

# HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Special Meeting of the CABINET held as a Remote Meeting via Zoom on Tuesday, 23 February 2021

PRESENT: Councillor R Fuller – Chairman.

Councillors Mrs M L Beuttell, S Bywater, J A Gray, D N Keane, J Neish and K I Prentice.

APOLOGY: An Apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor J M Palmer (Cabinet Assistant).

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor S J Corney.

## 60 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

## 61 FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND

Due to an imminent decision being required, an item of business was considered under the General Exception Provisions – Section 15 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules, as contained in the Council's Constitution.

Further to Minute No 20/17 and with the aid of a report by the Service Manager (Growth) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) and appendices (copies of which are appended in the Annex to the Minute Book) the Cabinet gave consideration to the preferred option in progressing the regeneration vision for St Neots in light of the offer from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) for 69% of the overall ask from the Future High Streets Fund (FHSF).

The Cabinet were reminded that should they wish to discuss the content of the appendices, which related to commercial and legally sensitive matters, to inform the Chairman so that the meeting could move to private session if required.

By way of background, the Chairman, as Executive Councillor for Housing and Economic Development, reported that the Council had re-engaged with specialist advisors, Mott MacDonald, to review the Council's original submission in light of recent developments whilst having regard to MHCLG requirements. He then went on to express his support for "Option A" as the preferred option, which would require the District Council to fund the shortfall of £1,729,943 to deliver the originally agreed regeneration programme for St Neots Town Centre from Community Infrastructure Levy funds.

Following a brief explanation from the Service Manager (Growth) on the work which had been undertaken to complete the benefit cost ratios of the proposals, the Cabinet were informed that the next steps of the project would be to move into detailed design and implementation phase which would include a

comprehensive public engagement process. Attention was also drawn to a misleading news article in the Hunts Post newspaper for which an apology had been received from the Editor and a commitment to printing a more accurate report in the ensuing week's edition.

The Cabinet unanimously expressed their support for "Option A" of the proposals and commended the Service Manager (Growth) and her team, together with the Chairman, as Executive Councillor for Housing and Economic Development and Councillors K Prentice and D Wells, Chairman and Member of the St Neots Master Plan Steering Group respectively, for their efforts, contributions and expertise in the delivery of the project to date.

Councillor S J Corney, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance and Growth), presented the outcome of the Panel's special meeting held prior to the Cabinet's meeting where it was noted that the proposals had been welcomed and met the great positivity by the Panel's Members.

In noting that the cumulative contribution towards the regeneration of St Neots Town Centre from the District Council would be £5,245,000 (inclusive of funds already allocated to St Neots Riverside Park), it was

#### RESOLVED

that the Cabinet agree to:

- (a) submit a final proposal to the Future High Streets Fund by 26th February 2021;
- (b) Option A as the preferred option;
- (c) endorse an additional £1.7m of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) spend in support of recommendation (b) above;
- (d) develop a delivery plan to include an engagement and communication strategy; and
- (e) delegate authority to the Service Manager (Growth), in consultation with the Executive Leader, Deputy Leader and Corporate Director (Place) to make adjustments to the final scheme, if required, based on feedback from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Chairman