate or Operational level. Changes would be required to the risk management software to accommodate this which was able to be easily made. All current risks would be reviewed and reallocated if necessary to the appropriate level.

Other changes to the Strategy were minor in nature. As the Corporate Management Team had agreed that all the Officer Governance Groups should be responsible for managing risk, the tasks assigned to the former Officer Risk Governance Group had been allocated to the Management Team and would be delivered through the Officer Governance Groups as the Risk Governance Group has been disbanded. Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet approve the Risk Management Strategy.

39. INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT, 2016/17, QUARTER 1

The Cabinet considered a report by the Corporate Team Manager and Head of Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), presented by the Head of Resources, which commented on progress against the Key Actions and Corporate Indicators listed in the Council's Corporate Plan for 2016/17 for the period 1 April to 30 June 2016. The report also incorporated progress on the current projects being undertaken at the Council; Financial Performance Monitoring Suite information as at the end June 2016 and an update on the Commercial Investment Strategy including details of the investments to date and the level of returns expected to be generated.

The Cabinet were informed, regarding the year end forecast outturn revenue position for 2016/17, of the net revenue spend of £17.3m resulting in a saving against budget of £570,000. The main reasons for the variance were detailed within Appendix D of the Officer's report.

As part of the budget setting process for 2016/17, £2.3m of new Zero Based Budget savings were approved. A review of the position of these savings to date had been carried out and a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating given. The RAG status for all individual projects were summarised in Appendix E.

There were currently two areas of significant risk for the Council being the IMD Shared Service and Homelessness. For all the shared services arrangements the financial target set was 15% saving across the original combined budget. For the ICT service this was £887,000 in 2016/17. To date £380,000 (43%) had been achieved through the new staff structure and work was underway to identify other areas for savings. However, there was a risk that this would not be fully achieved.

Homelessness acceptances in the final quarter of 2015/16 increased and this had continued into 2016/17. For the majority of 2015/16 there were on average 10 households/individuals in bed and breakfast accommodation which had since increased to 25-30 households/individuals. There were a number of factors that contributed to the increase in homelessness and work to counter this impact was ongoing with Officers in the short term working on a number of options including working with Housing Associations to find properties for impacted customers and in the longer term assessment of the options to generate more affordable housing and temporary accommodation in the District.

The Councils final 2016/17 net capital programme was £11m and Appendix D detailed the capital programme budget, spend to date and projected outturn position. Spend to date was £1.3m and the projected outturn was £10.0m, an underspend of £1m.

In considering the comments from the Overview and Scrutiny (Performance and Customers) Panel the Cabinet were informed that a report regarding consider longer term options to address the homelessness issue was being prepared for Member consideration.

The Cabinet agreed with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel regarding the need for further clarification as to why Performance Indicators 6 and 16 were annual measures and not quarterly measures.

Regarding Performance Indicator 20, the Cabinet acknowledged that it would be rational to only include food businesses that were open for business.

The Cabinet expressed concern in respect of the underspend within the Capital Programme and the consequential impact on the Minimum Revenue Provision. The Cabinet agreed that there was a role for Executive Councillors to ensure that only Capital Bids were progressed, where there were assurances that the project was likely to come to fruition as per the timescales within the bid documentation.

The Cabinet further requested that the Chairman of Finance and Governance Board ensure that new Capital bids for 2017/18 were only approved if there was absolute assurance that the capital project would be committed during the financial year and also provide an explanation as to how the current programme would be delivered within this financial year and any actions being taken, as appropriate, to remedy the situation. Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

- i. that the Cabinet considered and commented on progress made against Key Activities and Corporate Indicators in the Corporate Plan and current projects, as summarised in Appendix A and detailed in Appendices B and C of the report; and
- ii. considered and commented on the Council's financial performance as at the end of June 2016.

40. HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL PLAN TO 2036 QUARTERLY UPDATE AND INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING UPDATE

Prior to commencement of presentation of the report, Councillor D Tysoe declared a non-statutory disclosable interest having recently submitted a planning application.

By way of a report by the Head of Development (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet received a progress update on preparation of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (HLP2036), its supporting evidence base and the risks arising from delays to the Strategic Transport Study and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). The report also provided an update in relation to the highways and transport infrastructure projects necessary for delivery of the HLP2036.

