

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, 15 November 2022

PRESENT: Councillor S J Conboy – Chair.

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor J Kerr.

44 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18th October 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

45 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

46 ONE LEISURE PRICING PROPOSAL 2023/24

Councillor J Kerr, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers & Partnerships) was in attendance for consideration of this item.

With the aid of a report prepared by the Interim Head of Leisure (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were acquainted with the different pricing options available to One Leisure to mitigate and offset rising costs seen in utilities, staffing and other general operational expenditure during 2022-23 and leading into 2023-24.

The Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene reported that projected increases totalling £760,000 was anticipated for 2023-24 as a result of increased expenditure relating to utilities, staffing and other general operating costs. The Interim Head of Leisure then presented the three options which had been considered which included no price increase and increasing One Leisure pricing by an average of 8.7% or 12.8%. All pricing options had been reviewed and analysed with consideration also being given to a number of risks and issues which included cost of living, competition, operational costs, customer behaviour and implementation. Members were informed that the absence of a price increase would result in One Leisure operating at a £274,907 deficit in 2023-24 which would increase further in future years, impacting upon the Council's Medium Term Programme. A significant factor in the proposal to increase prices by 8.7% related to the offsetting of utility costs which were expected to increase by £530,000. In his concluding remarks, the Interim Head of Leisure assured the Cabinet that when considering pricing opportunities, a number of concessions continued to remain available, with no increases or costs being removed for

some areas. If approved by Cabinet, the new pricing structure would take effect from 1st January 2023.

Having received responses to questions of clarification relating to the deficit experienced at One Leisure since the transfer of the Active Lifestyles Team to the One Leisure service and the categories available for various concessions offered by the service, the Chair then invited Councillor J Kerr, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Customers & Partnerships) to deliver the views of the Panel on the proposals.

In addressing the Cabinet, Councillor J Kerr reported that a majority of the Panel were in agreement with Option 2 as this was perceived to be the most sustainable option for Huntingdonshire residents and that there had been no price increases under the previous administration for the last 5 years. Referring to the current economic climate, it was noted that all One Leisure concessions had been more proactively advertised on the One Leisure website and that a new business strategy was being developed. The Panel received assurances that the projections for increased energy costs would remain under review together with the level of footfall and income at each of the Centres. The Panel had expressed some concerns over the loss of the swimming pool facility available at Sawtry however this facility was now under the control of another provider. In her concluding remarks, Councillor J Kerr conveyed the Panel's concerns that there was no alternative plan if, following the six month review, data revealed a significant reduction in the use of One Leisure facilities.

Matters that were discussed by the Cabinet included the reasons why an alternative plan was not being proposed at the present time, whether or not the proposals would impact upon Huntingdonshire's most vulnerable residents, the 2019 One Leisure Business Plan, the extent to which One Leisure operated as a commercial gym operator and its current position of operating the facilities at zero cost to the Council. Following debate on the matter, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

to agree to launch with Option 2 price proposal to take effect from 1st January 2023.

47 HUNTINGDONSHIRE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

A report by the Chief Planning Officer was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking approval for submission of a formal consultation response to Cambridgeshire County Council's draft Huntingdonshire Transport Strategy on behalf of the District Council.

In introducing the report, the Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing reported that District Council Officers and Members had contributed to the development of a draft Strategy but there was an opportunity for the Council to submit a response to the consultation on behalf of the District Council. Whilst the consultation period had ended on 7th November 2022, the County Council had granted the District Council an extension to this time period. It was noted that a more detailed transport investment plan would emerge in the future. The Cabinet's attention was drawn to the diagram in paragraph 3.1 of the report portraying how the various transport policies would work with each other.

Having had their attention drawn to the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth), the Cabinet received assurances from the Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing that Ramsey's interests would be adequately reflected within the response. In noting that the Member Steering Group would continue to be actively involved in the next stage of the development of the Strategy, which included a meeting in December 2022 to review the consultation responses which had been received, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet endorse the submission of a response to Cambridgeshire County Council supporting the Huntingdonshire Transport Strategy and raising points of detail as identified in the analysis section of the report now submitted.

