

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the CIVIC SUITE (LANCASTER/STIRLING ROOMS), PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 19 July 2022

PRESENT: Councillor S J Conboy – Chair.

Councillors L Davenport-Ray, S W Ferguson, M A Hassall, B A Mickelburgh, B M Pitt, T D Sanderson and S Wakeford.

APOLOGY: An Apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor S L Taylor.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor S Corney.

18 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16th June 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

19 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

20 CORPORATE PLAN 2022/23

With the aid of a report prepared by the Business and Intelligence Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) Executive Members were updated on the development of a new Corporate Plan for 2022/23 and were presented with proposed objectives, actions and performance indicators for endorsement by Cabinet and approval by Council.

In introducing the report, the Executive Leader reported that a number of engagement events would be taking place over the summer and autumn period and that feedback received from the community would be incorporated into the Corporate Plan going forward. Executive Members were reminded of the opportunities they have had to contribute to the Plan thus far and welcomed the priority which had been accorded to the “tackling climate change and caring for the environment” objective which now appeared as the first objective of the Plan.

With reference to the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) and in response to a question raised by the Executive Councillor for Planning, it was confirmed that an action would be taken away to consider the addition of an indicator under the objective “Strengthening our Communities” to show timescales for payments to community groups. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Council be recommended to approve the Corporate Plan developed for 2022/23 as attached in the updated Appendix A of the report now submitted.

21 ENERGY BILLS REBATE - LOCAL SCHEME POLICY

A report by the Revenues and Benefits Manager was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking approval of a discretionary Energy Bills Rebate – Local Scheme policy to provide financial support to households not eligible for assistance under the main scheme.

By way of background, the Executive Councillor for Customer Services advised there were three strands of work relating to Energy Bills Rebate, with the discretionary scheme forming the latter part of this work. He went on to explain that households in Council Tax Bands A-D were eligible for a one-off payment of £150 which also included Band E properties where the award of a Disabled Band Reduction had lowered the Band to D. In noting that around 61,000 households were eligible for this payment, it was reported that 45,000 payments had been made to those households who paid their Council Tax via Direct Debit. The remaining 16,000 households had been contacted individually to obtain their payment details and to date, a total of 52,645 payments had been made equating to £7.9m.

In terms of the proposed Local scheme, it was noted that the District Council had been allocated a budget of £211,350 to be paid out by 30th November 2022 with any unused funding being returned to the Government. Attention was drawn to the three categories of households which had been identified following an analysis of local demographics to identify households on low incomes and/or likely to have higher fuel costs, namely, Council Tax Support (CTS) claimants, Disabled Band Reduction (DBR) recipients in Bands F-H and Households with Council Tax exemptions N, S, U and W in Bands E-H.

In receiving the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers and Partnerships) and following commendations to the Revenues and Benefits Team for their hard work and efforts to date, Executive Members noted that South Cambridgeshire and East Cambridgeshire District Councils had adopted similar schemes. Whereupon it was

RESOLVED

that the Huntingdonshire District Council's Energy Bills Rebate – Local Scheme policy be approved.

22 LOCAL TRANSPORT AND CONNECTIVITY PLAN

A report by the Chief Planning Officer was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking approval for submission of a formal consultation response on behalf of the District Council to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA).

The Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing reported upon the legal requirement for the CPCA to prepare a Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the area, with the current Plan having been approved in January 2020. The CPCA

has since published a draft Local Transport and Connectivity Plan for public consultation between 12th May to 4th August 2022 whilst also engaging directly with the County and District Councils in the area via Member workshops and Officer Working Groups. Having been advised that a full and detailed response would be provided to the CPCA alongside the completed feedback form as shown in Appendix A of the report, attention was then drawn to the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth). The Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing concurred with the comments which had been made in respect of the District's rural communities.

Comment was made upon the lack of information which existed within the Plan to identify how the six proposed goals would work together. The Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing reported that he would be asking Officers to pick this up as part of Working Group meetings with the CPCA. Cabinet Members acknowledged that further opportunities to comment on the Plan were available for example via the CPCA Transport and Infrastructure Committee. In agreeing to include a further comment within the Council's response seeking a firm commitment from the CPCA on rural transport conditions, the Executive Leader commented that the inclusivity of all the District's communities had been considered and would continue to be considered in the future and not just the District's market towns.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet agree the proposed response set out in the completed questionnaire (as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report now submitted) and authorise its submission to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

23 HACKNEY CARRIAGE FARE REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report by the Licensing Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking approval of a Table of Fares for Huntingdonshire's Hackney Carriages.

In introducing the report, the Executive Councillor for Customer Services reported that the last review had been undertaken in August 2019 and that a consultation with operators and drivers had been undertaken between 31st May 2022 and 27th June 2022, generating 12 responses. Following an explanation of the differences between the proposed Table of Fares at Appendix A and Appendix B and having received an example of costs for a typical 2 mile journey, the Cabinet were informed that the fees had not been reviewed in 3 years and that the cost of fuel and inflation had risen during this time. The Executive Councillor for Customer Services then went on to express his preference for Appendix A in light of the fact that this option was supported by most of the respondents to the consultation.

