

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the Cabinet Room, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Thursday, 25th November 2004

PRESENT: Councillor I C Bates - Chairman

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

APOLOGY: An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor D P Holley

87. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 4th November 2004 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

88. A VISION FOR ST NEOTS

Pursuant to Minute No. 80, the Cabinet gave consideration to a report by the Head of Planning Services to which was attached the Civic Trust Regeneration Unit's Centre Vision report on St. Neots Town Centre (copies of which are appended in the Minute Book). Having been acquainted with the work that had gone into preparing the Vision, the consultation undertaken and the uses to which it would be put, Executive Councillors' attention was drawn to amendments to the report which clarified the status of the Vision document. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that, subject to approval by the Head of Planning Services after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy of any minor, detailed amendments, the "St. Neots Town Centre: The Future (as amended by the revised 'Town Centre Character Areas' Plan)" be adopted as informal policy guidance.

89. URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK ST NEOTS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A report by the Head of Planning Services was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was appended a draft Urban Design Framework for the St. Neots Community College site. The framework was intended to set design parameters for the development of the site. Having noted the recent award of grant by the Government to develop a performing Arts Centre and other facilities, it was

RESOLVED

that the Urban Design Framework be approved as draft interim planning guidance for public consultation.

90. ST NEOTS LEISURE CENTRE AND ST NEOTS COMMUNITY COLLEGE SITE ISSUES

By way of a report by the Head of Community Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Cabinet were acquainted with the progress of negotiations among interested parties on the possible redevelopment of the St. Neots Leisure Centre and St. Neots Community College site, Barford Road.

With regard to the Cabinet's request for the preparation of a business plan for the Council's involvement in the development (Minute No. 12 refers), Executive Councillors were informed that a number of outstanding matters could not be resolved without the benefit of a feasibility study. In that context, a partnership arrangement was proposed with the County Council and the Community College and on the understanding that the District Council's costs, which could be met from within existing budgetary resources, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that, on the understanding that the brief also will include a reference to the need to examine the consequences of not developing the site, the Head of Community Services be authorised to enter into a partnership with the County Council and the St. Neots Community College and other partners as appropriate to procure a feasibility study for the range of site options identified in paragraph 2.3 of the report now submitted, and
- (b) that the brief for the feasibility study be circulated to Councillors Bates, Mrs Chandler, Clarke and Holley for comment before an agreement is entered into.

91. CALL-IN: "CUSTOMER FIRST"

The Cabinet received and noted a report by the Director of Central Services on the outcome of the call-in by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources) of the decision to release funding for the Customer First programme and the associated arrangements to procure the hardware and software required to link to Cambridgeshire Direct.

92. MEDIUM TERM PLAN

(a) Finance and Planning - Overview and Scrutiny Panel

A report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) summarising the deliberations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) on the Medium Term Plan at its meeting held on 9th November 2004, was received and noted.

(b) Progress

Further to Minute No. 77, the Cabinet gave further consideration to the report by the Director of Commerce and Technology reviewing the Medium Term Plan 2005 – 2010 and acknowledged the requirement for their deliberations to be concluded in sufficient time for a recommendation to be submitted to full Council on 16th February 2005.

(c) Government Efficiency Review and Revenue Support Grant

By means of a report by the Director of Commerce and Technology (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were acquainted with developments relating to the Government's (Gershon) Efficiency Review and the Revenue Support Grant. Having noted that the figure quoted in paragraph 4.2 of the report as representing the level of savings which exceeded MTP assumptions should have read £300k instead of £600k, Executive Councillors expressed their dissatisfaction with regard to the imposition of the approach to efficiency targets which failed to recognise or differentiate between authorities like the District Council, which had made sustained and successful efforts to achieve excellence in their performance and others where the scope for efficiencies and savings was much greater.

The Cabinet also was informed that an announcement on the Council's revenue support grant for 2005/06 had been delayed until the following week. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that a further report be submitted when further information is available on the efficiency review.

93. TREASURY MANAGEMENT: INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE

A report by the Head of Financial Services was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), which reviewed the respective levels of performance achieved during the second quarter of 2004/05 by external fund managers in the matter of investment of the Council's capital receipts.

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted.

