

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, 21 March 2023

PRESENT: Councillor S J Conboy – Chair.

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

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors L Davenport-Ray and S L Taylor.

80 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7th February 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

81 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor B M Pitt declared an other registerable interest under Minute Nos 22/90 and 22/92 by virtue of his membership of St Neots Town Council. He abstained from voting on both items.

82 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME MARCH 2023

With the aid of a report prepared by the Chief Planning Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were acquainted with the purpose and content of the proposed replacement Local Development Scheme (LDS) relating to the preparation of the Local Plan update.

By way of background, the Executive Councillor for Planning reminded the Cabinet of their previous decision on 24th January 2023 to support the preparation of an updated Local Plan. The Local Development Scheme detailed the components of the current development plan and summarised the plan-making process, providing an indicative timetable for preparing the Local Plan Update. He then went on to report that the primary purpose of the Scheme was to make local communities and stakeholders aware of the phases of engagement opportunities as well as illustrating the range of evidence base and supporting documents required together with the resources and risks involved.

Having had their attention drawn to the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth), in particular the comments relating to the level of engagement to be undertaken with the District's Town and Parish Councils, it was

RESOLVED

that the contents of the Local Development Scheme March 2023 be approved and brought into immediate effect following the Cabinet's meeting and the call-in period.

83 DRAFT SETTLEMENT HIERARCHY METHODOLOGY 2023

A report by the Chief Planning Officer was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) setting out the purpose and content of the draft Settlement Hierarchy Methodology 2023 and seeking approval of its content for publication for public engagement for a period of six weeks following the Cabinet's meeting and the call-in period.

In introducing the report, the Executive Councillor for Planning reported that when developing Local Plans, the Council must adhere to Government legislation and policy such as the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance. Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 established a settlement hierarchy for development, supported by additional policies to identify what type of development is acceptable and where. This report seeks to reassess settlements and aid the establishment of a settlement hierarchy for the next Local Plan whilst being mindful of not only growth, but social, environmental and economic benefits for the District and local communities. He then went on to report that a public consultation be undertaken for six weeks starting shortly after the Cabinet meeting and relevant call-in period. In his concluding remarks, attention was drawn to the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth) which were received, noted and welcomed by the Cabinet.

Matters that were discussed included the methodology used to categorise the hierarchy, where it was acknowledged that the Council would be adapting its approach to better reflect the patterns of growth within the District, for example, by working with local GP surgeries and other appropriate partners to better project growth projections in locality areas. In acknowledging the key role stakeholders played in contributing towards the settlement hierarchy methodology, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) to approve the contents of the draft Settlement Hierarchy Methodology 2023; and
- (b) to agree that the draft Settlement Hierarchy Methodology 2023 be published for public consultation for a period of six weeks.

84 CALL FOR SITES

Consideration was given to a report by the Chief Planning Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking approval of the content of the Call for Sites form for public engagement opportunities for a period of ten weeks following the Cabinet's meeting and the call-in period.

It was reported by the Executive Councillor for Planning that the commencement of a Call for Sites engagement period was being proposed to support the final stage of preparation of the Local Plan update. The form would provide

landowners, developers, agents, individuals and other interested parties an opportunity to suggest sites for a wide variety of uses and to indicate when they might be available. It was acknowledged that the Call for Sites engagement was interconnected with the Land Availability Assessment Methodology (Item No. 22/85 refers) and that together, both documents would form a key part of the evidence needed to prepare the next Huntingdonshire Local Plan. In his concluding remarks, the Executive Councillor for Planning drew the Cabinet's attention to the proposed 10 week engagement period for the Call for Sites process and the views of the Overview and Panel (Performance & Growth) where comments had been made in respect of flood mitigation measures, resource management and communities that were already in the middle of developing their own Neighbourhood Plans.

The Chief Planning Officer reported that any sites proposed would be subject to an assessment, which included a sustainability appraisal by Officers, full details of which would be submitted to the Cabinet in due course. Members were reminded that rural communities also had an opportunity to put forward exception sites too as part of this process. It was further confirmed that flood risk assessments would also be included as part of the assessment process and that partners such as the Environment Agency, Anglian Water and Cambridge Water would all be invited to participate and contribute in the Local Plan development process.

Whilst the use of the Call for Sites Form would be encouraged, if there were individuals requiring support or assistance in completing the form, alternative methods of acquiring the information would be accepted and dealt with on a case by case basis. Furthermore, the Executive Councillor for Planning commented that the Call for Sites process also provided an opportunity for smaller developers to submit their proposals. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the structure of the Call for Sites engagement be approved; and
- (b) that the Call for Sites engagement period commence after the Cabinet's meeting and the call-in period lasting for a period of ten weeks.

85 DRAFT LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

With the aid of a report by the Chief Planning Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were presented with the content of the Land Availability Assessment (LAA) Methodology and its approval for public engagement for a period of six week's following the Cabinet's meeting and the call-in period.

Following a brief introduction by the Executive Councillor for Planning who reported that the Land Availability Assessment set out a clear methodology by which to assess potential development sites and provide a consistent way in which to assess their suitability, availability, achievability, deliverability and potential capacity and in receiving and noting the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth), in particular the comments which had been made in respect of windfall sites, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) to approve the contents of the draft Land Availability Assessment Methodology; and
- (b) to agree that the draft Land Availability Assessment Methodology be published for public engagement for a period of six weeks following the Cabinet's meeting and the call-in period.