Within the previous update report the Cabinet had been informed of the continued delays in the availability of the revalidated Cambridge Sub-Regional Model (CSRM) and the resultant impact on the Strategic Transport Study. It was explained to the Cabinet that revalidation of the CSRM was scheduled to be completed at the end of September. Preparatory work for District Council development

scenarios had commenced and a member of Mott MacDonald was working at the Atkins' office one day a week to expedite liaison on the Council's Study.

Discussions between the Council, JBA and the Environment Agency had resolved the problems on modelling climate change allowances previously reported to the Cabinet. The Environment Agency had agreed to fund JBA to undertake the work for the whole Lower Great Ouse. JBA had commenced 16 models with some feeding into others which was expected to be completed in December with analysis to follow.

Regarding the Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment the Cabinet were informed that the final Assessment was expected to be received imminently by all participating Planning Authorities.

The Local Plan must demonstrate that development was supported by sufficient infrastructure, and that its vision, allocations and policies would enable viable development. To achieve this, the Council had sought to commission a Growth and Infrastructure Investment and Delivery Plan and a separate but linked Growth Viability Assessment. The Council had only received one response regarding the Growth and Infrastructure Investment and Delivery Plan, which was being considered and the Council had not received any responses regarding the Growth Viability Assessment. The risk being that if no quotations were received it could impact on the timetable for delivery of the HLP2036.

In response to a question regarding the provision of affordable housing within the HLP2036, it was explained that the Council was aware of the amount of affordable housing that it needed to deliver and that there was sufficient flexibility within the HLP2036 should some of the major housing developments not be realised.

Referring to the update within the report on the highways and infrastructure projects, the Cabinet noted that there were many projects pending which would have an impact on the level of growth. It was explained that within the updates there was a significant amount of positive progress. However, the current Local Plan was not dependent on the highways and infrastructure projects and the Council would continue to influence the development of these projects.

In considering the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny (Economy and Growth) Panel, the Cabinet were informed that the Leader had expressed that the top priority for the Executive Councillor for Planning Policy, Housing and Infrastructure was the delivery of the HLP2036, whereupon the Cabinet

RESOLVED

to note progress on preparation of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036, its supporting evidence base and the highways and transport infrastructure projects necessary for its delivery.

41. NEEDS ANALYSIS OF GREEN SPACE AND PLAY PROVISION - DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

The Cabinet received a report by the Interim Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained a consolidation of the needs analysis work of green space and play provision overseen by the Overview and Scrutiny (Communities and Environment) Panel and provided a schedule of prioritised development projects for the future strategic direction of all green space in Huntingdonshire.

Although the Council had adopted an Open Spaces Strategy in 2011 it did not include prioritised development projects for green space and play provision taking into account provision against the Council's adopted benchmarks for providing open space.

The consequence being that some planning applications for housing developments within the District had included green space provision outside of a robust strategic framework and therefore not all of the green spaces development had materially improved provision against areas of deficiency; the adoption of green space outside of a robust strategic framework had not ensured the long term financial commitments for the Council and also for Town and Parish Councils was aligned to clearly established priorities and Medium Term Financial Strategies of each organisation; and substantial Section106 contributions remained unspent.

During the needs analysis of current provision of green space and play provision Town and Parish Councils had been consulted to agree the development priorities. The Cabinet expressed appreciation to the Town and Parish Councils for their involvement as it was essential to gain a local perspective.

It was noted to the Cabinet that the development priorities identified within the Appendix to the report would be progressed from the £603,000 of uncommitted Section 106 contributions for green space and play provision. The Cabinet commended the Interim Head of Operations for identifying projects that would be funded via Section 106 contributions.

Having received a response to a question where it was confirmed that once a project had been completed it would be the responsibility of the relevant Town or Parish Council to maintain the area of green space or play provision, the Cabinet,

RESOLVED

to endorse the schedule of development projects for green spaces, as contained in Appendix 1 of the report, as the future strategic direction for the development of green spaces and as the guide for future planning decisions regarding green spaces provision.

