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## Cabinet

Report of the meetings held on the 29th June,  
20th July and 7 September 2006

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### Matters for Decision

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#### 19. HOUSING STRATEGY 2006 – 2011

Having considered the content of the Housing Strategy 2006 – 2011 Empty Homes Strategy 2006 – 2011 and Homeless Strategy 2006 – 2008 (copies of which have been circulated under separate cover to all Members) prior to their submission to Go-East, the Cabinet

#### RECOMMEND

**that the Housing Strategy 2006 – 2011, Empty Homes Strategy 2006 – 2011 and Homeless Strategy 2006 – 2008 be approved.**

#### 20. FINANCIAL STRATEGY

By way of a report by the Head of Financial Services (attached as an Appendix), the Cabinet has reviewed the Council's financial strategy for the period up to 2016/17.

In discussing the need to identify and implement savings to achieve a balanced Medium Term Plan, Members reiterated their disappointment that the Government continued to withhold some £547,000 in grant due to the Council by way of a safety net in light of future grant reductions. With regard to possible savings, and in addition to those listed in Annex A, Members' attention was drawn to a 'Reserve List' of suggestions made by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) described in Item No. 2 of their Report. In that respect, the Cabinet noted that Officers would be reviewing the suitability of the Panel's recommendations as part of the ongoing review of budgets and Medium Term Plan schemes. In noting references by the Executive Councillor for Finance as to the extensive range of grants made available by the Council in addition to those for community initiatives, the Cabinet

#### RECOMMEND

**(a) that the saving items set out in Annex A be supported;**

- (b) that the strategy for a steady profile of savings as represented by Annex B to the report now submitted be supported; and**
- (c) that Officers be requested to review all budgets and Medium Term Plan schemes (revenue and capital) to identify any further opportunities for savings.**

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### **Matters for Information**

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#### **21. CREATIVE ENTERPRISE**

The Cabinet has approved the publication of the Creative Enterprise Strategy for Huntingdonshire as a supplement to the Local Economy Strategy. The document aims to increase the sustainability, growth and productivity of creative industries in the District while maximising their potential to contribute towards broader social, economic and cultural regeneration.

At the same time, the Cabinet has considered proposals to develop a creative enterprise centre on the campus of Longsands College in St Neots, in conjunction with the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the College itself, which will link opportunities for job and business creation and economic regeneration through the Cambridge sub region with economic benefits from other regional centres. The Cabinet has agreed to release the appropriate funding from the Medium Term Plan and has authorised the Director of Central Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy, to enter into a lease of land for the Centre at Longsands College and a funding agreement with the DCLG.

#### **22. MOBILE HOME SITE, EYNESBURY – CONTAMINATED LAND REMEDIATION STRATEGY**

Further to Item No.107 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 22nd February 2006, the Cabinet has been acquainted with the findings of additional soil sampling of contaminated land at the Council's Mobile Home Park in Eynesbury, St Neots. In discussing a programme of work for the remediation of the land including the temporary re-housing of residents while the work is undertaken, Members were reminded that Government funding has been sought from the Contaminated Land Capital Projects Programme. Having received an assurance that the net cost to the Council for the whole of the project should not be significant, the Cabinet has approved a supplementary capital estimate of £437,000 and a supplementary revenue estimate of £10,000 to fund the works necessary to progress to the next stage of the project to enable tenders to be sought.

**23. AMENDMENTS TO THE HOUSING RENEWAL ASSISTANCE POLICY**

The Cabinet has approved amendments to the Council's Housing Renewal Assistance Policy which relate to disabled facilities top up grants, top up assistance for children's disabled facilities grants, disabled persons relocation grants and the awarding of grants to people in arrears with the Council. Details of the changes are available on request from the Democratic Services section.

**24. ADDITIONAL FUNDING FROM THE REGIONAL HOUSING BOARD FOR DECENT HOMES IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

Having been advised that the Council has been awarded a capital grant of £327,925 from the Regional Housing Board, the Cabinet has agreed that this grant should be used to provide thermal efficiency improvements to private sector homes occupied by vulnerable people. In so doing, the Cabinet has expressed concern over the Government's constraints on spending the money, given the Council's priorities for affordable housing and homelessness and the need to introduce water efficiency measures in the Eastern Region.

**25. CAMBRIDGE SUB-REGION GYPSY/TRAVELLER NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2005**

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the key findings of the Cambridge Sub-Region Gypsy/Traveller Needs Assessment undertaken by Anglia Ruskin University and Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College. Officers will be drafting a Gypsy and Traveller Sites Development Plan Document in the near future, to meet the needs identified up to 2021 including, if necessary, allocating new sites as required by Government policies.

**26. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME REVISIONS – DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

The Council has approved amendments to the Development Scheme for Huntingdonshire prior to their submission to the Secretary of State. The changes relate to the timing of the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document and the introduction of an Area Action Plan for West Huntingdon. At the same time, the Cabinet has approved for public consultation a draft Supplementary Planning Document on developer contributions towards affordable housing. The Executive Councillor for Environment and Transport has been authorised to make changes to the draft document to reflect specialist developments such as retirement homes and to approve a sustainability appraisal.

