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## Cabinet

Report of the meetings held on 4th December 2003,  
8th and 29th January 2004

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### Matter for Decision

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#### 102. BUDGET AND 2004 - 2009 MEDIUM TERM PLAN

The Cabinet has considered the contents of the 2004/05 draft Budget, the Medium Term Plan for the period 2004-2009 and the level of Council Tax for the following year. The financial report considered by the Cabinet at their meeting held on 29th January 2004 has been reproduced as an Appendix to the report of the Corporate Director, Commerce and Technology entitled Budget and 2004 - 2009 Medium Term Plan which appears on the agenda for the Council to consider at Item 3.

Under the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance, the Council is required to incorporate prudential indicators annually for the ensuing year to ensure that capital investment plans and treasury management decisions are affordable, prudent and sustainable. In that respect, the Cabinet has been advised that the indicators may need subsequent amendment to reflect any changes as a result of the review of the Council's spending plans for next year.

Accordingly, the Cabinet

#### RECOMMEND

- (a) that no further variations be made to the Medium Term Plan;
- (b) that, for the financial year commencing 1st April 2004, the existing level of Council Tax for a Band D property be increased to £94.54; and
- (c) that the Prudential Indicators for 2004/05, as shown in the revised Annex F of the report of the Corporate Director, Commerce and Technology submitted to the Cabinet on 29th January 2004, but amended to reflect the changes referred to in the said report, be approved.

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## **Matters for Information**

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### **103. RURAL POST OFFICES**

In September 2001, the Cabinet agreed to finance a scheme to provide 'on demand' remote CCTV monitoring of rural post offices to help combat the problem of post office robberies. Having been advised that there had been no expression of interest in the scheme, the Cabinet has agreed to delete the existing provision of £5,000 per annum set aside in the Medium Term Plan and has suggested to Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership that they investigate the problem of security of rural post offices.

### **104. TREASURY MANAGEMENT – INVESTMENT AND PERFORMANCE**

The Cabinet has noted the performance of the District Council's Fund Managers for the period 1st July to 30th September 2003.

### **105. LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT 1988 (AS AMENDED) PUBLICATION OF RURAL SETTLEMENT LIST**

Billing authorities are required under Section 42 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 to compile and maintain a rural settlement list identifying the boundary of any settlement which has not more than 3000 residents. This list is then used to grant rural rate relief to rural post offices, village shops and petrol filling stations. Changes to the District Council's Rural Settlement List have been approved by the Cabinet, the changes having arisen from an increase in growth in some areas.

### **106. PROVISION OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCES**

Further to Item No. 64 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 24th September 2003, the Cabinet has received a report of the inaugural meeting of the Public Conveniences Advisory Group held on the 11th November 2003. Having noted the recommendations of the Group regarding the replacement of town centre facilities, the future maintenance of new public conveniences and contract options, the Cabinet has –

- ◆ agreed to replace existing town centre public conveniences with semi-automated facilities based on an individual cubical design with direct access;
- ◆ requested the Head of Environment and Transport to contact Godmanchester, Ramsey, St Ives, St Neots and Huntingdon Town Councils to ascertain whether they wish initially to enter into an agency agreement on a temporary basis and ultimately to tender for a contract to maintain and clean those public conveniences in their towns;
- ◆ requested the Head of Environment and Transport to invite tenders for the external design/construction, maintenance and

- cleaning of public conveniences in the town centres both as part of one contract and as a design/construction contract only.
- ◆ supported a Medium Term Plan bid relating to the cessation of the automatic public convenience service in villages in the District; and
  - ◆ informed the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources) of the deliberations of the meeting of the Advisory Group.

#### **107. PARISH PLANS – MAXIMISING THEIR CONTRIBUTION**

The Cabinet has supported the development of the Parish Plan programme within the District in partnership with Action with the Communities in Rural England, which has attracted funding and Officer support from District Council and Primary Care Trusts within Cambridgeshire. Parish Plans present the public with the opportunity to discuss the social, economic and environmental issues affecting their own community at grass roots level. Work has already been undertaken to ascertain the prioritisation of support from the Council if parish plans are undertaken in the parishes of Holme, Offord Darcy, Toseland and Upton.