94. COUNCIL FUNDING OF MANDATORY DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS

The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Housing (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which sought an additional supplementary capital estimate of £222,000 in respect of the cost of Disabled Facilities Grants until the end of the financial year.

In noting the trends in demand for Disabled Facilities Grants since 2001/02, Executive Councillors discussed the changing demographic profile of the District in terms of the increasing numbers of older people and the potential implications for resourcing adaptations to their homes, particularly in a scenario where the Government had chosen to cap its contribution towards the cost of expenditure in this field from the current financial year. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the contents of the report be noted;
- (b) that a supplementary capital estimate of £222,000 for expenditure on Disabled Facilities Grants be approved;
- (c) that a further monitoring report be submitted in January setting out the position to the end of the third quarter; and
- (d) that a further report be submitted to a future meeting on the future resource and other implications of Disabled Facilities Grants' on the District Council.

95. REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES

By way of a report by the Director of Commerce and Technology (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet gave consideration the proposed to adoption of a policy for fees and charges. The report contained details of the current level of income from fees and charges and an analysis of those areas where there was potential to increase income.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the fees and charges policy contained in Annex A to the report now submitted be approved;
- (b) that the policy be incorporated into the next review of the constitution in 2005;
- (c) that the charge for a CON29 search be increased from £89 to £110.00 with effect from 1st April 2005; and
- (d) that the Director of Commerce and Technology be requested to submit a report in the New Year on the implications of introducing discounts for District Council services which currently attract a charge or fee.

96. RAMSEY RURAL RENEWAL - REQUEST FOR RELEASE OF FUNDS

By way of a joint report by the Heads of Planning Policy and of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered a request for the release of funding from the Medium Term Plan for the Ramsey Renewal Scheme. Following a

review by the Ramsey Area Partnership of the precise nature of the work required the Cabinet also was requested to approve the transfer part of the bid from capital to revenue and to profile the release of funding over five financial years.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the release of funding for the Ramsey Rural Renewal Scheme in 2004/05 and 2005/06 be approved; and
- (b) that a supplementary revenue estimate of up to £10,000 in the current year and the inclusion of the variations in revenue impact relating to 2005/06 onwards in the MTP be approved.

97. CCTV - MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

The Cabinet gave consideration to a report by the Head of Environment and Transport (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the management and operation of the Council's CCTV service. Having reviewed the recommendations for the service, the staffing implications of which had been approved the previous day by the Employment Panel, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the release of funding for a CCTV and Emergency Planning Team Leader and two additional CCTV operators be approved;
- (b) that the Cabinet acknowledge that once the two additional CCTV operators have been recruited the associated funding in the draft MTP will become unavoidable;
- (c) that scheme 03/384 be deleted from the MTP;
- (d) that the replacement of cameras that have exceeded their useful life as set out in paragraph 5.2 of the report now submitted and the release of £98,000 in 2004/05 and £7,000 in 2005/06 from MTP scheme 03/020 be approved; and
- (e) that the Head of Environment and Transport be authorised to procure a contract for maintenance of the CCTV system as set out in paragraph 6.4 of the report now submitted and to include the camera replacements in the contract.

98. IMPLEMENTING ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT STATEMENT 2004

By way of a report by the Head of Information Management (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) Members were acquainted with the contents of the draft 2004 Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) Statement for submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

RESOLVED

that full Council be recommended to approve the IEG statement prior to its submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

99. BUS SHELTER PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Environment and Transport (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking the release of funding from the Medium Term Plan for the installation of bus shelters at various locations in the District.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the contents of the report be noted;

- (b) that the release of MTP funds for 24 bus shelters at the locations contained in the Annex to the report now submitted be approved; and

- (c) that the Head of Environment and Transport be authorised to proceed with the installation of the shelters and associated infrastructure.

100. LAND AT RIVERSMEAD, ST NEOTS

By way of a report by the Head of Legal and Estates (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered proposed terms for the transfer of land at Riversmead, St. Neots to St. Neots Town Council.

Having regard to concerns expressed by Executive Councillors representing the Little Paxton and St. Neots (Priory Park) Wards relating to the proposal to grant consent for a lease of part of the land to the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association for East Anglia, it was

RESOLVED

that further consideration of the matter be deferred to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

Chairman