

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the Cabinet Room, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon on 15th July 2004

PRESENT: Councillor D P Holley - Chairman

Councillors I C Bates, Mrs J Chandler,
N J Guyatt, Mrs P J Longford,
Mrs D C Reynolds, T V Rogers and
L M Simpson

The Chairman welcomed both Councillor Mrs P J Longford, Executive Councillor for Housing and Young People, and Dr S Lammin, Head of Environmental Services to their first meeting of the Cabinet.

04/16 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 24th June 2004 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

04/17 SUGGESTED EXECUTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

Further to Minute No. 04/02, the Cabinet noted a schedule of suggested responsibilities for Cabinet Members (a copy of which is appended to the Minute Book) and subject to responsibility for "highways" being incorporated in the portfolio for Waste Management and Streetscene and for "travellers" in the Housing and Young Peoples portfolio, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the suggested executive responsibilities as set out in the schedule now submitted be adopted.

04/18 MEDIUM TERM PLANS - REQUESTS FOR RELEASE OF FUNDS

The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Financial Services requesting the release of funding for identified schemes included in the Medium Term Plan. (Copies of the report and associated justifications are appended in the Minute Book.)

Having requested additional information in relation to the CCTV – Camera Replacement Scheme, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that £15,000 be released from the Council's MTP to enable a concessionary fares study to progress; and
- (b) that £148,000 be released for the CCTV – Camera Replacement Scheme subject to the Chairman and Executive Councillor for Public Health and Community Safety being satisfied as to the content of the report

referred to in Annex C to the report now submitted.

04/19 HOUSING AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT - PENSION PARTNERSHIP BID TO DEPARTMENT OF WORK AND PENSIONS

By way of a report by the Head of Revenue Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were acquainted with details of a bid for funding submitted to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) which, if successful, would enable increased pensioner benefit take up, through partnership working within Cambridgeshire.

The Cabinet noted that the Council has acted as lead authority for Cambridgeshire and had submitted a bid for funds to recruit a Welfare Benefits Adviser at each authority to target pensioner take up of pension credit, housing and council tax benefit. In that respect and subject to the scheme being approved within the Medium Term Plan, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the action taken in submitting the bid to the DWP be endorsed; and
- (b) that, in the event that the application for funding is approved by the DWP, the grant awarded be released and the Head of Revenue Services authorised to implement the scheme for a period of two years subject to a review six months prior to its expiry.

04/20 HIGHWAYS AGENCY

The Cabinet received a report by the Head of Environment and Transport (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding notice received of the County Council's intention to terminate the Highways Agency with effect from 31st March 2006.

The Cabinet noted that the Council had undertaken certain highways maintenance functions on behalf of the County Council since 1974. However, the County Council's Best Value Review on highways had concluded that these services would be best delivered by a comprehensive long term partnership with a single contractor encompassing both the management and delivery of the function.

Having identified a range of highways related activities which still could be undertaken by the District Council for the benefit of the community, and recognised that it would be in the Council's interests to serve a district-wide agency for the delivery of the functions listed in paragraph 6.2 of the report now submitted, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that, the notice served by the County Council to terminate the Highways Agency with effect from 31st March 2006 be accepted;

- (b) that the Director of Operational Services be authorised to seek early termination of the Agreement with effect from March 2005 to coincide with the termination of Agency Agreements at other Authorities;
- (c) that the proposed transfer of five employees to Cambridgeshire County Council under the TUPE arrangements following the Agency's termination be noted;
- (d) that a report be submitted to a future meeting further evaluating the financial implications of the termination of the Agency consequential service changes and any resulting requirement for MTP bids;
- (e) that a proposal to develop a co-ordinated streetscene approach to the management of complementary services affecting public areas be supported;
- (f) that the Director of Operational Services be authorised, after consultation with the Chairman, to seek to secure a new agreement with the County Council for the discharge of those functions listed at paragraph 6.2 of the report now submitted and to submit an update to the Cabinet on the progress of negotiations at a future meeting; and
- (g) that any savings achieved in indirect costs be considered as part of the ongoing base budget review.