#### **108. STAFFING REVIEW – OPERATIONAL SERVICES**

Arising from Item No. 17 of the Report of the Employment Panel, to the meeting of the Council held on 10th December 2003 the Cabinet has agreed arrangements to grant early retirement to two employees in the Operational Services Directorate in the interest of the efficient exercise of the Council's functions.

#### **109. OFFICE ACCOMMODATION**

Further to Item No 73 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 10th December 2003 and on the recommendations of the District Council's Headquarters and other Accommodation Members Advisory Group, the Cabinet has agreed, subject to the satisfactory conclusion of negotiations, that the District Council's contact centre be located for a temporary period of three years at Speke House, St Ives and to retain consultants to undertake a feasibility study of options for the re-location of the District Council's headquarters to take into account the following -

- ◆ the existing bus station site in Huntingdon Town Centre;
- ◆ redevelopment of the Pathfinder House site;
- ◆ refurbishment of Pathfinder House; and
- ◆ the identification of a site on the periphery of Huntingdon (subject to the identification of a suitable site of 50 – 70,000 square feet and an understanding that it would be complemented by a customer service centre in or convenient to the town centre).

**110. ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY**

Following Item No.14 of the Employment Panel's Report to the meeting of the Council held on the 10th December 2003, the Cabinet has approved the content of an Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy for Council services which highlights the Council's attitude and commitment towards preventing fraud, corruption and theft, lists the policies and procedures which are in place and explains the process to be adopted for reviewing the strategy.

**111. RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The Cabinet has approved the content of a Risk Management Strategy for Council services. The strategy oversees the Council's risk management process and is a requirement of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment and the Accounts and Audit Regulations. Annual progress reports on the strategy's implementation will be submitted to the Cabinet and the Planning and Finance (Overview and Scrutiny) Panel.

**112. COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS AND EXEMPTIONS**

In accordance with the Local Government Act 2003, the Cabinet has reviewed the level of discounts currently available to Council Taxpayers. Bearing in mind that the Council's tax base is affected by the number of discounts given, the Cabinet has agreed to reduce the current discount of 50% in respect of Council Tax liability awarded on second homes in the District to 10% and to abolish the current discount of 50% for properties empty on a long term basis. Both charges will take effect from 1st April 2004.

**113. HOUSING AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFITS – PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

In response to the introduction of new standards for the administration of housing and council tax benefits by the Department for Work and Pensions, the Cabinet has approved the content of a statement of intent which demonstrates the Council's commitment to provide an efficient, effective and secure housing and council tax benefits service. At the same time, the Cabinet has also approved a series of associated strategies on over-payment, debt recovery, fraud and working with landlords.

**114. HUNTINGDONSHIRE CAR PARKING STRATEGY 2004 – 2016**

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the proposed contents of the Huntingdonshire Car Parking Strategy 2004 – 2016 which has been the subject of an extensive public consultation, the results of which have indicated a significant level of support for the majority of the proposals contained in the initial draft.

In discussing the Strategy's content, the Cabinet has raised concerns over charging proposals for market town car parks and has suggested the following changes to the proposed rates:-

Shoppers car parks (2-3 hours)	to be decreased from £1.20 to £1.00
(3-4 hours)	to be decreased from £2.10 to £2.00
Edge of Centre parking (0-60 minutes)	to be decreased from 25p to 20p
On-Street parking (20 – 60 minutes)	to be increased from 40p to 50p

Having referred to the difficulties arising from the current layout of the Cattle Market Car Park in St Ives in terms of long stay and short-stay parking, Members had been informed that Officers will be reviewing the design of this car park as part of the proposals for the guided bus project.

Members also felt that consideration should be given in due course to the possible introduction of a card payment scheme for the District's car parks to reduce the problems associated with monetary payments and transactions and to issues surrounding the payment of graduated excess charges for non-compliance.

As an opinion survey currently is proposed to ascertain the preference of Council Taxpayers on the delivery of Council services, the Cabinet has agreed to defer the approval of the Strategy until after the results of the survey are known.

#### **115. RESPONSE TO TWENTY 16 KEY ISSUES EXERCISE**

The Cabinet has noted the findings of the Twenty 16 Key Issues exercise held during the summer of 2003 as part of the review of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan. The consultation booklet detailed numerous development sites put forward by landowners, developers and others. However, Members emphasised that reference to the sites did not in any way commit the Council to their suitability for the purposes proposed in the document and stressed the need to convey this message to all interested parties, including town and parish councils.

