

---

## Cabinet

Report of the meetings held on 13th October and 3rd, 10th and 24th November 2005

---

---

### Matters for Decision

---

#### 61. FINANCIAL STRATEGY - UPDATE

Further to Item No. 26 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 28th September 2005, the Cabinet has been reminded of a number of uncertainties, including potential changes to government grant which has made it difficult to recommend a Financial Strategy to the Council in December to assist in determining the Budget and Medium Term Plan for the forthcoming year. A copy of the relevant report by the Director of Commerce and Technology is appended hereto (Appendix A). It is anticipated that notification of the grant settlement will be received early in December 2005 and given difficulties which this presents, the Cabinet

#### RECOMMEND

**that consideration of a decision on the Council's Financial Strategy be deferred until the meeting to be held on 22nd February 2006 to enable the Strategy to be considered in parallel with the budget and 2006/11 MTP.**

#### 62. CORE POLICIES DPD – AFFORDABLE HOUSING TARGETS PREFERRED OPTION FOR CONSULTATION

The Cabinet has discussed a preferred option for affordable housing targets and contributions for inclusion in the Council's Core Strategy Development Plan Document. (A copy of the report by the Head of Planning Services is appended hereto [Appendix B].) The Core Strategy is the first part of the Local Development Framework to be determined by the Council and will set out a vision for the District and policies for guiding the development and use of land.

In noting that a target figure of 40% or more for the total number of affordable dwellings in future housing developments is in line with the Cambridgeshire Structure Plan, the Cabinet

#### RECOMMEND

**that the proposed preferred option for affordable housing targets and contributions be approved as a basis for public consultation.**

**63. HEADQUARTERS AND OTHER ACCOMMODATION –  
FINAL TENDER EVALUATION**

Members will have received under separate cover a copy of a report by the Chief Officers Management Team entitled “Headquarters and Other Accommodation – Final Tender Evaluation”. The report has been considered by the District Council Headquarters and Other Accommodation Members’ Advisory Group and the Cabinet and has been the subject of discussion at a joint meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels. The recommendations of the Advisory Group have been circulated separately to all Members and have been endorsed by the Panels and the Cabinet.

Due to the confidentiality of the information contained in the report, the Council will need to exclude the press and public during its consideration.

The Cabinet therefore

**RECOMMEND**

- (a) that the press and public be excluded from the meeting by virtue of paragraphs 8, 9 and 10 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 to enable consideration of the report by the Chief Officers Management Team; and**
- (b) that the Council approve the recommendations set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report of the Advisory Group.**

*(NB. The Council will need to resolve to re-admit the press and public following consideration of this item.)*

---

**Matters for Information**

---

**64. NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES –  
DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF –  
CHARITIES AND KINDRED ORGANISATIONS**

The Cabinet has re-examined and modified the Council’s policy for assessing entitlement to discretionary rate relief for charities and kindred organisations which was last reviewed in January 1996. In so doing, the Cabinet has agreed that existing recipients of discretionary relief should be advised of the changes to the scheme and their cases reassessed as required following a change in rateable value. The Cabinet also has authorised the Head of Revenue Services and

the Local Taxation Manager to grant relief under the new policy and the Director of Commerce and Technology to deal with appeals from dissatisfied applicants. The rateable value referred to in the policy will be reviewed on the occasion of the issue of a new rating list every 5 years and all new cases will be assessed using the revised criteria.

**65. NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES –  
DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF BRAMPTON PARK GOLF CLUB**

Having considered a request from Brampton Park Golf Club, the Cabinet has agreed not to award discretionary rate relief from non-domestic rates to the club. This decision was subsequently called in by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance), (Item No 28 of their Report refers) who decided not to refer the matter back to the Cabinet.

**66. HUNTINGDON TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENTS:  
REQUEST FOR RELEASE OF FUNDS**

The Cabinet has approved the release of appropriate funds from the 2005/06 Medium Term Plan for a series of studies on issues likely to impact on the redevelopment and economic viability of Huntingdon Town Centre, some of which will involve a transfer from capital to revenue funding. Should revenue savings fail to cover the impact of this change the Cabinet has agreed a supplementary revenue estimate of up to £54,000 in the current year and the variations and revenue impact relating to 2005/06 onwards will be included in the plan.

