

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 June 2017.

PRESENT: Councillor R B Howe – Chairman.
Councillors D Brown, G J Bull, S Cawley, Mrs A Dickinson, R Harrison, J E White and R Fuller.

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor J A Gray.

9. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17th May 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

10. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Prior to the consideration of the item of business regarding Proposal for Use of External Grant Underspend, Minute No. 17 refers, Councillor R Fuller declared a pecuniary interest by virtue of being Chairman of an organisation to whom Urban Civic had made a donation. Similarly in respect of Minute No. 17 ante Councillor Mrs A Dickinson declared a pecuniary interest by virtue of being a member of an organisation to whom Urban Civic had made a donation and Councillor D Brown declared a pecuniary interest by virtue of being in contract negotiations with Urban Civic.

11. HUNTINGDONSHIRE HOUSING STRATEGY 2017 - 2020

Consideration was given to a report by the Housing Strategy Manager to which was appended The Huntingdonshire Housing Strategy and the Housing Strategy Action Plan April 2017 to March 2018, (Copies of the report, Strategy and Action Plan are appended in the Minute Book). Executive Councillors were informed that the Huntingdonshire Housing Strategy addressed housing issues in the District, the legislative changes relevant to the housing sector and potential impact upon the provision of housing in Huntingdonshire. The Strategy detailed how the District Council aimed to improve housing issues for residents and deliver economic growth through its Corporate Plan. The Action Plan sets out key actions to be undertaken in the first year of the Housing Strategy. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Huntingdonshire Housing Strategy 2017-20 and

Housing Strategy Action Plan 2017-2018 be adopted.

12. HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL PLAN TO 2036 QUARTERLY UPDATE / APPROVAL FOR CONSULTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING UPDATE

By means of a report and PowerPoint presentation by the Planning Services Manager appended to which was a copy of the Draft Local Plan (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book), the Cabinet was updated on the progress of Local Plan preparation and provided with a further update in relation to the necessary highways and transport infrastructure projects. It was confirmed that the Government deadline to have submitted a new Local Plan by the end of March 2018 was on course. It was also noted that an additional round of consultation was scheduled to allow supporting evidence and comments from interested parties to be up-to-date upon submission. It was therefore

RESOLVED

that the proposed approach for submission be endorsed and to approve for consultation the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036: Consultation Draft 2017 and accompanying Sustainability Appraisal, Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) June 2017, and to issue a call for sites.

13. COUNCIL TRADING COMPANY - SHAREHOLDER AGREEMENT, ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION AND COMMERCIALISATION UPDATE

A report by the Managing Director to which was appended the Shareholder Agreement and Articles of Association relating to HDC Ventures Ltd, (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book), was considered for approval. The Cabinet was reassured that these documents had been verified by the 3C Shared Services Legal team and deemed to be in order. The documents provided for a Corporate framework for a commercial strategy to sit alongside Local Government procedures, as the Trading Company allowed the freedom to trade and provided a variety of opportunities without being constrained by bureaucracy. The Managing Director confirmed that the Trading Company was not covered by the Constitution but that it was a Cabinet function and monitoring arrangements would be in place to protect the District Council from trading partners. Thereby, it would be

RESOLVED

- a) that the Shareholder Agreement for HDC Ventures Limited be approved as set out in Appendix 1 to the report now submitted,
- b) that the Articles of Association for HDC Ventures Limited be approved as set out in Appendix 2 to the report now

submitted,

- c) that the Managing Director of the District Council be appointed as the first Company Director, and
- d) that authority be delegated to the Board to appoint additional Directors.

14. DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICY (Pages 9 - 10)

Consideration was given to a report by the Finance Manager and associated Debt Management Policy, (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book), seeking approval of a new Debt Management Policy for the Council. Executive Councillors were advised that the policy provided a controlled, concise and more consistent Policy to ensure the minimisation of debts and collection of rates are maximised by way of a consistent approach. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Debt Management Policy be approved and adopted.

15. ADOPTION OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH FUNERALS POLICY

Executive Councillors were invited to consider a report by the Head of Community and a copy of the proposed Public Health Funerals Policy (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book) seeking approval for the adoption of the Policy by the Council. It was noted that the District Council had provided three funerals, under such provisions in its statutory duty to arrange such funerals, over the last 18 months. Executive Councillors were advised that the Policy would formalise and collate the various pieces of legislation which the Council currently adhered to on this matter and ensured provision for those in need. Whereby it was

RESOLVED

- a) that the Public Health Funeral Policy be approved;
- b) that the Head of Community be authorised to make minor editorial changes which by definition make no change to the Policy;
- c) that the Head of Community, in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing and Regulatory Services, be authorised to make changes to the Policy as a result of revocations, amendments or enactment of relevant statutory provisions.

16. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

Further to Minute No. 58 of their meeting held on 17th November 2016, the Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Resources (a

copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which reviewed the treasury management performance for the 2016/2017 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, a mid year review and annual report after the financial year end.