**27. HUNTINGDON TOWN CENTRE VISION**

The Cabinet has agreed to adopt as informal planning guidance a Centre Vision report on Huntingdon Town Centre produced by the

Civic Trust. The document describes the overall development potential of the town and identifies a number of opportunity sites and their individual planning and market potential. It will be used to inform the content of the forthcoming Planning Proposals Development Plan Document and will assist in day to day decisions that have to be made affecting the future viability and vitality of the town centre.

**28. POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS**

Further to Item No.5 of the Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) to the meeting of the Council held on the 28th June 2006, the Cabinet has agreed to withdraw the Council's funding for the employment of Police Community Support Officers in Huntingdonshire at the earliest opportunity, on the understanding that this will not reduce the number of officers deployed within the District. To enable all Members to be aware of the situation locally the Cabinet has also agreed that the Community Safety Partnership quarterly crime report for Huntingdonshire be made available in future to all Members of the Council.

**29. LOCAL JUSTICE AREA BOUNDARIES CONSULTATION PAPER**

The Cabinet has considered a proposal to make minor changes to the boundaries of the Peterborough, Huntingdonshire and Cambridge Local Justice Areas to realign their boundaries with the Cambridgeshire Police force divisions, the relevant local authorities and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships. In so doing, the Cabinet has authorised the Head of Legal and Estates to respond to the Cambridgeshire Justices' Issues Group reflecting Members concerns over transport issues in certain parts of the District when the public travel to and from court.

**30. REVENUE OUTTURN 2005/06**

The Cabinet has noted the outturn of revenue expenditure in 2005/06 along with variations between the original and revised budget provision for that year.

**31. MONITORING OF THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2005/2006**

Consideration has been given by the Cabinet to a report detailing the outturn of Capital Expenditure for 2005 – 2006 and the implications for 2006/07.

**32. BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM PLAN PROCESS 2007 – 2011**

Further to Item No. 1 of the Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) to the meeting of the Council held on 28th June 2006, the Cabinet has approved the process and timetable for the review and approval of the Financial Strategy, the 2007/08 Budget and the 2008/12 Medium Term Plan. At the same time, the Cabinet has adopted a procedure for the identification of savings that will be required in the period to 2016/2017.

**33. MEDIUM TERM PLAN:  
REQUESTS FOR THE RELEASE OF FUNDS**

Following the discontinuation of Local Authority Social Housing Grant, the Cabinet has agreed to release appropriate funding from the Medium Term Plan for the development of new affordable housing in the District. These resources will be used to meet the cost of development on those sites not funded by the Housing Corporation or other sources.

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

The Cabinet has been advised of those debts which have been written-off as irrecoverable during the period April to June 2006.

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

**35. RACE EQUALITY SCHEME**

The Cabinet has approved the Council's Race Equality Scheme and associated action plan and timetable showing how and when the proposed work identified in the scheme will be completed.

**36. QUALITY OF LIFE STRATEGIES, ARTS CULTURE,  
MAJOR SPORTS FACILITIES AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Cabinet has considered three quality of life documents on arts culture, major sports facilities and the green infrastructure commissioned by Cambridgeshire Horizons to help shape and guide growth across the Cambridge Sub-Region. In so doing, the Cabinet has agreed to adopt the Green Infrastructure Strategy as technical guidance to guide the preparation of any open space/recreation/leisure strategies and as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and appeals. The projects within the strategy will be considered for incorporation in the forthcoming Planning Obligation Supplementary Planning Document.

At the same time and having noted the contents of the Culture and Arts Strategy and the Major Sports Facilities Strategy, the Cabinet has agreed to consider their status at a later date when discussions with Cambridgeshire Horizons and adjoining authorities on the issues and financial implications of the proposals within the documents have taken place.

**37. EAST OF ENGLAND PLAN:  
REPORT OF EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC**

The Cabinet has considered the Independent Panel's report of the Public Examination of the draft East of England Plan. The plan outlines the strategic planning approach for the East of England until 2021 and sets out a strategic planning framework to guide future development. Having endorsed the proposed content of the Council's

initial response to the draft Panel report and highlighted a preference for four sub-regions within the Eastern Region and the need for appropriate steps to ensure the availability of adequate water resources, the Cabinet has authorised the Head of Planning Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, to reflect these sentiments in the Council's response to the East of England Regional Assembly.

**38. GREAT FEN PROJECT – MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT**

Further to Item No. 19 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 17th July 2002, the Cabinet has authorised the Director of Operational Services to sign a memorandum of agreement between the Wildlife Trust, English Nature, Environment Agency and the District Council in relation to the project to restore over 3,000 hectares of wetland in and around the Woodwalton Fen and Holme Fen Nature Reserves. The agreement is designed to replace and strengthen the existing memorandum of understanding for the project.

