

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, 11 September 2003.

PRESENT: Councillor D P Holley - Chairman
Councillors Mrs J Chandler, R L Clarke,
N J Guyatt and T V Rogers

APOLOGYIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors I C Bates, Mrs K P Gregory and L M Simpson

65. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 1st September 2003 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

66. COMMUNITY STRATEGY

Further to Minute No. 03/31, consideration was given to a report by the Head of Policy (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was attached a draft copy of the Community Strategy – Shaping Our Future which had been produced to promote the social, environmental and economic well-being and quality of life for residents in the District.

Having noted the deliberations of and conclusions reached by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels on the content of the strategy in relation to monitoring and partnership involvement, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that full Council be recommended to adopt the draft Community Strategy for Huntingdonshire; and
- (b) that the Chief Executive be authorised, after consultation with the Leader of the Council, to approve any amendments to the strategy as a consequence of the deliberations of the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership Board on 25th September 2003.

67. CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Consideration was given to a joint report by the Executive Director of Central Services and the Audit Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding the emergence of the concept of a Code of Corporate Governance within local government.

It was reported that, the draft Code appended to the report sought to

bring together in a single document the principles of governance which impacted on the Council and the way it conducted its business as a corporate body, using the maxims of openness, integrity and accountability. The draft code had been discussed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels arising from which it had been suggested that an appropriate reference should be made to the role of Overview and Scrutiny. Whereupon, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that subject to the inclusion of a reference to Overview and Scrutiny in paragraph (f) of the section on Structures and Processes, the Code of Corporate Governance be adopted; and
- (b) that the Monitoring Officer be authorised to review the content and effectiveness of the Code annually.

68. REVENUE BUDGET, 2002/03: OUTTURN

A report by the Head of Financial Services was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained details of the outturn of revenue expenditure 2002/03 and the variations between the original and revised budget provision for that year which had resulted in a net reduction in expenditure of £404,000.

In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 1996, the Cabinet also considered the draft accounts for the year 2002/03 and were acquainted with formal determinations undertaken by the Corporate Director, Commerce and Technology in accordance with the powers delegated to him.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the level of outturn expenditure as at 31st March 2003 and the resulting contribution to revenue reserves be noted;
- (b) that the action taken by the Corporate Director, Commerce and Technology as set out in Section 3 of the report now submitted be noted; and
- (c) that full Council be recommended to approve the draft accounts for 2002/03 for the purposes of audit.

69. FINANCIAL STRATEGY

(The Chairman announced that he proposed to admit the following item as a matter of urgency in accordance with Section 100B(4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972, in order to consider the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) on the matter and enable a recommendation to be made by Cabinet to Council).

Further to Minute No. 03/50, consideration was given to 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 a proposed financial

strategy and the issues which would need to be addressed in the ensuing months in conjunction with the review of the Medium Term Plan and associated processes.

Mindful of earlier deliberations recorded at their meeting held on 31st July 2003, having noted views expressed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and for the purpose of developing a draft Medium Term Plan and budget for consideration on 4th December 2003, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that full Council be recommended to:-

- (a) endorse variations in approving cash limits for 2004/05 – 2007/08 in accordance with the tabulation reproduced at Annex A to the report now submitted;
- (b) agree that any additional spending proposed in conjunction with the review of the MTP should be met from within the overall, updated levels of expenditure referred to in (a) above;
- (c) direct that, unless related to demographic considerations, no additional provision for revenue developments should be made in 2008/09 and £3.5m p.a. earmarked for capital investment (at current prices);
- (d) accept that further consideration should be given to the level of acceptable development post 2008/09 and Council Tax levels at future meetings; and
- (e) note that, in conjunction with the forthcoming review of the MTP, consideration will be given to the scope for identifying further savings.

70. 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 first quarter of 2003/04 by external fund managers in the matter of investment of the Council's capital receipts.

RESOLVED

that the content of the report be noted.

71. LICENSING ACT 2003

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were acquainted with the requirements of the Licensing Act 2003 in terms of liquor licensing and the consequential implications for the District Council.