04/21 PROCUREMENT UPDATE

The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Commerce and Technology (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) giving an update on the progress of the Council's procurement functions and indicating those areas for development following the publication by the Government of the National Procurement Strategy (NPS) in October 2003.

Having discussed the efficiency improvements detailed in the report, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that progress achieved to date be noted together with the intention to include a procurement improvement target in the base budget review.

04/22 FOOD SAFETY ENFORCEMENT PLAN 2004

In accordance with the requirements of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) the Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Environmental Services together with a Service Plan for Food Law Enforcement 2004/5, copies of which are appended in the Minute Book.

Members noted the Service Plan indicated the work programme for the Food Service in 2004/5, the staffing resources required to enable

its implementation, the constraints placed upon the service and the priority afforded to tasks identified. A review of the previous years' performance also had been undertaken. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Council be recommended to approve the Food Safety Service Plan for 2004/5.

04/23 ST IVES, HEMINGFORDS AND FENSTANTON FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Environment and Transport (a copy of which is appended to the Minute Book) outlining the outcome of a study completed by the Environment Agency on the floods in Hemingford Grey in 1998 and 2001. .

The study had concluded that the present flood bank to the north of Hemingford had a defence standard of less than 1 in 20 years and that some 400 homes south of the river were at risk of flooding. The report also sought the Cabinet's views in respect of a request for funding by the Environment Agency for the implementation of pumping station to the south of the river to reduce the risk of flooding in this area.

While welcoming the Agency's acknowledgement of the risk to flooding and the commitment of funding to alleviate the problem, Members were concerned that an improvement to the flood bank would provide an effective solution. Particular reference was made to the apparent reduction in dredging works to the rivers in recent years.

Having noted that funding had been allocated by the Government to the scheme proposed by the Environment Agency as part of an annual block grant, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the acknowledgement by the Environment Agency that St Ives, Hemingfords and Fenstanton section of the River Great Ouse required significant defence works to ameliorate flooding be welcomed;
- (b) that the Environment Agency be requested to consider as a matter of urgency an increase in the frequency that this section of river is dredged to facilitate the rates of flow in the river;
- (c) that, in the event that the increased dredging of the river does not alleviate flooding of the area, the Agency be requested to proceed with the improvement works to the flood bank;
- (d) that the Agency be requested to note the possibility that in the event of the bund being improved surface water may continue to cause flooding in Victoria Terrace and Greenfields, without the provision of a pumping station; and

- (e) that in the event of a pumping station being installed no contribution be made by the Council towards the capital cost and ongoing responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the pumping station.

04/24 CRITICAL ORDINARY WATERCOURSES - ENMAINTMENT BY THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

With reference to a report by the Head of Environment and Transport and in view of the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) copies of which are appended in the Minute Book, the Cabinet noted that following widespread flooding in 1998, the Government had identified a number of Critical Ordinary Watercourses (COWS) which were most likely to cause flooding to properties and had sought to clarify responsibility for these watercourses.

The Cabinet were advised that five watercourses in the District had been identified as critical, of which three were "awarded" watercourses for which the Council retains statutory responsibility for all maintenance work. These watercourses were identified as

- ◆ Colmworth Brook;
- ◆ Houghton Field Drain; and
- ◆ Kingsbrook Drain.

Having noted that responsibility for maintenance of Fox Brook and Hen Brook also lay with the Council as riparian owner of adjacent land it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the enmainment process for Fox Book and Hen Brook and the potential future enmainment of the three awarded watercourses at Colmworth Brook, Houghton Field Drain and Kingsbrook Drain be noted;
- (b) that a proposal by the Environment Agency to contract the Council to undertake responsibility for the maintenance of the enmained watercourses be not accepted; and
- (c) that the funds associated with the maintenance of the newly enmained watercourses be not transferred from the Council to the Environment Agency.

04/25 GROWING SUCCESS - CORPORATE PLAN TARGETS

By way of a report by the Head of Policy (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet have reviewed the provisional targets for the Council's priorities relating to the quality of life in Huntingdonshire.