42. STREET SCENE SERVICE - UPDATE REPORT

The Cabinet considered a report by the Interim Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which provided an

update on the progress made to implement the Street Scene Service (an integration of grounds maintenance and street cleansing activities on an area basis) to improve the service delivery arrangements and standards of work across Huntingdonshire, a review of grass maintenance regimes in 2016 and an update on negotiations with Cambridgeshire County Council regarding grass cutting frequencies in urban areas of land within their ownership.

Within the 2015/16 Zero Based Budget exercise it was agreed that the Council should fully recover the costs for providing grounds maintenance services to Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC). Negotiations with CCC had been ongoing since November 2015 and the fundamental issue being that the CCC Highways Asset Management Improvement Plan only incorporated three cuts per annum in urban areas, which to provide a maintained environment to a reasonable standard had been evidenced to be inadequate.

Since negotiations had been slow to progress, in June 2016 it was decided that the District Council would cease grass cutting for CCC having already completed the required three cuts, to redirect resources to the maintenance of District Council land. Subsequently grass cutting on CCC land recommenced in late July 2016 after CCC agreed to interim fund grass cutting in 2016 pending the finalisation of an agreement for grounds maintenance services in future years. The increased payments from CCC had assisted towards the actual costs being met by the District Council in 2016. The Cabinet were reminded that the grounds maintenance service not only included grass cutting but also shrub maintenance, hedge cutting, annual bedding and weed control.

In response to whether there was a national minimal standard of the number of grass cuts required per annum it was explained that eight cuts per annum was the standard adopted without the country. However, this year due to the exceptional growing conditions throughout the East of England at the end of the season there will have been twelve to fourteen cuts. Given the impact that climate change was having it was being considered to increase the number of cuts per annum in future years to twelve.

In response to a further question it was explained that the grounds maintenance team worked annualised hours which meant that in order to meet the needs of the service increased hours were worked during the summer months and less in the dormant season. The Council usually commenced grass cutting at the beginning of March and concluded at the end of October each year.

The Cabinet expressed disappointment with the manner in which CCC had addressed the situation and the increased dissatisfaction this had unnecessarily created with residents.

Having considered the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny (Communities and Environment) Panel the Cabinet fully supported Officers to continue negotiations with CCC to fully resolve the funding issue of the grounds maintenance service being provided on CCC owned land. The Cabinet commended the Interim Head of Operations for progress made with CCC negotiations so far and,

RESOLVED

- i. to review the performance of the Street Scene Service detailed in the report, to influence the future development of service delivery arrangements for grounds maintenance and street cleansing activities; and
- ii. that a further report on the resourcing of the Street Scene Service be presented to the Cabinet once negotiations with Cambridgeshire County Council concluded.

43. WASTE AND RECYCLING ROUND RECONFIGURATION - UPDATE ON PROGRESS

The Cabinet received a report by the Interim Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained an update on the Waste Service round reconfiguration project, issues impacting on delivery of the project plan and the remedial action initiated.

Prior to the meeting a Briefing Note had been circulated to the Cabinet which detailed an update on the Waste Service round reconfiguration and the revised anticipated implementation date for the new collection rounds.

It was explained to the Cabinet that the main factor affecting progress was the lack of responses from residents to enable the Council to assess their individual service requirements. Every individual that had an assisted collection had been contacted via letter and there were a significant number of responses outstanding, data which was essential to develop the future waste service. The result being a delay of the project by two months that would reduce the savings delivered in 2016/17 by £34,000 (£17,000 per month), which would be met within the Operations Service budget.

In response to a question it was explained that if a resident that had not responded to the initial letter they would receive a further letter, then a telephone call and as a last resort a Council officer would personally visit the property. As the list of those in receipt of an assisted collection had not been reviewed for some time it had made the task more onerous. In the future the list should be reviewed annually as it was currently estimated that a third of properties on the list no longer required an assisted collection.

In considering the comments from the Overview and Scrutiny (Communities and Environment) Panel the Cabinet acknowledged that it was correct to proceed the project in the current manner. However, until final report was ready for consideration the Cabinet requested that it receive no further update reports, particularly as the Overview and Scrutiny Panel were receiving regular updates. Whereupon it was,

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet

- i. notes the update with regards to the current progress and anticipated implementation date for the new collection rounds as indicated in the Briefing Note circulated to the Cabinet prior to the meeting; and
- ii. that the Cabinet receive no further update reports until a final report is ready for its consideration.

