

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, 19 January 2017.

PRESENT: Councillor R B Howe – Chairman.

Councillors D Brown, G J Bull, S Cawley,
Mrs A Dickinson, R Fuller, J A Gray,
R Harrison, J M Palmer and J E White.

REFUSE VEHICLE INCIDENT

Prior to the commencement of the formal business of the Cabinet, Members wished to extend their thoughts to the three employees injured in a recent road traffic accident involving a Huntingdonshire District Council refuse vehicle, one employee having suffered severe life changing injuries, as well as to the families, friends and work colleagues of those injured.

The Cabinet further acknowledged the wider impact upon those not directly involved in the incident and commended the respectful way in which the situation had been managed both within the Operations Team and other departments throughout the Council. The Council would do its utmost to assist the three injured employees and offer support to anyone affected by the incident.

The Cabinet also expressed appreciation to the Executive Councillor for Operations for his assistance, particularly having only recently been appointed to the post.

64. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

65. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

66. APPOINTMENT OF EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS

Following changes made to the membership of the Cabinet, it was

RESOLVED

- a) that the executive responsibilities for the remainder of the Municipal Year be allocated as follows:

Commercialisation and Shared Services	Councillor D Brown
Housing and Regulatory Services	Councillor R Fuller

Operations	Councillor J White
Transformation and Customers	Councillor S Cawley
Community Resilience	Councillor Ms A Dickinson
Strategic Resources	Councillor J A Gray
Leisure and Health	Councillor J M Palmer
Growth	Councillor R Harrison

The Deputy Leader (Councillor G Bull) also has responsibility for Development Management and Planning Enforcement.

- b) the Executive Leader of the Council be appointed to serve as an ex-officio Member of the Employment Committee; and
- c) that Executive Councillors be appointed to serve as ex-officio Members of the following:

Executive responsibility for Management and Enforcement	Councillor with Development and Planning	Development Management Committee
Executive Councillor for Housing and Regulatory Services		Licensing and Protection Panel/Licensing Committee

67. HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP

Following changes made to the membership of the Cabinet, it was

RESOLVED

that Councillor J White be appointed to serve on the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group for the ensuing Municipal Year.

68. HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL GROWTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE THEMATIC GROUP

Following changes made to the membership of the Cabinet, it was

RESOLVED

that the Executive Councillor for Growth (formerly Planning Policy, Housing and Infrastructure) be appointed to serve as an ex-officio Member as Chairman of the Group.

69. DEVELOPMENT PLANS POLICY ADVISORY GROUP

Following changes made to the membership of the Cabinet, it was

RESOLVED

that Councillor R Harrison be appointed to serve on the Development Plans Policy Advisory Group for the ensuing Municipal Year.

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

By way of a report from 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 highways and transport infrastructure projects necessary for its delivery.

Within the previous update reports the Cabinet had been informed of the continued delays to the revalidated Cambridge Sub-Regional Model (CSRM) and the resultant impact on the Strategic Transport Study. At the meeting in June, Minute No. 40 referred, the Cabinet agreed with the approach that the priority was to develop a defensible transport evidence base which necessitated waiting for the revalidated CSRM to be available.

The Cabinet were advised that the revalidation work had been completed and reviewed by Mott McDonald to ensure it was fit for use from a Huntingdonshire perspective.

The Cabinet were referred to the revised timetable included within the submitted report and it was explained that although completion of revalidation of the CSRM by the County Council was six months behind schedule, the District Council continued to make considerable efforts to ensure that the timescale for the statutory consultation on, and submission of, the Local Plan was only one month later than reported to the Cabinet at the meetings in June and September. The Cabinet commended Officers for their hard work to ensure that the timescale for statutory consultation on and submission of, the Local Plan had only been delayed by one month.

In response to a question it was explained that the remaining evidence base that relied on external consultants related to the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). JBA had made good progress on the SFRA, recently undertaking the climate change modelling work on behalf of the Environment Agency for the whole of the lower Great Ouse and the final report was nearly complete.

The Cambridgeshire, King's Lynn and West Norfolk, Peterborough and West Suffolk Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTNA) reflected the new 'planning' definition for a Gypsy, Traveller or Travelling Showperson as set out in the national Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (2015). However, was inconsistent with the definition in the Equalities Act (2010) and might be subject to further legal challenge.

In response to a question it was explained that using the new definition, the GTNA had indicated a need for nine additional pitches for Gypsy and Traveller households in Huntingdonshire which might potentially increase to nineteen additional pitches as there were a number of non-responders to the questionnaire.