#### **116. COMMUNITY SAFETY DEFINITION**

The Cabinet had approved the following definition of the term "Community Safety" for use within the Council's Community Safety Strategy –

"How safe do people feel within their community. It represents an individual and collective ability to live life free from crime and disorder, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

It confers responsibilities on individuals and communities to ensure they do all they can to promote safety. It is the responsibility of local authorities, police, health, statutory and voluntary organisations, as well as the community of Huntingdonshire and individuals to ensure that crime and disorder is minimised and that residents are

reassured. Community safety covers the areas of crime, anti-social behaviour, fire safety and home/property safety.”

#### **117. MEDIUM TERM PLAN: REQUEST FOR RELEASE OF FUNDS**

The Cabinet has considered the release of funding for various schemes to be included or identified for inclusion in the Medium Term Plan. In considering individual justifications, the Cabinet has requested additional information on the following schemes/projects -

- ◆ Additional Homelessness Officer;
- ◆ Additional Council Tax Clerk;
- ◆ Customer First: contact centre and transactional website; and
- ◆ Pathfinder House/Castle Hill House: cleaning costs.

At the same time, approval has been given for the relevant funding to be released for the following schemes/projects -

- ◆ Capital Contingency;
- ◆ Sawtry Leisure Centre Fitness Studio;
- ◆ Leisure Centres: future maintenance;
- ◆ Ramsey Leisure Centre: multi-activity area;
- ◆ Licensing Act 2003: new temporary posts;
- ◆ Introduction of new payroll/personnel and Operations Division business systems;
- ◆ Introduction of ICT “out of hours” support service;
- ◆ Pathfinder House: access arrangements;
- ◆ St Ives Bus Station: repairs and improvements;
- ◆ Huntingdon Bus Station: repairs and improvements;
- ◆ Small scale environmental improvements;
- ◆ Upgrade of existing disabled toilet and access at Little Paxton Visitors Centre;
- ◆ Local Transport Plan;
- ◆ Provision of extra bus shelters;
- ◆ Additional caretaker, Pathfinder House/Castle Hill House;
- ◆ Discretionary repair grants; and
- ◆ Disabled facilities grants.

#### **118. THE COUNCIL’S PRIORITIES**

The Cabinet has been acquainted with work in progress on the Council’s vision and of priorities which have been developed following a review of the Council’s Corporate Plan. Members were advised that the review had been undertaken in order to support the Community Strategy, to clarify the Council’s ambitions and objectives and to prioritise the Council’s Medium Term Objectives in response to feedback from the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Peer Challenge.

In discussing the issues involved, Members endorsed the steps being taken to support the delivery of the Council’s priorities by way of a performance management framework which would embrace a

balanced scorecard methodology. It was reported that the work would reflect Member, public and customer perpectives, internal business processes and learning and growth within the Council. The final plan and framework will be submitted to the Cabinet for further consideration on 25th March 2004 with a view to its approval by the Council in April.

**119. COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT:  
PEER CHALLENGE AND SELF-ASSESSMENT**

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the final report by the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Peer Challenge Team following their visit to the Council in November and have considered the latest draft of the Council's CPA self-assessment document.

In endorsing the Council's self-assessment submission which assesses the Council's performance and service delivery, the Cabinet has authorised the Chief Executive, after consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make such minor drafting and other amendments to the documents as he considers appropriate prior to their submission to the Audit Commission.

**120. THE FUTURE OF AIR TRANSPORT AND LOCAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Cabinet has considered the content of the Government's White Paper "The Future of Air Transport", which sets out a strategic framework for the development of airport capacity in the United Kingdom over the next 30 years, against the background of wider developments in air transport.

Of primary concern to the Council is the future use of Alconbury, in which respect the White Paper states that – "the development of Alconbury Airfield for passenger or freight services was no longer supported, but that in the Government's view potential remained for the relocation there of aircraft maintenance operations from Cambridge". The Cabinet has welcomed the rejection of air freight and low cost passenger facilities but is concerned over the reference to relocation of aircraft maintenance from Cambridge. A separate report on decisions by the First Secretary of State to allow appeals against the District Council's decision to refuse planning applications for development at Alconbury Airfield has been discussed by the Development Control Panel and is referred to at Item No. 30 of their Report.

