

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, 16 July 2024

PRESENT: Councillor S J Conboy – Chair.

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

20 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18th June 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

21 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor T D Sanderson declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest under Minute No. 24/23 by virtue of the fact that he was a Member of Huntingdon Town Council, he left the room and took no part in the discussion or voting on the item.

Councillor S J Conboy declared a Other Registrable Interest under Minute No. 24/23 by virtue of her membership of the English Civic War Society.

Councillor B M Pitt declared an Other Registerable Interest under Minute No. 24/23 by virtue of his membership of St Neots Town Council.

22 FENS AND LINCS RESERVOIRS

Due to the reasons as contained within the report and an imminent decision being required, having obtained the agreement of the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth), an item of business was considered under the Special Urgency Provisions - Section 16 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules, as contained in the Council's Constitution, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

Consideration was given to a report by the Chief Planning Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the second non-statutory consultation on the Fens and Lincs reservoirs proposals and associated infrastructure challenges involving Anglian Water and Cambridge Water at the pre-application stage of Development Consent Orders.

Members attention was drawn to the second non-statutory consultation that was active but was not essential to respond to but felt appropriate to have the option to respond by way of decision and the statutory consultation was expected mid-2025 for a formal response ahead of the submission of the Development Consent Order for a Nationally Strategic Project (NSP).

The Chief Planning Officer advised the Cabinet of the background to the initial consultation that focussed on the broad locations of where new reservoirs would be required and latterly both the Fens and Lincs proposed locations of the reservoirs will come into the District, whereby consultation had already been undertaken by Anglian Water and Cambridge Water with the parishes directly affected.

The role of the District Council in the NSP would be as a technical consultee, with direct representations being made to the Planning Inspectorate. Members noted that work had not commenced on the Environmental Impact Assessment, but work had focussed on the technical input looking at the routing of infrastructure between the reservoirs and there would be further opportunities to engage.

Councillor L Davenport-Ray referred to the positive impact of Anglian Water re-investing in infrastructure and suggest viewing projects such as these in the wider context of the impact of climate change, specifically some communities in the District and the rising sea levels and not relying on infrastructure problems to solve the impacts of climate change.

Councillor S Ferguson supported the concerns shared by Councillor Davenport-Ray and the technical issues associated with building such large reservoirs in the Fens should not be underestimated in an area at risk of flooding as a result of climate change.

In noting the timeline for delivery of the Fens reservoir not until 2036 and further opportunities to input into the consultation process, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) the Chief Planning Officer, in consultation with the Executive Leader and Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing, be authorised to prepare and submit formal comments on the current second non-statutory consultation on the Fens and Lincs reservoirs and associated infrastructure proposals; and
- (b) that the Chief Planning Officer be authorised to take all associated action necessary in the interests of the efficient and timely conduct of the Council's compliance with the Fens Reservoir and the Lincs Reservoir Development Consent Order (DCO) procedures including but not limited to:
 - i. prepare the Council's responses to any written questions from Examining Authority during the DCO Examinations and to submit those to the Examining Authority;
 - ii. settle the content of and submit any Written Representations to the Examining Authority;
 - iii. negotiate, settle and complete any legal agreements relevant to secure the granting of a DCO pursuant to the applications;
 - iv. settling and the submission of the Statement of Common Ground to the Examining Authority; and
 - v. the instruction of witnesses and legal advisors throughout the Examination process if required; and f) the discharge of DCO

requirements made under any development consent order granted by Secretary of State.

23 MARKET TOWNS PROGRAMME SUMMER UPDATE

With the aid of a report prepared by the Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager the Cabinet received an update (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) that provided details on the 2024/2025 Q1 update on the Market Towns Programme (MTP).

By way of background the Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing reported that the funding for the Shop Front Grant scheme had been used for the intended purpose and the remaining funding be extended to the wider District. He further reported on the proposal to move funding around the project budgets with more flexibility in light of emerging deadlines. Members attention was also drawn to the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth).

Councillor B Pitt referred to the positive impact of the ongoing Market Towns Programme and Councillor S Taylor further highlighted her concerns with the lack of hygiene facilities for type of trades using the Shop in a Box and the determination of the leases, whereby Councillor Wakeford explained that the precise uses had not yet been determined but would be reflected upon in the designation of use and various options were being considered working with partners but had not been concluded.

In noting the positive impact reported by Councillor L Davenport-Ray of the works in St Neots and improvements to road user hierarchy and safety for pedestrians and cyclists, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the extension of the Shop Front Grant scheme on a district wide basis be approved; and
- (b) that the Corporate Director (Place), in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing be authorised to approve and initiative delivery on new Market Town focused projects and/or reallocate funding within existing programme activities, utilising funding generated from efficiency savings and/or underspend elsewhere within the Market Town Programme, should such savings be realised before the end of the 2024/25 financial year.

24 LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING FUND ROUND 3

Consideration was given to a report by the Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager and Resources Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) detailing information on participation of the Government's Local Authority Housing Fund in Round 3 in anticipation of the acquisition of a small number of homes under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

Members attention was drawn to comments raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities and Partnerships), in particular clarification on the tenancies of the units.

The Cabinet further noted that the Council would be working with Registered Providers to support the acquisition of the units and in response to a question from Councillor T D Sanderson on an update on whether Stonewater Housing Association, it was reported that he would have to defer to ongoing discussion that Officers were continuing with, but was hopeful for a resolution.

Accordingly, the Cabinet has

RESOLVED

- (a) that Huntingdonshire District Council's participation in the Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3 (LAHF R3) and to future LAHF rounds subject to finding a Registered Provider(s) willing to work with the Council to deliver the homes be approved;
- (b) that the signing of all documents in relation to the LAHF R3 and any subsequent rounds of funding be delegated to the Corporate Director (Place) and the Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing;
- (c) that the Council be authorised to provide support to the residents either directly through the Community Team; or in directly through another body; and be responsible for the processing of any grant claims associated with these households under Government grant schemes; and
- (d) that the signing of all documents that enable the Council to accept Government Funding and to use that funding to facilitate the delivery of affordable housing be delegated to the Corporate Director (Place) and the Regeneration and Housing Delivery Manager in consultation with the Executive Councillor for Economy, Regeneration and Housing.

25 PRODUCTIVITY PLANS

The Cabinet has considered a report by the Corporate Director (People) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the Council's proposed Productivity Plan prior to submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The Executive Leader confirmed details of the requirement for the Council to complete a Productivity Plan following a request for this on 16th April 2024 from the then Minister for Local Government, Simon Hoare. In noting the Council's compliance with meeting the timescales required in preparation for submission by 19th July 2024, it was further noted that the Council had undertaken an additional action of developing a Continuous Improvement Plan to assist with transforming the services provided to the public to be more efficient.

In noting the comments raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth) and assurance provided to the Panel and explanation provided by the Chief Executive in the likelihood of the emergence of new guidance and legislative provisions with the change in Government that the document would remain as a living document, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Productivity plan for Huntingdonshire District Council which will form the Council's submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government be approved; and
- (b) that the Council's Continuous Improvement Plan be endorsed.

Chair