Referring to wind turbine development it was noted that the HLP2036 did not incorporate matters such as proximity or noise. It was explained that once areas within the District had been designated in principle as potential sites suitable for further wind turbine development, other matters such as proximity and noise would be considered.

Having considered the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economy and Growth) 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.

71. ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT, INCLUDING FIVE YEAR HOUSING LAND SUPPLY

The Cabinet received a report by the Head of Development (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) for 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 that provided progress of the Local Plan against the Local Development Scheme, total Community Infrastructure Levy receipts, the position on Neighbourhood Plans and the Duty to Cooperate, an analysis of policy performance and effects based on over 25 indicators, the position on Housing Development and Supply (including 5 year housing land supply) and Business, Retail and Leisure Development.

The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 required local planning authorities to produce a Monitoring Report. However, the Regulations removed the requirement to submit the AMR to the Secretary of State.

It was explained that the AMR was presented to the Cabinet as a consequence of one of the actions incorporated within the Action Plan based on the recommendations of the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge Team.

The Cabinet were referred to the Executive Summary of the AMR attached to the submitted report.

The AMR demonstrated that the Council had a 5.24 years housing land supply, which was a slight increase in supply in the previous AMR of 5.23 years. It was noted that some permissions counted in the supply last year were now unable to be included. A like-for-like comparison using the same criteria as last year would provide a supply of 5.5 years compared to 5.23 years for last year. In demonstrating a 5.24 years supply, the Council continued with a cautious approach to site delivery rates. The projections of site delivery rates supplied by developers/agents equated to a 6.22 years housing land supply.

The Cabinet commended Officers for continuing to maintain a 5 year housing land supply.

In response to a question regarding the content of the AMR, it was explained that the Council had to demonstrate that it was undertaking what it could to achieve a 5 year housing land supply. It was critical that planning consents for new housing developments continued to be granted and that it was recognised that developments of all scales, including small developments, contributed to the supply of housing. However, it was noted that once a planning application had been granted the delivery was out of the control of the District Council. Whereupon it was,

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet commented and noted the twelfth Annual Monitoring Report.

72. REVIEW OF STREET MARKETS (HUNTINGDON AND ST IVES)

The Cabinet considered a report, presented by the Executive Councillor for Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the improvement plan being implemented for the Council's Markets Service, following a review, and proposals to reconfigure the layout of the Huntingdon and St Ives markets to return the service to a trading profit.

To address the lack of management of the Markets Service and its decline, the restructure of the Operations Service in 2015/16 had incorporated a retail specialist as the Markets Officer. Working with the Business Development Manager the service has been fully reviewed and improvement actions implemented to first stabilise and then develop the markets. Significant progress had been made and the Markets Service was due to produce a trading surplus of over £50,000 in 2016/17.

It was explained that Huntingdon Market would be relocated from Market Square to along the High Street which would capture the main footfall of the town and re-invigorate both the Market and High Street and enable the Market Square to be used for promotional and community events, such as the recent Italian flag throwing demonstration.

In addition, as the fortnightly farmers market had been operating at a loss for a number of years it was also proposed to consolidate the Farmers Market with the High Street Market every Wednesday and Saturday.

It had been disappointing to witness the decline of the Markets and therefore the Cabinet were supportive of the proposals. In response to a question it was explained that following informal consultation with over 80 retailers directly affected by the proposal in Huntingdon, only two did not support the proposal. However, the market relocation would be sited to ensure that stalls did not impede the frontage of premises along the High Street.

It was noted by some Members of the Cabinet that the solution proposed was one that had been suggested in the past by the public, retailers and the market stall traders and had already been trialled.

As Huntingdon Market would be relocated from the Market Square, the Cabinet requested that a number of promotional and community events be scheduled and advertised to encourage more people to the Market and High Street.

It was agreed that St Ives Market was the more thriving market but required improvement. The Markets Officer had a number of ideas to continue to develop the Markets and the Cabinet commended his achievements, acknowledging him as an exceptional Officer, particularly given the short time he had served in post.

In the past selling the rights of the market had been considered as a potential funding stream and the Cabinet reflected that the decision to not pursue this option had been the correct decision.

It was requested that the Executive Councillor for Operations contact St Neots Town Council to offer the services of the Markets Officer on a consultancy basis to improve St Neots Market. In conclusion the Cabinet,

RESOLVED

- i. to approve the proposals to relocate Huntingdon Street Market; and
- ii. approve the proposal to carry out detailed feasibility work and consult with retailers in St Ives regarding the proposed relocation of part of the St Ives Monday market, both to negate the need for a partial road closure and re-introduce some parking spaces on Market Hill for Blue Badge Holders.