Having been informed that the pricing structure encompassed both time, date and day differentials and that the fees proposed were the maximum level of charges that Hackney Carriage drivers and operators could impose upon customers, the Cabinet were then informed of the rationale behind

recommendation b) which sought delegated approval of any future Hackney Carriage fare tables to relevant Officers and the Executive Portfolio Holder. Whereupon, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) to consider the proposed table of Hackney Carriage fares that have been compiled following the consultation that finished on 27 June 2022 and approved the table of fares as outlined in Appendix A of the report now submitted; and
- (b) to delegate the approval of any future Hackney Carriage fare tables to the Licensing Manager and Head of Service, in conjunction with the Executive Portfolio Holder.

24 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MARKET TOWNS TASK AND FINISH STUDY

Councillor S Corney was in attendance for this item.

A report by the Overview and Scrutiny Market Towns Task and Finish Study was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which outlined the background, justification, process, conclusions and recommendations arising from a task and finish study on the general theme of Huntingdonshire's market towns.

In introducing the report, Councillor S Corney provided the Cabinet with background to the study which had arisen following an Overview and Scrutiny Members away day in June 2021. Members were acquainted with the methodology used for the study which included an interview with representatives from Ramsey Neighbourhood Trust.

The Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing welcomed the report and the recommendations contained within it making particular reference to the Council's Economic Development Team for the support that they have provided businesses across the District during the pandemic and recovery from it. In welcoming the report and having commended Members of the Working Group for their efforts with the study and in acknowledging the synergies which existed with the current work being undertaken with the Place Strategy, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- a) to formally recognise the work of the Council's Economic Development Team for the support they have provided businesses across the District during the pandemic and recovery from it;
- b) to identify support and guidance for traders within the District to enable them to identify the right place, the right people, obtain advice and funding opportunities for their business;
- c) to co-ordinate with Town and Parish Councils as well as local groups, to encourage self-promotion of their towns and villages, as well as opening communication and dialogue within and between local communities;

- d) to explore visitor opportunities within the District for short tourist experiences;
- e) to conduct research to identify residents within the District who are excluded from current dialogues, and to identify reasons for this;
- f) to investigate and identify further funding opportunities available to the Council and local businesses to aid continued growth;
- g) to encourage local trading bodies to exert their influence in supporting businesses within the District and to discourage promotion of businesses in neighbouring areas; and to ensure enforcement powers can support this where appropriate; and
- h) that the findings of this study be incorporated into the Community Strategy implementation plans.

25 FINANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021/22 OUTTURN

A report by the Chief Finance Officer was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) presenting details of the Council's projected financial performance for 2021/22.

The Director for Finance and Corporate Services reported that COVID-19 still had an impact upon the finances of the Council with revenue outturn and capital outturn both achieving underspends at £2,012k and £28,741k respectively. Attention was drawn to areas which had impacted upon the financial outturn together with the positive impact the Treasury Management Strategy was having in generating a good rate of return for the Council. In acknowledging the budgetary challenges that existed around increasing rates of inflation and the need to continue identifying savings and efficiencies, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) to consider and comment on the financial performance for the 2021/22 financial year, as detailed in Appendix 1 and summarised in paragraph 3.2 of the report now submitted; and
- (b) to consider and approve the re-phasing of capital to future years as outlined in paragraph 3.3 of the report now submitted.

26 TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN REPORT 2021/22

With the aid of a report prepared by the Chief Finance Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were updated on the Council's treasury management activity during 2021/22 which included investment and borrowing activity and treasury performance.

The Financial and Treasury Accountant reported that a half yearly report had been presented to the Cabinet in October 2021 and that this report provided outturn figures for the 2021/22 financial year. He went on to report that both inflation and interest rates had increased and that no borrowing had been

undertaken by the Council in that year. In receiving an update on the Council's investment position, it was reported that the Council's average investing rate was at 0.82%.

In noting the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) and having received assurances that climate and environment considerations would be included in future reports and that the Council's property portfolio was subject to re-evaluation each year by an external body, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

to note the treasury management performance for 2021/22 and recommend the report to Council for consideration.

27 3C LEGAL, ICT AND BUILDING CONTROL SHARED SERVICES ANNUAL REPORTS 2021/22

The Cabinet received a report by the Corporate Director (People) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the Annual Report 2021/22 of the services currently delivered in partnership with Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils.

Following an introduction by the Executive Councillor for Corporate and Shared Services on the performance of each of the three service areas, attention was drawn to the proposal that future reporting be incorporated in the Council's annual reporting arrangements. The Managing Director commented that the relationship with service areas was now well established and that quarterly updates would continue to be received.

Having had their attention drawn to the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth), a brief discussion ensued on 3C ICT which included the measures taken by the service to mitigate cyber security, the relocation of the Street Naming and Numbering team to Building Control and the contributions from all three services towards the identification of savings targets. The Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources commented upon the various risks associated with ICT and in response the Managing Director confirmed that risk management was the responsibility of the Corporate Governance Committee but that she would discuss the matter with the Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources outside of the meeting. In receiving a response to a question raised by the Executive Councillor for Community and Health regarding the commercial nature of Building Control and the advantages that this brought to the District, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- a) to endorse the 3C Shared Services Annual Reports attached as Appendices A, B and C to the report now submitted; and
- b) that future reporting on the 3C ICT, Legal and Building Control shared services is incorporated into the Council's annual reporting arrangements.

Chair