**67. MEDIUM TERM PLAN: REQUEST FOR RELEASE OF FUNDS**

Having considered details of three schemes in the Medium Term Plan, the Cabinet has agreed to release appropriate funding for a programme of maintenance work at the District's Leisure Centres, a contribution towards a partnership project for an indoor activity hall at the Grafham Water Centre and the replacement of the bar air conditioning unit at St Neots Leisure Centre.

**68. RECYCLING CREDITS**

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery and Resources) the Cabinet has been acquainted with changes to the Recycling Credit Scheme proposed by Cambridgeshire County Council, the Waste Disposal Authority. The new proposals aim to harmonise the recycling credits awarded to local authorities in the County. In noting the expected growth in recycling income from 2005 to 2010, the Cabinet has authorised the Head of Environment and Transport, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Environment and Transport, to agree a draft revised recycling credits scheme and to confirm the Council's support at the next meeting of the Cambridgeshire Councils Association Waste Forum.

**69. CONEYGEAR COURT, HUNTINGDON: REVENUE FUNDING**

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the details of a bid by the Granta Housing Association for capital funding from the Housing Corporation to provide an additional six units of accommodation for homeless people at Coneygear Court, Huntingdon. In supporting the bid, the Cabinet has considered a request from Granta for an increase in the level of revenue funding from the Council to finance additional staffing posts required to support the increase in accommodation. In that respect, Executive Councillors have expressed the view that the additional cost of £30,000 should be met from within the Government's Supporting People Budget. However, given the limited funds available and in noting the pressures in the District for this type of accommodation, the Cabinet has agreed a transfer of funds from the housing benefit budget to the homelessness budget to finance the increased revenue funding of this scheme.

**70. CHOICE BASED LETTINGS, CAMBRIDGESHIRE SUB-REGION: RECOMMENDED OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

The Cabinet has approved in principle a partnership approach in developing a sub-regional choice-based letting scheme with other local authorities and housing associations in the Cambridge sub region. By working together the partnership will be in a position to submit a bid for up to £100,000 from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to develop a regional scheme.

The Government intends to introduce choice based lettings throughout the country by 2010 and the scheme will allow applicants to choose their own accommodation through available properties being advertised and interested households bidding for properties of their choice. In discussing the possibility of Government funding, the Cabinet has expressed reservations that resources are unlikely to meet the overall costs of the scheme and have requested that a further report on this matter be submitted to a future meeting.

**71. THE COUNCIL'S SCHEME OF DELEGATION: INTERIM VARIATION PENDING THE APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONAL SERVICES**

The Cabinet has approved interim arrangements relating to the Council's Scheme of Delegation pending the recruitment of a Director of Operational Services. With effect from the 14th November 2005, the Chief Executive will undertake the powers delegated to the Director in the scheme on a temporary basis.

**72. COMMISSIONING A PATIENT- LED NHS: PRIMARY CARE TRUST**

The Cabinet has been acquainted with arrangements for the proposed development of options by the North Suffolk and Cambridgeshire Strategic Health Authority (SHA) for consultation on the future configuration of Primary Care Trusts (PCTs). Having been

advised that the SHA may well be inclined to put forward two alternatives for Huntingdonshire - the amalgamation of Cambridgeshire's four PCTs to create one trust with the same geographical boundaries as the County Council or the amalgamation of Cambridgeshire's four PCTs with the Greater Peterborough Primary Care Partnership - the Cabinet has authorised the Chief Executive, in conjunction with the Leader of the Council, to make appropriate representations to the SHA to include an option of retaining the Hunts PCT based on or similar to its existing boundaries in any future reconfiguration of Primary Care Trusts in the Eastern Region.

