

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, 24 January 2023

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.

62 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12th December 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

63 MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor S W Ferguson declared an other registerable interest under Minute No. 22/69 by virtue of being the Cambridgeshire County Council Ward Member for Great Gransden.

64 CLIMATE STRATEGY

With the aid of a report prepared by the Assistant Director (Strategic Insight & Delivery) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were presented with the Climate Strategy for adoption by the Council.

In introducing the report, the Executive Councillor for Climate & Environment outlined the breadth of work undertaken by Officers to produce the Strategy which seeks to achieve the following:

- a positive example through its actions to be a net carbon zero Council by 2040;
- an enabler supporting action within our communities and across our partners; and
- an encourager to those that live, work and visit Huntingdonshire to take climate action and reduce carbon emissions.

She then went on to report that the Council had previously agreed a Cost of Living and Climate Change motion at its meeting on 12th October 2022 which recognised that both matters required joint attention to support the wellbeing of residents and businesses. Attention was then drawn to the vision and 6 objectives of the Strategy which had been devised following feedback from residents, businesses and stakeholders whom had engaged with the Council's 2022 Climate Survey. The pathway to achieving carbon net zero 2040 was then discussed, together with an explanation of the projected emissions and linear and exponential target emissions. It was noted that the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Carbon Management Plan would initially seek to avoid activities that

would cause emissions, with the Council's least favoured option being offsetting residual emissions. Finally, attention was drawn to Appendix 5, which outlined the Council's Climate Action Plan. Members of the Cabinet noted the 3 high priority actions and acknowledged that some of the actions within the plan had already commenced within the Council.

Having had their attention drawn to the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities & Partnerships) and in noting that Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth) had been invited to attend the Panel to address the meeting on the content of the Strategy given its impact upon the Council, the Cabinet's attention was drawn to cross party concern over the planned £100,000 reserve set aside for actions/projects designed to achieve the objectives of the Strategy. Views had been expressed that this was not a sufficient level of funding. The Executive Councillor for Climate and Environment advised that in the next budget round, she would be making a one off bid of £150,000 to help further achieve the aspirations of the Strategy. Executive Members' attention was then drawn to a suggestion made by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environment, Communities & Partnerships) to include an additional recommendation relating to the establishment of a set of measures against which progress and timescales could be monitored through regular reporting to Overview and Scrutiny. The Executive Councillor for Climate and Environment acknowledged the role that Overview and Scrutiny could play in the future and instead proposed an alternative recommendation relating to the annual reporting of progress to Overview and Scrutiny and more frequent collaboration with the Overview and Scrutiny Climate Working Group.

Matters that were discussed by the Cabinet included the outcome of the Residents Survey undertaken 12 months ago, the statutory requirement for the Council to collect waste and the planning that would be required to manage the Council's vehicle fleet going forward and the impact of the new A14 and tree planting in the area. In response to the latter, the Executive Councillor for Leisure, Waste and Street Scene delivered a comprehensive update on the National Highways Replanting Strategy and the steps that would be taken to consider each of the tree planting site locations individually with a view to better matching tree species with soil conditions to improve the health of the trees and offer better sound screening to affected communities. It was anticipated this work would be completed by September 2023.

In discussing the need to create a balance in the reporting of action plan measures so that it would not dominate Officer time and whilst exercising some caution around the linear target emission pathway to achieving carbon net zero by 2040, thanks was extended to Officers, Service Managers and all Cabinet Members for contributions and the production of a comprehensive and informative report. The Executive Councillor for Climate and Environment also welcomed the detailed comments which had been provided by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Having expressed their unanimous support for the recommendations proposed, including the additional recommendation suggested by the Executive Councillor for Climate and Environment, it was

RESOLVED

that Council be recommended to approve:

- (a) the formal recognition of a Climate Crisis and Ecological Emergency;
- (b) the adoption of the Council's Climate Strategy in response to the Climate Emergency;
- (c) the adoption of the initial Climate Action Plan proposed, endorsing its annual refresh in association with our communities, businesses and partners through the Climate Conversation; and
- (d) the annual reporting of progress to Overview and Scrutiny and more frequent collaboration with the Overview and Scrutiny Climate Working Group.