**121. LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN:  
ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2003 – SETTLEMENT NOTE AND  
THE NEW LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 2004-2011**

The financial settlement for the Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) has been reported to the Cabinet. The plan outlined proposed developments in transport to 2011 and the key targets and outputs expected to be delivered at a local level over that period.

As part of the settlement letter, the Government has given some general feedback on the new LTP submission, which was considered by full Council in July 2003. However, they have made it clear that the overall assessment of current performance has been determined entirely by the assessment of the current LTP APR and that the new LTP for 2004-2011, due to be published in 2004, will be re-assessed to take into account future guidance from the Government and the developing Regional Transport Strategy and adopted Local Plans.

**122. CAMBRIDGESHIRE GUIDED BUS**

Further to Item No. 57 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 24th September 2003, the Cabinet has considered the County Council's proposals for development of the Cambridgeshire Guided Bus Scheme, formerly the Cambridge to Huntingdon Rapid Transit. The proposed scheme will allow high quality conventional buses to run both on public roads and on sections of dedicated guide-ways, the longest section of guide-way being between St Ives to Histon. The core scheme extends from Hinchingsbrooke Hospital, via Huntingdon Railway Station, Huntingdon and St Ives town centres to locations in Cambridge including the Science Park, city centre, railway station, Addenbrookes Hospital and Trumpington park and ride site.

Having noted that the County Council are preparing a Transport and Work Act application which, once approved, would provide deemed planning consent and authority to acquire the necessary land, the Cabinet expressed concern that the District Council had only been given a short period of time to consider the County Council's final proposals.

With regard to the overall scheme, Members raised potential concern associated with the commercial viability and environmental impact of the proposals and authorised the Director of Operational Services to seek to resolve any outstanding matters of concern with the County Council. In that respect, it was reported that the period for formal objections to the TWA submission would remain open until the end of March 2004 and that Cabinet would be given the opportunity to consider the matter further at a future meeting.

**123. DRAFT PPS12 – LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK AND RELATED DOCUMENTS**

The Cabinet has discussed the Government's draft planning advice on proposals to introduce a new planning framework for producing local planning documents and have endorsed the Council's response on the matter.

**124. EMERGENCY PLAN**

The Cabinet has considered the content of an Emergency Plan which documents the Council's emergency planning arrangements. Members were advised that the plan had been developed by the Flooding Advisory Group in response to the Group's concerns that



the District Council's emergency arrangements were not formally documented and that a formal policy was not in place for the deployment of sandbags in the case of flooding.

**125. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) STRATEGY**

The Cabinet has endorsed the content of an IS/ICT Strategy which describes underlying principles for the development of the Council's ICT services. The Strategy's implementation is subject to the release of Medium Term Plan funding.

**126. SMALL SCALE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS**

The Cabinet has noted progress on small-scale environmental improvement schemes and have approved a programme of schemes for 2004/05, subject to the release of Medium Term Plan funding.

A summary of the schemes approved for 2004/05 is available on request from the Democratic Services Section.

**127. QUARTERLY SUMMARY OF DEBTS WRITTEN OFF**

The Cabinet has been advised of those individual debts which have been written off as irrecoverable during the period October – December 2003.

A summary of the list is available on request from the Democratic Services Section.

**128. OXMOOR ACTION PLAN – PROPERTY UPDATE**

Further to Item No. 50 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 23rd July 2003, the Cabinet has considered property implications relating to the sale, acquisition and disposal of areas of land at Oxmoor, Huntingdon which have arisen as a result of the planning guidance for the area. The Cabinet has –

- ◆ authorised the Executive Director of Central Services, after consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Executive Councillors for Resources, Welfare and IT and for Finance, to approve detailed terms for
  - the sale of land required for the Acorn Community Health Centre;
  - the acquisition of land from the BRJ Club and its disposal to the commissioners of the Acorn Community Health Centre; and
  - the overall funding for the redevelopment of Sapley Square;
  
- ◆ approved the terms for the acquisition of properties in Sapley Square from Huntingdonshire Housing Partnership;

- ◆ approved the terms for the disposal of land at Buttsgrove Way; and
- ◆ authorised the Director of Operational Services to appoint a Project Manager for Oxmoor for a temporary period of two years.

D P Holley  
Chairman