With reference to the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels, the Cabinet discussed the targets which had been developed using existing base lines where available and which related predominantly

to the six priority areas. In that light, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Corporate Plan targets for the forthcoming year be noted; and
- (b) that a report be submitted to the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Panels at six monthly intervals detailing the Council's performance against targets set in the Plan and related performance statistics.

04/26 CUSTOMER SURVEY

By way of a report by the Head of Policy (a copy of which is appended to the Minute Book) the Cabinet were acquainted with a consolidation of satisfaction surveys arising from a number of Best Value Performance Indicators that relate to aspects of the Council's services.

Having noted the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels with respect to the Customer Satisfaction Survey 2003/04 and following discussion around statistics held in the document, it was

RESOLVED

that the results of the Customer Satisfaction Survey 2003/04 be noted.

04/27 QUALITY PARISH COUNCILS

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered the details of the Government's Quality Parish Council Initiative.

Having been informed of the establishment of two working parties within the District to assess the implications of the quality initiative, to deal with potential problems concerning double taxation and to draft a Countywide Charter for consideration by individual authorities, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Executive Councillors for Resources, Welfare and IT and for Finance be appointed to represent the District Council on each of the respective working parties; and
- (b) that a further report be submitted to a forthcoming meeting on progress in the adoption of the Charter and the implications of the double taxation.

04/28 REPRESENTATION ON ORGANISATIONS

(Councillor D P Holley declared a personal interest in the following item by virtue of his wife's appointment and proposed nomination as a Trustee to Kimbolton School Foundation.)

Having received and considered a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended to the Minute Book) in relation to the appointment/nominations of representatives to serve on a variety of organisations, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that, with the exception of the following adjustments, nominations be made to the organisations as set out in the Appendix to the report now submitted,

Organisation	Representative(s)
Huntingdon Business Against Crime	Councillor J M Sadler
Greater Cambridge Partnership Board	Councillor D P Holley
Cambridgeshire Association of Local Councils – Liaison Group	Councillor D P Holley
Community Safety Task Group for North Huntingdonshire Area (Yaxley)	Councillor J S Watt
Internal Drainage Board for Houghton and Wyton	Councillor Mrs J Chandler

- (b) that, in the event that changes are required to the Council's representatives during the course of the year, the Deputy Leader and Vice-Chairman of the Cabinet be authorised to nominate alternative representatives as necessary.

04/29 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to terms proposed in the course of negotiations for a contract for the acquisition or disposal of land or property or the supply of goods and services.

04/30 CUSTOMER FIRST - RELEASE OF FUNDING AND TERMS FOR THE LEASE OF ACCOMMODATION AT SPEKE HOUSE, ST IVES

The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Operational Services (a copy of which is appended to the Minute Book) outlining the proposed terms and funding for the lease of Speke House for the accommodation of the Call Centre.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the outline terms for the lease of accommodation for Speke House and the release of the associated revenue budget be approved; and
- (b) that the Director of Central Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Resources, Welfare and IT be authorised to approve the release of funding and terms of the lease.

04/31 MOORHOUSE CHURCH, MOORHOUSE DRIVE, HUNTINGDON

The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Legal and Estates (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding a request to lift a restrictive covenant imposed on land sold originally for use as a church site and to consider the potential for purchase of the property as part of a wider redevelopment of the adjoining amenity land.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Director of Central Services be authorised after consultation with the Chairman and the Executive Councillors for Resources, Welfare and IT and for Finance to approve detailed terms for the removal of the covenant and for the purchase of the church property.

04/32 LAND AT BRAMPTON ROAD, GRAFHAM AND LAND AT HOLMEWOOD, HOLME

The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Legal and Estates (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking approval for the disposal of Council-owned land at Brampton Road, Grafham and Holmewood, Holme.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Cabinet approve the sale of the land on the terms set out in the report now submitted; and
- (b) that the Director of Central Services be authorised, after consultation with the Executive Councillors for Resources, Welfare and IT and for Finance to approve the considerations to be received for the disposal of the two areas of land detailed in the report.

Chairman