73. OPEN SPACES WATER SAFETY POLICY

The Cabinet received a report presented by the Executive Councillor for Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the Open Spaces Water Safety Policy.

The Open Spaces Water Safety Policy had been designed to better enable the Council to ensure the safety of the public within District Council open space and had been developed based on advice and guidance from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA). The Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) had been engaged to review the document and their advice was used to improve the policy and establish a programme of risk assessments.

In May 2016, RLSS trained eleven members of staff to conduct Risk Assessments in relation to water safety, seven of which completed the exam and qualified with a Level 3 Award in Risk Assessment Principles and Practice. During the training, staff received 'on the job' guidance and priority phase risk assessments were completed.

Whilst it was agreed that the Open Spaces Water Safety Policy was a thorough document it was more appropriate as a Guidance document as it was too comprehensive to be a Policy document. The Cabinet suggested that the format should be a short Policy document accompanied by a more comprehensive Guidance document.

It was noted that the document made no reference to any contribution from the Environment Agency or to any areas that the Environment Agency had responsibility for.

The Policy required promotion to the public, which it was assumed would be via the Council's website. However, the Cabinet requested that Officers be mindful of how the information was presented, which needed to be targeted and accessible, not by a lengthy document. In concluding the debate the Cabinet,

RESOLVED

to approve the Open Spaces Water Policy for implementation.

74. WASTE AND RECYCLING ROUND RECONFIGURATION UPDATE

Further to Minute No.43 of the Cabinet meeting on 22 September 2016, the Cabinet gave consideration to a report presented by the Executive Councillor for Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained an update on the Waste Service round reconfiguration project.

It was explained that the reconfiguration of refuse and recycling rounds aimed to maximise efficiencies and reduce fuel usage whilst meeting waste collection needs and delivering good customer service.

Implementation of the reconfigured waste service was on target for February 2017 with a re-profiled start date of 27 February 2017, to allow for additional communication to residents.

A communications campaign had been developed with a range of methods being used to advise the public of the changes and the Cabinet were presented with a photograph illustrating the sign boards being used on the refuse collection vehicles.

It was noted that the implementation date contained within the Appendix to the submitted report required amendment to reflect the re-profiled start date.

The Cabinet commended the Waste Service round reconfiguration project which they agreed would benefit the residents of the District and feedback on the proposals from the public already seemed positive.

It was requested that before the revised Waste Service rounds were implemented that all Members should be informed of the new rounds in ample time. Councillors would then be able to promote the revised service to Ward Constituents. It was explained that once the revised rounds were communicated to drivers and crews for final comment Councillors would subsequently be informed.

Referring to the Communication Plan attached to the submitted report, the Cabinet noted that in addition that information to the public required careful management, the Council should also be proactive with management of the media campaign. Whereupon, the Cabinet,

RESOLVED

- i. to note the update report and progress;
- ii. endorse the re-profiled live date of 27 February 2016 to allow a longer period for additional communication with residents; and
- iii. that a project review and closure report be scheduled for June 2017 to allow the new service to bed in over a two month period.

75. DRAFT 2017/18 REVENUE BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (2018/19 TO 2021/22)

By way of a report by the Head of Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were presented with the detail of the Draft Budget preparations to date for consideration and comment.

Tabled at the meeting was supplementary information on the Draft Budget 2017/18 which included a Summary Budget with Gross Income, Gross Expenditure and Net Expenditure separated per Service area and a list of the main growth and savings items.

Regarding the Revenue Budget it was explained that at the present time the draft Net Service Expenditure Budget for 2017/18 was £16.7m. In comparing the draft 2017/18 Net Service Expenditure Budget to the 2016/17 Forecast Outturn and the Original Budget, there had been a net saving of £0.4m (2%) and £1.2m (7%) respectively, the draft figures for 2017/18 included:

- savings from detailed line by line Budget reviews of £0.7m;
- growth of £0.5m, as detailed in Appendix 2 of the submitted report;
- non-realisation of previously approved Zero Based Budgeting (ZBB) savings of £0.4m;
- the impact of all other unavoidable budget adjustments which added £0.96m; and
- the increased income from the Commercial Investment Strategy of £1.0m.

Regarding the Capital Programme it was explained that there was a capital requirement of £9.5m in 2017/18, £4.3m funded from borrowing and the balance from external sources and internal contributions. The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) had been calculated at £2.2m.