86 LOCAL PLANS ADVISORY GROUP (LPAG) TERMS OF REFERENCE

A report by the Chief Planning Officer was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking approval of the Terms of Reference for the Local Plans Advisory Group (formerly known as Development Plans Policy Advisory Group).

In light of the work being undertaken to prepare an update on the Huntingdonshire Local Plan, it was now timely to review the Advisory Group's name, terms of reference and membership.

In doing so, the Chair reported upon a proposed membership change at paragraph 1.4 of the report suggesting the removal of Councillor C H Tevlin from the Advisory Group and replacing her with Councillor L Davenport-Ray. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Cabinet agree the revised Terms of Reference for the Local Plans Advisory Group as outlined within the report now submitted; and
- (b) that Councillors E R Butler, S Corney, L Davenport-Ray, D B Dew, C Gleadow, J Neish and T D Sanderson be appointed to serve on the Local Plans Advisory Group for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

87 HUNTINGDONSHIRE PLACE STRATEGY

Consideration was given to a report by the Interim Managing Director (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking endorsement of the shared Place Strategy for Huntingdonshire, known as Huntingdonshire Futures for approval by the Council.

The Chair, as Executive Councillor for Place reported upon the work undertaken to date to develop the Strategy which would be owned by Huntingdonshire and its stakeholders and communities. The document would be a living and working one, driving forward the ambitions for Huntingdonshire over the next 20 to 30 years working in conjunction with partners. The Strategy sought to influence, engage and empower Huntingdonshire.

The Cabinet then received a detailed account of the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth), noting the comments which had been made in respect of engaging with the agricultural farming community, the

implications of active travel in rural areas and the wider impact upon the Council's Climate Strategy.

In welcoming the Strategy and in noting the next steps would be to engage with partners to identify the actions they would undertake in Huntingdonshire to achieve the objectives of the Strategy, the Cabinet placed on record their thanks to Officers, residents, communities and businesses who took part in the many consultation events held to help inform the Place Strategy. Whereupon, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) to note the extensive engagement and work with partners, stakeholders and residents across Huntingdonshire to develop the shared Place Strategy known as Huntingdonshire Futures;
- (b) to endorse and commit to the outcomes and ambitions set out in Huntingdonshire Futures; and
- (c) to recommend to Council the adoption of Huntingdonshire Futures.

88 CORPORATE PLAN 2023-2028

The Cabinet gave consideration to a report by the Business Intelligence and Performance Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) updating Members on the development of a new Corporate Plan for 2023-2028 and to present proposed priorities, outcomes, actions and operational performance indicators to Council for approval.

Having been informed by the Chair, as Executive Councillor for Place of the background to the work undertaken, the Cabinet noted the three key priorities for the Corporate Plan as follows:

- Improving quality of life for local people;
- Creating a better Huntingdonshire for future generations; and
- Delivering good quality, high value for money services with good control and compliance with statutory obligations.

Attention was then drawn to the table outlined in Section 4 of the report outlining the measures of success for each priority which would be achieved through working smarter across internal and external systems within Huntingdonshire, which included working closely with Huntingdonshire's partner organisations.

Having commended Officers for their energy and enthusiasm in turning ideas into ambitious realities and in acknowledging the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth), the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- to recommend to Council the endorsement of the Corporate Plan for 2023-2028 (as attached at Appendix A of the report now submitted).

89 UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND UPDATE

With the aid of a report by the Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet received an update on the programme of activity funded through the new UK Shared Prosperity Fund in Huntingdonshire.

By way of background, the Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy & Housing drew attention to the update provided in Appendix 1 of the report and the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth). In noting that a decision was currently awaited from the Government on the rural fund, it was

RESOLVED

to note the progress made in developing a new programme of UK Shared Prosperity Fund activity to support the delivery of the best outcomes for our residents, businesses and place.

90 MARKET TOWNS PROGRAMME - SPRING UPDATE

See Minute No. 22/81 – Members' Interests.

A report by the Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) providing an update on activity across the strands of the Market Towns Programme.

The Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy & Housing provided some background to the recommendations proposed within the report and took the opportunity to remind the Cabinet of the history to the Wayfinding (Digital Information System) project, drawing particular attention to paragraph 2.37 of the report.

Having had their attention drawn to the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth) and in thanking the Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy & Housing for the newsletter which had been produced to highlight, promote and support the work of the Market Towns Programme, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) to note progress on the Market Towns Programme (MTP) over the last quarter;
- (b) to delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) or the Managing Director in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy & Housing and Executive Councillor for Finance and Resources to enter contractual arrangements, as necessary, to facilitate the completion of the St Neots Market Square renewal project; and
- (c) to delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Place) or the Managing Director in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy & Housing to approve initiation of the Wayfinding (Digital Information System) project, or alternatively return the funding allocation to

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority as per the requirements of the Accelerated Projects Funding Agreement.

(Councillor B M Pitt abstained from voting on this item).

91 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

92 ST NEOTS MARKET TOWN PROGRAMME (OLD FALCON INN & MARKET SQUARE)

See Minute No. 22/81 – Members' Interests.

The Cabinet gave consideration to an exempt report (a copy of which is appended in the annex to the Minute Book) which provided an update on the St Neots Market Town Programme (Old Falcon Inn & Market Square).

Having received an update from the Executive Councillor for Jobs, Housing and Economy who responded to a number of questions raised and in noting the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth), the Cabinet

RESOLVED

to endorse the recommendations contained within the exempt report now submitted.

(Councillor B M Pitt abstained from voting on this item).

Chair