65 HUNTINGDONSHIRE PLACE STRATEGY UPDATE

A report by the Corporate Director (Place) was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) providing an update on the development of a new Place Strategy for Huntingdonshire.

The Chair and Executive Councillor for Place reported that the Strategy sought to set the agenda and vision for Huntingdonshire over the next 20-30 year period, with the District Council acting as the enabler and facilitator for the Strategy. Extensive engagement with residents, businesses, communities and stakeholders had been undertaken to date which included 70 organisations, numerous workshops, the use of social media, direct contact with 489 residents and 147 children and young people and engagement with Town and Parish Councils, the voluntary and third sector and a number of businesses and community groups. Engagement would continue on an ongoing basis in the future.

The Cabinet's attention was drawn to the key messages which had been identified to date and the Five Journeys which had emerged as a result of this work, namely:

- Pride in Place
- Environment Innovation
- Equitable Economy
- Health Embedded
- Travel Transformed.

Next steps would be to identify what projects/actions the Joint Administration could influence and shape, working with partners and businesses as necessary to create a jointly owned piece of work.

The views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth) were welcomed by the Cabinet. Assurances had been delivered to the Panel that some of Huntingdonshire's communities would not be able to cope without a private motor vehicle but that the challenge remained on how to make travel more active and available across all of Huntingdonshire's communities whilst offering choice and flexibility. One challenge which remained was the loss of the Corporate Director (Place), however it was reported that a recruitment campaign

was underway and Members were hopeful that a suitable replacement would be appointed.

Matters that were discussed included the fact that there were limits to what the Council could directly control in Huntingdonshire, the need to address the more challenging aspects which had also emerged through this work to date (the example referred to at the meeting was the commentary provided by children and young people) and the exciting and opportunistic times which lay ahead for Huntingdonshire. The assets held by the Council to encourage healthier and happier living, namely parks and open spaces, was acknowledged by the Cabinet, together with an awareness that the meaning of the term sustainability was perceived differently by individuals across the District.

In her concluding remarks, the Chair and Executive Councillor for Place highlighted the importance of the Place Strategy working alongside the Corporate Plan, Climate Strategy and the Council's budget setting process for the benefit of Huntingdonshire's residents. Having placed on record her invaluable thanks to the Corporate Director (Place) in assisting the Council with facilitating the development of the Place Strategy which was echoed by Cabinet Members, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet

- (a) note the extensive engagement and work with partners and stakeholders to date;
- (b) provide comment on the emerging Place Strategy structure and areas of focus; and
- (c) note that the draft Place Strategy would be presented to Cabinet in March 2023.

66 HUNTINGDONSHIRE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW AND PROPOSED UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report by the Chief Planning Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) proposing the commencement of work on a new Local Plan to replace Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

By way of background, the Executive Councillor for Planning reported that in conjunction with the next two items on the agenda for the Cabinet meeting (Minute Nos 22/67 and 22/68 refer), the report would seek to commence a full update to the Local Plan and agree publication for public engagement of the Statement of Community Involvement and the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report. Under the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) the Council was required to review its Local Plan within 5 years of adoption. Members were reminded that the current Local Plan had been adopted by Council on 15th May 2019. Furthermore, it was noted that changes to national legislation and the National Planning Policy Framework had further prompted the need for the review.

Having highlighted the changed methodology for calculating local housing need resulting in a need for Huntingdonshire to deliver 950 new houses instead of the former target of 804 and in discussing the impact of tilted balance on planning decisions, the Cabinet discussed the impact of the new Local Plan process upon those communities which had already developed their own Neighbourhood Plans as well as those communities that were currently in the process of developing their own. Arising from which, it was agreed that Officers would be asked to engage directly with Town and Parish Councils providing advice as necessary. Furthermore, it was reported that the Local Plan process would appear as an item at the next Town and Parish Council engagement session delivered by the Council.