The Commercial Investment Strategy (CIS) had a capital requirement of £31.5m in 2017/18. This was funded from borrowing of £26.4m, a MRP of £1.9m and an earmarked reserve contribution of £3.2m.

In previous years the Council had been cautious in incorporating Government funding into the Budget, which had proved to be the correct decision. The Government had previously offered local authorities a Four Year Financial settlement on submission and approval of a Four Year Efficiency Plan. The Council had since

received approval for its Plan. Subsequently the Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government had announced the provisional finance settlement for 2017/18, which indicated that Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and New Homes Bonus (NHB) allocations were in line with the indicative Four Year Settlement announced the previous year. By 2019/20 the RSG would no longer exist and new criteria had been announced for NHB with a transitional year for 2017/18.

Within the current Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) the Council had an aspiration to be self-financing by 2020/21. With the changes in NHB, the aspiration would be achieved one year earlier, by 2019/20. Any NHB received from 2019/20 onwards would be allocated to the CIS Earmarked Reserve, the CIS being a key strategy for the Council to continue to progress.

The Four Year Efficiency Plan included a proposal to increase Council Tax by 2% which was included in the 2017/18 draft Budget and MTFS.

With regard to Reserves it was the Council's policy that the General Fund Reserve was to be maintained at a minimum level of 15% of net revenue expenditure of the authority.

The Executive Councillor for Strategic Resources commended Members and Officers for having previously made the difficult decisions so enable the Council to now report a positive draft Budget position.

The ZBB exercise had been ambitious and it was accepted that not all savings identified would be delivered. However, the draft Budget demonstrated that the non-realisation of the ZBB savings had been absorbed.

Members were referred to Table 9 detailed within paragraph 5.6 of the submitted report, in particular the Net Expenditure which demonstrated that the Council was in a position of control and strength.

Members were further referred to Table 10 detailed within paragraph 5.7 of the submitted report, which demonstrated the impact on the Budget if the Council opted to not increase the Council Tax by 2%. It was noted that 2% was lower than the increase in pensions and the average wage growth in Huntingdonshire.

It was noted amongst the Cabinet that the format of how the budget was now presented to Members had greatly improved over recent years. The CIS provided an example of how the Council had progressed in a way that some would never have once contemplated. However, the Council had to continue to identify further efficiency savings and all of those involved in the budget process were congratulated for the excellent work.

Referring to the comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Customers) which had been circulated to the Cabinet subsequent to the agenda publication, further narrative within the Budget was required to better explain that the restructure of

Community Service although had generated £3k in savings for 2017/18 would in the future generate further savings.

Further narrative was also required within the Budget regarding the comments from the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Customers) relating to the new post of Executive Assistant for the Leader and the Cabinet, to encompass that the post was required as the emerging Combined Authority would change some of the priorities for the District and demands on the Council.

In response to questions regarding an Economic Development Officer and Business Administrator Apprentice and the Apprenticeship Scheme, it was explained that from 2018 the Council was required to pay an apprenticeship levy and that 3% of its workforce had to be apprentices. The departments of the Council that would be able to best accommodate apprentices were within the administrative support functions and the Operations Team, particularly as the Operations Team used a high number of temporary staff. For each apprentice the Council was able to draw-down from the levy.

Appreciation was expressed to the Executive Councillor for Strategic Resources for his assured management of the Council's finances and the support he had provided to both the Leader and Managing Director. Appreciation was further expressed to the Head of Finance and his Team for the comprehensive budget which had been straightforward for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Customers) to review. The Overview and Scrutiny Panel were also commended for the scrutiny of the budget. Having noted that the Council continued to deliver quality services on limited resources, the Cabinet,

RESOLVED

to approve:

- i. the overall draft Budget 2017/18 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2018/19 to 2021/22 (as attached in Appendix 1 of the report);
- ii. the savings and growth proposals (as per paragraphs 3.1 to 3.3 and attached as Appendix 2 of the report), and specifically:
 - a. approval of an Economic Development Officer and Business Administrator Apprentice, and
 - b. consideration of the Apprenticeship Scheme proposal to mitigate the impact of the apprenticeship levy;
- iii. removal of Zero Based Budget savings as detailed in Table 3 of the report;
- iv. the draft Capital Programme 2017/18 to 2021/22 (as per paragraphs 3.6 to 3.7 of the report); and
- v. the planned increase in Council Tax of 2% for 2017/18 and for the duration of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (as per paragraphs 4.4 to 4.6 and Table 9 of the report).

76. HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the draft Minutes of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group meeting held on 14 October 2016 were received and noted.

Chairman