48 ACTIVE TRAVEL STRATEGY FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Consideration was given to a report by the Chief Planning Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking approval for submission of a formal consultation response on behalf of the District Council to Cambridgeshire County Council's public consultation on the Active Travel Strategy for Cambridgeshire.

The Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing reported upon the aims of the Strategy to make active travel the "go to" option for local journeys through walking or cycling thereby improving air quality, providing affordable travel options and improving the health and well-being of communities. In referring to Appendix A of the report, the Cabinet's attention was drawn to the Council's proposed response to Question 6 of the consultation, where comments had been made around the deliverability of the objectives for Huntingdonshire which had not been sufficiently detailed, together with how success would be measured and a lack of detail on how the varying landscape of Cambridgeshire would be addressed. In his concluding remarks, the Executive Councillor for Job, Economy and Housing made comment that the loss of the private motor car in Huntingdonshire would be some way off in the future.

In acknowledging the importance of the challenge across all Cambridgeshire authorities which included both rural and urban communities and in noting the that this theme had also emerged as part of the Place Strategy consultation, the Cabinet received and noted the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth). Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet

- (a) agree the proposed response set out in the completed questionnaire as attached at Appendix A of the report now submitted; and

- (b) authorise any necessary minor amendments to be approved by the Executive Councillor for Jobs, Economy and Housing and the Chief Planning Officer for onward submission to Cambridgeshire County Council.

49 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT 2022/23, QUARTER 2

With the aid of a report prepared by the Business Intelligence & Performance Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were presented with details of delivery of the Corporate Plan 2022/23 and project delivery.

The Executive Councillor for Customer Services summarised the progress made in delivering the Key Actions for 2022/23 over the reporting period where the Cabinet were pleased to note that all were on track or within acceptable variance. Specific mention was made of the performance levels achieved for the Energy Bills Rebate scheme, the Resident Advice and Information Team, the work being undertaken in conjunction with community and voluntary organisations to deliver projects around tackling health inequalities in the District and the Community Chest funding grants. In respect of Corporate Indicators, it was reported that with the exception of one, all were on track or within acceptable variance. The Executive Councillor for Customer Services reported that less green waste had been collected owing to the long hot summer and made reference to three of the amber corporate indicators relating to housing benefit claimants, community and voluntary sector groups and food safety inspections. The red corporate indicator related to homelessness but was not a grave cause for concern. Finally, the Cabinet received details on the status of corporate projects which had progressed well with only one identified as being significantly behind schedule. This project related to the Revenue and Benefits service e-billing project which had been pushed back owing to the prioritisation of the Energy Bill Rebates scheme.

A number of matters were raised and discussed by the Cabinet. These included confirmation from the Executive Councillor for Climate and Environment of her intention to declare a Climate Emergency together with actions to resolve, an update from the Executive Councillor for Jobs, Housing and Economy on the various projects falling under the Market Towns Programme scheme and the comments observed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth) in respect of the project relating to St Neots Riverside Walks.

Having commended Officers for their achievements in continuing to deliver excellent services to the residents of Huntingdonshire during challenging times, it was

RESOLVED

that Cabinet note the progress made against the Key Actions and Corporate Indicators in the Corporate Plan and current projects, as summarised in Appendix A and detailed in Appendices B and C of the report now submitted.

50 HINCHINGBROOKE COUNTRY PARK JOINT GROUP

The Cabinet has received and noted the Minutes of the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Joint Group held on 14th October 2022.

The Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene delivered a brief update on the outcome of the meeting which was welcomed by Cabinet Members. Matters that were discussed included the County Council representation at the meeting, wild swimming and the associated signage that would need to be updated around the site and the ongoing encouragement and development of green skills opportunities within the community.

Chair