**73. QUARTERLY SUMMARY OF DEBTS WRITTEN-OFF**

The Cabinet has been advised of those debts which have been written-off as irrecoverable during the period July-September 2005.

A summary of the list is available on request from the Democratic Services Section.

**74. FINANCIAL MONITORING – REVENUE BUDGET**

The Cabinet has noted the expected revenue budget variations already identified in the current year.

**75. MONITORING OF THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2005/06**

Consideration has been given by the Cabinet to a monitoring report of Capital Programme expenditure in 2005/06. Having noted variations to the approved programme the Cabinet has approved increases of £151,000 for the implementation of the car park strategy scheme and associated additional staffing costs of £59,000.

**76. FIXED PENALTY NOTICES**

Further to Item No. 40 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 28th September 2005, the Cabinet has approved in principle the adoption of the 2005 Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act's default penalties to deal with various environmental misdemeanours. Officers required to enforce the penalties will be trained and competent in both the interpretation of the relevant law and the process to be followed. The Director of Operational Services has been authorised to appoint persons to issue fixed penalty notices on behalf of the District Council.

**77. MOBILE HOME SITE, ST. NEOTS:  
CONTAMINATED LAND SURVEY**

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the initial findings of a contaminated land survey of the Council's mobile home park at Eynesbury, St. Neots which had been undertaken as part of a general review of the site. Having been informed that further tests will be undertaken due to the levels of carbon dioxide and benzo(a)pyrene in

the soil, the Cabinet has requested further updates once these tests are completed.

**78. REVIEW OF MEMBER DEVELOPMENT**

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the findings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel's (Planning and Finance) review into Member Development. In acknowledging the need to improve certain aspects of Member support and development, the Cabinet has approved the introduction of briefing sessions for Members to be organised, as far as possible, by service areas every second month and have requested Chief Officer's Management Team to remind Officers of the need to notify Members on matters of significance affecting their wards. Alternative training mediums will be investigated but the Cabinet were of the opinion that responsibility for mentoring schemes for newly elected Councillors and the appointment of training champions should be referred to the Leaders of political groups represented on the District Council. A report on the possible provision of a broadband internet connection for Members will be considered at a future meeting of the Cabinet.

**79. POLICE FORCES: RE-STRUCTURING**

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the outcomes of a report by Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary – "Closing the Gap: A Review of the "Fitness for Purpose" of the Current Structure of Policing in England and Wales" The response by the Home Secretary and the timescale set for the consideration of options for the restructuring of police forces in England and Wales has also been drawn to Members' attention.

Having expressed concern about the timescale involved, the potential impact on the morale of the force in Cambridgeshire and the potential impact of a larger force comprising either three or six County Constabularies both in terms of the level of service provided and loss of local accountability, the Cabinet has authorised the Chief Executive to make representations to the Home Secretary for a preferred option to retain the existing single force option in Cambridgeshire.

**80. OPERATIONAL SERVICES DIRECTORATE:  
APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONAL SERVICES**

In accordance with paragraph A (e) of the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, Cabinet has informed the Chief Executive that there was no material or well founded objection to the proposal of the Appointments Panel with regard to the offer of appointment to fill the post of Director of Operational Services.

**81. REVIEW OF COUNCIL BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE**

The Cabinet has noted the findings of a review into the Council's budget and expenditure undertaken by a Working Group of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance) (Item No.29 of their Report refers).

In discussing the Panel's individual recommendations, the Cabinet requested that the Panel be advised of the following response -