The Cabinet were referred to paragraph 3.2 of the Officer's report that summarised the treasury management transactions undertaken during the 2016/2017 financial year and detailed the investments and loans held as at 31st March 2017 in Appendix B of the Officer's report. Whereupon the Cabinet,

RESOLVED

that the 2016/17 Treasury Management performance, be noted.

17. PROPOSAL FOR USE OF EXTERNAL GRANT UNDERSPEND

See note on Members interests, Minute No.10 ante refers, Councillors R Fuller, D Brown and Mrs A Dickinson left the room.

Consideration was given to a report by the Economic Development Manager, appended to which was the Urban & Civic Draft loan terms sheet (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book). The report detailed options for the use of the retained element of a Building Foundation for Growth (BFG) capital grant received from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in 2014 as a loan facility and consider the proposed use of the income stream thus generated. It was agreed that the proposal provided an excellent use of the money given the restrictions imposed under the terms of the grant and that the capital investment into the Economic Zone was significant. Thereby it was

RESOLVED

- a) that the use of the £1,984,868 BFG underspend as a loan facility which complied with State Aid regulations be approved; and
- b) that Option 2 in Paragraph 4.2 of the report now submitted for the use of the revenue generated be approved as a budget proposal in the next budget round

Councillors R Fuller, D Brown and Mrs A Dickinson returned to the meeting.

18. TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

A report by the Managing Director was considered (a copy of which is

appended in the Minute Book) which updated the Cabinet on the progress of the Council's Transformation Programme. It was noted that the Programme has been renamed as 'Mosaic' as part of the Project's progression and the Cabinet were advised of the roadshow events planned for week commencing 26th June 2017. Members noted key messages from the scheme were to work with greater efficiency by making use of better processes but with the same resources and to improve customer service. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the progress of the Council's Transformation Programme be noted.

19. INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT 2016/17 QUARTER 4

The Cabinet considered a report by the Corporate Team Manager and Head of Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book along with the associated Appendices) and commented on progress against the Key Activities and Corporate Indicators listed in the Council's Corporate Plan for 2016/17 for the period 1st January to 31st March 2017. The report also incorporated progress on the current projects being undertaken at the Council; details of the 2016/17 provisional outturn for revenue and capital spend; and an update on the Commercial Investment Strategy including details of the investments to date and the level of returns these were expected to generate. A progress report on the Peer Challenge Action Plan is also included following approval at their meeting in November 2016. Thereby it was;

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet:

- a) 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 Officer's report now submitted;
- b) considered and commented on the Council's financial performance at the end of December, as detailed in Appendices D and E, and achievement of the Peer Challenge Action Plan, appended as Appendix G of the Officer's report now submitted; and
- c) considered and commented on the Capital Programme rephasing of some schemes into 2017/18 as detailed in Appendix D of the Officer's report now submitted.

20. REPRESENTATION ON ORGANISATIONS

Consideration was given to a report by the Democratic Services Officer and related appendices (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book) regarding the Council's representation on a variety of organisations and partnerships. A review of the organisations and

partnerships had been undertaken and the consultation responses were attached as Appendix 1 of the report. Although representatives had previously reported quarterly, this was now being reviewed annually. Having considered the schedule of organisations and partnerships, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- a) to nominate to the organisations and partnerships referred to in Appendix 1, as amended and circulated prior to the meeting;
- b) that appointed Members be required to report on an annual basis, in writing, to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel; and
- c) 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.

21. 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 the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

22. AGREEMENT FOR TRANSFER OF LOAN

Further to Minute No. 90 of their meeting held on 16th March 2017, the Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Resources, an addendum and relating Appendices (copies of which are appended in the Annex to the Minute Book) to transfer the responsibility of an existing loan granted to Huntingdonshire Regional College to Cambridge Regional College following the merger of the two colleges. Whereupon, it was;

RESOLVED

- a) that the loan advanced to Huntingdonshire Regional College be transferred to Cambridge Regional College following merger of the two colleges; and
- b) that authority be delegated to the Head of Resources to instruct 3C Shared Services Legal Practice to take all necessary action in respect of the merger of the colleges, the Loan Agreement and the legal charge.

23. ASSET DISPOSALS

(Councillor M F Shellens was in attendance for consideration of this item).

The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Resources, an addendum and associated Appendices for each proposed site (copies of which are appended in the Annex to the Minute Book) in respect of asset disposals surplus to operational requirements. Consideration was given to the proposals by Executive Councillors, however concern was expressed by the Cabinet and shared by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Customers) that Ward members and parishes had not been fully consulted whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that the item be deferred to a future meeting to allow for further consultation with Ward members and Parish Councils.

24. COMMERCIAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY - APPROVAL TO PURCHASE CIS INVESTMENT

The Chairman announced that he proposed to admit the following urgent item in accordance with Section 100B (3) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972 given there was a need an urgent decision being required. Consideration was given to an exempt report by the Head of Resources, an addendum and appendices (copies of which are appended in the Annex to the Minute Book) concerning a proposed investment in line with the Council's Commercial Investment Strategy. Permission for this urgent item had been granted by the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Customers). Having considered the proposal and terms of investment and fully debated the matter, the Cabinet;

RESOLVED

that the Council's investments as detailed in the report now submitted be approved in line with the Commercial Investment Strategy.

Chairman

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DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICY

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Council has a duty to recover outstanding debts and in doing so ensures that its processes are fair to everyone. The introduction of the Debt Management Policy will ensure that debt is minimised and rates of collection are maximised with a consistent approach.
- 1.2 The key aims of this policy is to maximise the level of income collected by the Council by accurate and timely billing, reducing the level of debt arising, effective and timely recovery processes and utilising the appropriate recovery method by debt type.
- 1.3 The Council is responsible for ensuring that procedures are in place for the recovery of any outstanding debt.
- 1.4 This policy sets out the procedures for debt recovery and for the write-off of any debt which is deemed to be irrecoverable.
- 1.5 The term 'miscellaneous debt' is used to represent any debt other than Council Tax or Business Rates. It covers the following services:
- One Leisure
 - Operations
 - Commercial Rents
 - Licensing
 - Housing
 - Environmental Health
 - Building Control
 - Other invoicing

2 POLICY

- 2.1 Payment should be obtained as and when goods/services/facilities are provided wherever possible; in particular where the value of goods and services is relatively small, i.e. less than £30.
- 2.2 Where payment is not received in advance or at the time when the goods/services/facilities are delivered an invoice must be raised as soon as possible, but must be within 7 days of the goods/services/facilities being provided.
- 2.3 To ensure that payment is received in good time, it is important that the customer details have been set up correctly on the financial system:
- Correct address information, including postcode.
 - Contact details – telephone number (landline and mobile), email address.
 - Invoices should be checked prior to posting/printing to prevent unnecessary credits and delays in payment.
- 2.4 Invoices should state that the bill is due and payable at the invoice date. The standard payment terms are 21 days.
- 2.5 If no payment is received within 21 days from date of issue of the invoice, a reminder will be issued to the debtor on day 22. This first reminder will clearly state that full payment is required in the next 7 days.
- 2.6 If payment is not received after 10 days of issuing the first reminder, a second and (final) reminder will be sent out and clearly state that legal action will be taken if the debt is not settled in full within a further 7 days of the date of the final reminder. The debtor is advised of potential

costs this will incur, including legal fees, future credit difficulties, bailiff action and County Court Judgments.

- 2.7 If there is no response from the debtor after the final reminder period, then attempts will be made to contact the debtor by phone or email and the use of tracing agencies if required. The debt will then be passed on to the Council's Legal Team for action to be taken (debts over £300) or to a collections agency for debts under £300.
- 2.8 Where only part payment has been received, with no explanation of any query against the balance outstanding, a final reminder should be issued 10 days from the issue of the first letter. The final reminder should clearly state that legal action will be taken if the debt is not settled in full within a further 7 days of the date of the final reminder.
- 2.9 Where a debtor requests permission to settle the debt by instalments and extend the normal terms and conditions of supply, they must submit an application in which must not exceed 21 days from the date of issue of the invoice and explain the reasons for their inability to meet the original contract terms. The Income Manager and the Finance Manager will agree the revised terms.
- 2.10 If the debt is not settled within the terms set by the Income Manager and the Finance Manager then a final reminder should be issued to the debtor. The final reminder will clearly state that legal action will be taken if the debt is not settled in full within a further 7 days of the date of the final reminder.
- 2.11 The total outstanding debt is reported each month to the Senior Management Team and Cabinet Members, and quarterly to the overview and Scrutiny (Performance and Customers) Panel and Cabinet.
- 2.12 Write off of debts may take place if all attempts to get the debt paid is unsuccessful. The Income Team are required to demonstrate to the Council's S151 Officer that all reasonable attempts to collect outstanding debt have taken place prior to a write-off request.
- 2.13 A write-off must not be communicated to the debtor. It is not an acknowledgement that the debt does not exist, but is an internal transaction in the accounts of the Council, which removes the debt from the records.
- 2.14 Individuals or organisations that have previously defaulted on payments to the Council are not allowed credit facilities.
- 2.15 Where a debtor's payments are regularly or consistently paid outside the terms of supply the Council must consider withdrawal of credit facilities and request the individual/organisation to pay for goods/services/facilities at the time they are consumed.
- 2.16 Collection of Council Tax and Business Rates - debts relating to Council Tax and Business Rates are collected in accordance with the legislation relating to those local taxes.
- 2.17 Collection of Housing Benefit Overpayment - debts relating to Housing Benefit Overpayment are collected in accordance with the Department for Work & Pensions - Good Practice Guide (V1 12 February 2015).

Person / Post Responsible	Finance Manager	
Date Approved / Adopted	SMT	XX XXX XXXX
Approved by	Council	XX XXXX XXXX