44. RE:FIT PROGRAMME - ENERGY CONSERVATION MEASURES FOR ONE LEISURE

By way of a report from the Interim Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet received the outcome of the Investment Grade Proposal (IGP) provided by Bouygues Ltd - the detailed analysis of energy savings suggested at all One Leisure sites.

In 2015 there had been a Desk Top Assessment (DTA) of the energy conservation measures appropriate for each of the One Leisure sites. The report detailed an explanation of the differences between the measures, costs and savings first identified in the DTA and those identified in the IGP, which had resulted in an increase of £107,889 to deliver the programme of improvements best suited for the One Leisure facilities.

It was noted that a key risk to the project was that the current leases at the One Leisure sites had either expired or would expire in the near future. The Council was currently in negotiations with various authorities regarding the renewal of these leases. However, there was significant risk to the investment if any of those authorities withdrew from the arrangements.

Given the current uncertainty with renewal of the leases, the Cabinet agreed that progression of the Re:Fit Programme should be deferred until the lease situation had been resolved. The Cabinet expressed appreciation to the Officers involved in the Re:Fit project and were keen to emphasise that the decision to defer was no reflection on their work.

The Cabinet accepted that should the project not progress the Council might be liable for £29,000 to Bouygues Ltd which in comparison to the overall cost of the project the Cabinet suggested was acceptable when the current situation meant the Council might not receive a return on its investment.

The Cabinet requested confirmation that there were no other investment options for One Leisure that would have a better return than the guaranteed £110k per annum of savings from the Programme, with a shorter payback period than nine years.

Following clarification of the timeline for the lease renewals and confirmation there was no alternative preferred investment proposal for One Leisure, the Cabinet agreed that discussions were required with Bouygues Ltd to re-align the programme. Having been advised of the potential capital cost increase implications the Cabinet accepted this was a consequence of the decision and

RESOLVED

to defer progression of the Re:Fit Programme until the current lease situation at the One Leisure sites had been resolved following which a further report be presented to the Cabinet for consideration.

45. DISPOSAL AND ACQUISITIONS POLICY: LAND AND PROPERTY - UPDATE ON THRESHOLDS AND THE SHARING OF CAPITAL RECEIPTS WITH TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

Prior to the commencement of presentation of the report, Councillor D Tysoe declared a non-statutory disclosable interest by virtue of being the Parish Clerk to Ellington Parish Council.

Having received a recommendation from the Corporate Governance Committee at their meeting on 20 July 2016, the Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to approve an amendment to the Disposal and Acquisition Policy.

Given the relatively slow use of the Policy over the past 12 months, it was proposed that the current thresholds remained unaltered.

There were parcels of land in the District that were too small to enable a Parish or Town Council to benefit from development funding. The amendment to the Policy would, where the District Council opted to dispose of development land for commercial gain, enable the respective Parish or Town Council to receive 10% of any capital receipt.

Referring to the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny (Performance and Customers) Panel the Cabinet suggested that a website link to the map on the Cambridgeshire County Council website which identified its assets be made available on the District Council website.

Having noted the comments of the Corporate Governance Committee, the Cabinet discussed whether there should be criteria to ensure that the capital receipt was allocated specifically for infrastructure and not for items such as new furniture for village halls. There were some diverging opinions as any criteria should not be too prescriptive as the money was a windfall to any benefitting Parish or Town Council. It was noted that the suggested amendment did include that the 10% capital receipt would be subject to agreement by the Cabinet at which point a stipulation could be made as to how the money should be allocated. In the meantime the Cabinet agreed that the Head of Resources and Executive Member for Strategic Resources should consider such stipulation. Whereupon the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- i. to endorse the continuation of the Disposal and Acquisition thresholds for land and property as previously approved by Council in July 2015; and
- ii. approve a revision to the Policy as follows:

'When land is disposed of within a Town or Parish Council area and where there is no likelihood of any consequential development funding returning to the Parish Council (e.g. Community Infrastructure Levy or S.106), that following disposal the Parish Council receives 10% of any capital receipt received by the Council, subject to agreement by the Cabinet'.

Chairman