**39. ST. NEOTS CONSERVATION AREA:  
LAND REVIEW, CHARACTER STATEMENT AND  
MANAGEMENT PLAN CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS**

The Cabinet has approved for public consultation a draft Boundary Review, Character Statement and Management Plan for the St. Neots Conservation Area. The boundary review has been produced with a view to amalgamating the existing conservation areas in St. Neots, Eynesbury and Eaton Socon in line with English Heritage's general guidance on the management of conservation areas.

**40. CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**

Arising from the possible relocation of Marshall Cambridge Aerospace Ltd and the commercial nature of the business plan available for discussion among local authorities and other organisations, the Cabinet has authorised the Director of Central Services to enter into a Confidentiality Agreement with Marshall Cambridge Aerospace Ltd on behalf of the District Council and has appointed the Director of Operational Services as the designated officer under the agreement.

**41. CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU**

Following a request from the Huntingdonshire Citizens Advice Bureau, the Cabinet has authorised the Director of Central Services to approve arrangements for the District Council to act as a guarantor for the lease of premises in All Saints Passage, Huntingdon occupied by the organisation.

**42. PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

The Cabinet has reviewed the Council's performance against targets within the Corporate Plan – "Growing Success" during the period 1st April to 30th June 2006.

**43. SANCTUARY PROJECT**

Having been acquainted with proposals to provide home security measures for victims of domestic violence by way of a county wide sanctuary scheme administered by the Luminus Group, the Cabinet has authorised the Director of Central Services to sign and seal the joint agreement with Luminus, East Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council.

**44. PAXTON PITS NATURE RESERVE**

The Cabinet has considered proposals to extend Little Paxton Pits Nature Reserve from 240 to over 700 acres by the District Council leasing additional land adjacent to the reserve following the termination of further gravel extraction operations. Having acknowledged the ecological and leisure benefits associated with the proposals and in noting that the cost of managing the additional land should be covered by the provision of a Section 106 Agreement and from income generated from activities on the site, the Cabinet has authorised the Director of Central Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy, to approve detailed terms for the leases. It is envisaged that, once completed, the nature reserve and adjoining land will provide a complex of lakes and public open space with a network of footpaths, bridlepaths and cycling ways.

**45. GAMBLING ACT 2005 – STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES**

The Cabinet has approved for consultation purposes the Council's Gambling Act 2005 draft Statement of Principles. The Act requires all licensing authorities to publish a statement on how they intend to approach their responsibilities under the Act. The District Council will consult widely on the draft statement prior to its approval by full Council on 6th December 2006.

**46. PROMOTING BETTER HEALTH IN OLDER PEOPLE THROUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

The Cabinet's attention has been drawn by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) to the findings of a study by the Older Persons' Working Group regarding the needs of older people and the services available. In discussing the Panel's individual recommendations, described in Item No. 9 of their Report, the Cabinet were informed that the District Council was represented on the Out and About Steering Group by the Leisure Centres' Co-ordinator. With regard to the possible extension of the Council's current range of leisure services for older people, Members acknowledged the importance of promoting better health, particularly through physical activity. However, they were concerned over the possible cost implications of the proposals given the financial restraints faced by the authority. In the absence of any operational and financial details within the Panel's report, the Cabinet has requested that a further report be produced by Officers for consideration at a future meeting.

**47. CONSERVATION AREAS**

The Cabinet has approved the public consultation draft management plans for Post Street and Earning Street in Godmanchester and for Keyston. The plans outline a series of proposals aimed at conserving and enhancing the character and appeal of these areas.

The Cabinet also has approved a draft Management Plan for the Stonely Conservation Area which will be used to guide planning decisions and as a basis for further consultation. The Plan has been produced to clearly identify, co-ordinate and programme a series of specific projects aimed at enhancing the character and appeal of the village.

**48. ST. MARY'S VILLAGE URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK**

Further to Item No. 4 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 28th June 2006 and having been acquainted with responses received from the consultation exercise on the Urban Design Framework for the redevelopment of land to the west of St. Mary's Church, St. Neots, the Cabinet has adopted the Framework as Interim Planning Guidance.

**49. DISTRICT COUNCIL'S HEADQUARTERS AND OTHER ACCOMMODATION**

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the most recent developments in the procurement of a new headquarters and other accommodation for the District Council.

The Cabinet also has been acquainted with the recommendations of the District Council's Customer First and Accommodation Advisory Group, as a result of their meeting held on 26th July 2006, and in that respect has agreed to continue the use of call queuing arrangements at the call centre. This adjustment gives the caller the option to queue or leave a message. Having also discussed the need to clearly identify the Operations Centre's address for mailing purposes, the Cabinet has authorised the Director of Operational Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for the new Headquarters and Information Technology, to determine an appropriate name for the Centre.

I C Bates  
Chairman