- ◆ that the distribution of a total spend analysis similar to Annex A of the Panel's report would be helpful to Members and could be supported;
- ◆ that the Cabinet already monitors the Medium Term Plan (MTP) closely with specific approval being required before each scheme in the programme is able to proceed;
- ◆ that the recommended advice to Officers on the formulation of MTP bids mirrors Management Team instructions with final consideration being given to individual proposals by the Cabinet and Council;
- ◆ that future inflation levels are reviewed on an ongoing basis and are included in budget reports;
- ◆ that the Cabinet also currently favour option 3 in respect of Council Tax increases, subject to the content of the final grant settlement;
- ◆ that the Cabinet also supports early savings in the Council's budget and should be informed of the savings that have been achieved in the past year;
- ◆ that the decision on the operational arrangements for the call centre had been made by the Council and that the Cabinet can not support any change in those arrangements;
- ◆ that it is anticipated that efficiency savings will become apparent as services are transferred to the call centre and that all vacant posts are evaluated to ensure that a need exists for them to be filled;
- ◆ that the Cabinet does not support any consideration of alternative funding strategies for the leisure centres in the short term; and
- ◆ that a decision on alternative office accommodation can not be taken in advance of receipt of the grant settlement.

A report to this effect will be submitted to the December meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Planning and Finance).

## **82. CONCESSIONARY FARES**

Following the Government's 2005 budget announcement that a free concessionary bus fare scheme for those over 60 years of age and those with disabilities will be introduced from April 2006, the Cabinet has been advised of the implications for the District. The scheme makes provision for concessionary travel within the boundaries of an individual authority after 09:30 hours only and a study has been commissioned by the Cambridgeshire local authorities in an attempt to identify a deliverable scheme for implementation by next April. Given that the scheme will result in some recipients being worse off than previously and having expressed concern over the imposition of a further initiative on local authorities without the accompanying financial resources, the Cabinet have agreed to adopt a statutory minimum concessionary fares scheme for an interim period of 12

months and requested the submission of a further report and associated Medium Term Plan bid to a future meeting.

**83. TREASURY MANAGEMENT INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE**

The Cabinet has reviewed the respective levels of performance achieved during the quarter 1st April – 30th September 2005 by three external Fund Managers in the matter of investment of the Council's Capital Receipts.

**84. HUNTINGDON HIGH STREET – ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS**

The Cabinet has approved the release of appropriate funds from the 2006/07 Medium Term Plan for Phase II of the Huntingdon High Street Environmental Improvements Scheme for improvements to the St Benedict's Court area including the removal of the present gazebo structure. Phase I of the works, involving the laying of new surfacing and drainage channels in the High Street from the Market Square to Hartford Road has been successfully completed.

**85. ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Cabinet has noted the Council's property portfolio performance for 2004/05 against National Property Indicators including four new performance management initiatives covering maintenance, environmental property issues, suitability and accessibility. At the same time, the Cabinet has agreed the Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy being designated as "Champion" to promote efficient and effective asset management in respect of all District Council land and property.

**86. LICENSING ACT 2003 – IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACT**

Further to Item No. 66 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 24th September 2003, the Cabinet has been acquainted with progress in implementing the Licensing Act 2003. The Act abolished several licensing regimes, including liquor licensing (by the Licensing Justices) and public entertainment, cinemas, theatres and late night refreshment houses (by District Councils) replacing them with three new types of licences, as follows -

- ◆ a premises licence for all venues selling intoxicating liquor or at which regulated entertainment is provided or late night refreshment provided between 11 pm and 5 am;
- ◆ a club premises certificate; and
- ◆ a personal licence which permits an individual to supply alcohol in venues with a premises licence or a club premises certificate.

Members have been advised that the changeover has been progressed successfully with Officers dealing with over 550 applications for premises licences and club premises certificates and 600 for personal licences being received by the end of October 2005.

To deal with the extra workload, two additional members of staff have been employed for a temporary period of two years within the Licensing Section of the Central Services Directorate. Given the likely ongoing workload created by the Act and the implementation with effect from September 2007 of the Gambling Act 2005, the Cabinet has approved the preparation of a Medium Term Plan bid in respect of the estimated additional income which will be received and the cost of making permanent the two temporary members of staff.

**87. STAFFING REVIEW – PATHFINDER HOUSE RECEPTION**

Arising from Item No. 13 of the Report of the Employment Panel, the Cabinet has approved a supplementary estimate to grant early retirement and redundancy to a member of staff employed at the main reception at Pathfinder House following the transfer of the Council's switchboard to the call centre in September 2005.

D P Holley  
Chairman