Members were informed that on a date yet to be announced in 2004 the Act would abolish several existing licensing regimes currently

administered by the Licensing Justices and District Councils, replacing them with three new licences to be issued by District Councils. Despite the absence of detailed guidance and while a series of Statutory Instruments were awaited, Members were advised that in order to undertake the new responsibilities it was anticipated that two additional members of staff would be required in the Licensing Section of the Central Services Directorate. In view of the timeframe and the need to recruit and train the two Members of staff, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that an additional two members of staff be recruited to the Licensing Section of the Central Services Directorate on fixed term, temporary 2 year contracts and that a review of the new licensing system be undertaken in the second year of operation to ascertain the support required to maintain the levels of service required; and
- (b) that the potential financial impact in 2004/05 and thereafter which will form an unavoidable MTP bid in the current year's review of the programme be noted.

72. FORMER ALCONBURY AIRFIELD: UPDATE

Further to Minute No. 02/64 consideration was given to a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) updating Members with the current position on progress with regard to the appeal against the District Council's refusal of planning consent for development at Alconbury Airfield and the consultation paper on airport policy published by the Government.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the contents of the report be noted; and
- (b) that the retention of Parliamentary Lobbyists, Messrs Chelgate, be extended at an estimated cost of £20,000 to be met from the contingency reserve.

73. OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

Having been acquainted with a recommendation from the District Council's Headquarters and Other Accommodation Members' Advisory Group, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the Director of Operational Services be authorised to commission an update of the structural survey of Pathfinder House at an estimated cost of £30,000 to be met from the current year's approved capital programme.

74. DIRECT PLANNING ENFORCEMENT ACTION

The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Planning Services (a

copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) proposing the establishment of a procedure for undertaking direct planning enforcement action in appropriate cases.

Having considered the content of the report, the financial implications associated with the recommended course of action and the views of the Development Control Panel on the matter, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the arrangements proposed by the Development Control Panel for direct planning enforcement action, be funded from the Council's contingency reserve, subject to the maximum financial commitment in any individual cast not exceeding £25,000.

75. HOME ENERGY CONSERVATION ACT (HECA) 1995: SEVENTH PROGRESS REPORT, 2002/03

Consideration was given to a report by the Head of Environmental Health Services, to which was attached a copy of the Council's 7th Annual Report on Home Energy and Fuel Poverty Initiatives. A copy of the report, which was to be submitted to the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs as part of the Council's Annual Housing and Investment Programme Return, is appended in the Minute Book.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the content of the Annual Report on Home Energy and Fuel Poverty Initiatives, as appended to the report now submitted, be approved; and
- (b) that the Chief Executive be authorised to sign the report on behalf of the Council prior to its submission to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

76. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information relating to an employee of the District Council and to terms of a contract for the supply of a service.

77. STAFFING REVIEW - ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT

By means of a joint report by the Heads of Environment and Transport and of Personnel Services (a copy of which is appended in the annex to the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered a proposal to grant early retirement to the holder of post reference OPS.45 in the Environment and Transport Division.

RESOLVED

that a maximum discretionary payment of £21,000 be made in this case and that the cost be met from savings in the base budget.

78. FORMER ALCONBURY AIRBASE UPDATE - SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT

(The Chairman announced that he proposed to admit the following item as a matter of urgency in accordance with Section 100B(4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972, in view of the requirement to submit comments to the Secretary of State on any material changes to the policy documents considered at the Alconbury Inquiry and any other relevant matters arising since the inquiry closed).

Further to Minute No. 03/72 ante, the Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the annex to the Minute Book) regarding an invitation from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and the Department for Transport to submit comments on any material changes to the policy documents considered at the Inquiry into the refusal of planning consent for development at the former Alconbury Airfield.

Having been updated with developments by the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and the Head of Planning Services, inter alia, with regard to an extension of time in which further information could be submitted, it was

RESOLVED

that a sum of up to £12,000 be made available from the contingency reserve for expenditure on the retention of consultants and advisers to prepare a response on behalf of the District Council.

Chairman