In noting the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth) and having expressed their unanimous support for the proposals, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet be recommended to

- a) agree to the preparation of a full update to the adopted Local Plan;
- b) agree to the commencement of work to compile an updated local evidence base to inform and support preparation of the full update to the adopted Local Plan, working with partners and consultants as necessary; and
- c) require the preparation of an updated Local Development Scheme to formally outline the scope of the update to the adopted Local Plan and an indicative timetable for its preparation.

67 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT 2023

The Cabinet received and noted a report by the Chief Planning Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) setting out the purpose and content of the Statement of Community Involvement and seeking the Cabinet's approval of its content and agreement for public engagement commencing in February 2023.

By way of background, the Executive Councillor for Planning set out the legislative background to the Statement of Community Involvement required by Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The Cabinet's attention was drawn to paragraph 4.1 of the report which outlined planning matters that would be covered within the Statement.

In drawing attention to the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth) and in noting the Council's intention to consult with as many residents, groups, businesses and communities beyond the statutory list of consultees, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- a) to approve the contents of the Statement of Community Involvement 2023; and

- b) to agree that the Statement of Community Involvement be published for public consultation commencing in February 2023 and running for a period of 6 weeks.

68 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SCOPING REPORT

A report by the Chief Planning Officer was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) setting out the purpose, legal context and content of the draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report and seeking the Cabinet's approval of its contents and agreement for public consultation commencing in February 2023 and running for a period of 6 weeks.

The Executive Councillor for Planning drew the Cabinet's attention to the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Process designed to assess the extent to which an emerging plan, such as a Local Plan, will help to achieve sustainable development. It was noted that the process was required under Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and the five stages required to complete this were outlined in paragraph 3.3 of the report. Additionally, it was noted that a Strategic Environmental Assessment was required under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Having been acquainted with the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth) and in agreeing that paragraph 9.3 of the report was outdated as it did not accurately reflect the current position with the Council's Climate Strategy, it was

RESOLVED

- a) that the contents of the draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report be approved; and
- b) that the draft Scoping Report be published for public consultation commencing in February 2023 and running for a period of 6 weeks.

69 GREAT GRANSDEN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN EXAMINATION OUTCOME AND PROGRESSION TO REFERENDUM

See Minute No. 22.63 – Members Interests.

Consideration was given to a report by the Chief Planning Officer (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking agreement to act upon the Examiner's report into the Great Gransden Neighbourhood Plan leading to a referendum on whether or not it should be brought into force as part of the statutory development plan. The report also sets out a timetable for this process.

The Executive Councillor for Planning acquainted the Cabinet with the background to the report, drawing attention to the 3 appendices and the options available to the Council on how to respond to the examiner's recommendations outlined in paragraph 2.2 of the report. In noting the proposed referendum date of 9th March 2023 and if the majority of votes cast by residents indicate a "yes", Council would be asked to "make" the neighbourhood plan at its meeting on 29th

March 2023. This would mean that the plan would become part of the statutory development plan for Huntingdonshire.

In noting the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth), specifically that Conservation Area Appraisals were not a requirement of the Neighbourhood Plan process, the Executive Councillor for Planning indicated that he would be raising this point with the Planning Policy Team.

Having commended Great Gransden Parish Council for the production of the Neighbourhood Plan and in thanking Officers for their support and production of the report whilst also acknowledging the level of work required to produce the Neighbourhood Plan, it was

RESOLVED

that the Cabinet agree that the District Council should act upon the Examiner's report to accept the recommended modifications and progress the neighbourhood plan to referendum.

70 MANAGING DIRECTOR AND CORPORATE DIRECTOR (PLACE)

The Chair, on behalf of the Cabinet, placed on record her thanks and appreciation for the invaluable support, advice, direction and service provided by the Managing Director, Mrs J Lancaster in steering the Joint Administration through the last few months whilst settling into respective roles. The Managing Director was applauded by all those present and thanked for her service.

In a similar vein, the Corporate Director (Place), Mrs K McFarlane was commended for her work during her time at the Council and the Cabinet wished her well in her new role with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

Chair