
Cabinet

Report of the meetings held on 4th & 18th October and 22nd November 2007

Matters for Decision

38. BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM PLAN 2008-2013

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) and by way of a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is attached as an Appendix) the Cabinet has reviewed the draft 2008/09 budget, the Medium Term Financial Plan for the period up to 2012 – 2013 and the longer term financial forecast to 2018 – 2019. Final approval of the proposals will be dealt with by Council at their meeting on 20th February 2008.

In discussing the content of the report, Members have emphasised the need to consider a range of potential schemes, particularly given the uncertainty as to future levels of revenue support grant and the possible impact of a lower than expected increase in Government grant in 2008/2009. With this in mind, the Cabinet

RECOMMEND

- (a) that the implications of receiving a low level of revenue support grant in terms of future Council Tax increases be noted and that Officers be requested to report to a future meeting on other options which would involve increases of between 4.99% and 7.5%**
- (b) that a policy of limiting increases in the budget requirement to 4.99% be supported but Officers be invited to consider models requiring a lower requirement approximately to circa 4%;**
- (c) that the content of the draft Medium Term Financial Plan, appended to the report now submitted, be approved to assist in the production of the budget for 2008/09, revised Medium Term Plan for 2009/2013 and the financial plan to 2018/2019; and**
- (d) that officers be requested to critically review all budgets and Medium Term Plan schemes (revenue and capital).**

39. LICENSING ACT 2003: STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

The Cabinet has considered the results of a consultation exercise on the production of a revised Statement of Licensing Policy under the Licensing Act 2003. A separate report appears elsewhere on the agenda for the Council meeting and the Cabinet therefore

RECOMMEND

that the Statement of Licensing Policy be approved and implemented with effect from 31st January 2008 for a period of three years.

Matters for Information

**40. ST IVO OUTDOOR CENTRE:
RELEASE OF SECTION 106 FUNDING**

Further to Item No. 113 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on the 22nd February 2006, the Cabinet has been acquainted with developments in relation to a project within the Medium Term Plan to improve football facilities at the St Ivo Outdoor Leisure Centre. Executive Councillors have been advised that, as a consequence of a previous commitment to provide changing facilities at Priory Park, St Neots, the St Ivo scheme will be reliant on the receipt of Section 106 contributions from local housing developments and the success of a grant application to the Football Foundation. The original scheme has been revised on the advice of the Foundation and now incorporates a synthetic football pitch with floodlighting.

In that respect, the Cabinet have considered issues surrounding the timing of the bid and the receipt of Section 106 income. To enable the scheme to proceed, the Cabinet has approved the submission of a bid for £1,000,000 to the Football Foundation and, subject to this being successful, authorised expenditure of £500,000 by the District Council in advance of the receipt of the Section 106 contributions.

**41. MEDIUM TERM PLAN –
REQUEST FOR THE RELEASE OF FUNDS**

The Cabinet has agreed to release £71,000 from the Medium Term Plan towards the cost of resurfacing the synthetic pitch at Huntingdon Leisure Centre. This sum is net of a contribution of 26% by the County Council towards the cost of the scheme under a cost sharing agreement recently achieved whereby they will contribute towards the implementation of the Leisure Centre condition survey over the next 5 years.

42. CULTURAL STRATEGY REPORT

The Cabinet has approved a Cultural Strategy for Huntingdonshire which will be used as a reference document for the current review of the Sustainable Community Strategy. However the Cabinet are conscious of the current level of expenditure from the Council's budget on cultural objectives and they have stressed that the delivery of any new initiatives will need to be financed from alternative funding sources such as Sport England or the Lottery Commission.

43. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

The Cabinet has considered the contents of the draft revised Sustainable Community Strategy for Huntingdonshire which sets out arrangements for involving partners and stakeholders, including the business and voluntary sectors, in the process of improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of the District.

In discussing the following six strategic themes within the Strategy –

- ◆ Growth and Infrastructure;
- ◆ Health and Wellbeing;
- ◆ Inclusive, Safer and Cohesive Communities;
- ◆ Children and Young People;
- ◆ Economic Prosperity; and
- ◆ Environment

the Cabinet has requested the inclusion of appropriate references to the guided bus network, the development of effective transport networks to meet the demands of the area, improved recreational facilities for young people and improvements in road safety for children.

The next stage in the Strategy's development will be the refinement of the specific objectives and action planning. Once these have been completed, an updated version of the Strategy will be submitted to a meeting of the Cabinet in January 2008.

44. TREASURY MANAGEMENT INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE

The Cabinet has reviewed the respective levels of performance achieved during the period 1st April to 31st August 2007 by external Fund Managers in the matter of investment of the Council's capital receipts. Having regard to the performance of one of the Fund Managers and in particular the lower than predicted investment returns achieved, the Cabinet has noted the circumstances behind the decision to bring the funds managed by this company back in-house.

45. VOLUNTARY SECTOR COMMISSIONING

The Cabinet has agreed to replace the Council's Grant Aid allocation process with a commissioning framework linked to the Council's identified community objectives. It is anticipated that commissioning

will allow the Council to be more pro-active in seeking bids for funding support to meet specific service criteria. Service objectives will be determined at the outset and monitored throughout the life of the commissioning agreement to ensure that the desired outcomes are being realised. The process will clearly set out what services or activities the Authority wishes to directly commission along with a description of the service to be provided, key targets, performance indicators and the level of funds available for each area of activity.

The Cabinet has acknowledged that moving to a model of this nature may cause some difficulties for small organisations who are not able to supply commissioned services. Historically the revenue grant aid budget has been used by these small organisations to purchase equipment, such as computers. As these are capital items, the Cabinet has agreed that the terms of reference for the capital grant aid budget should be amended to relax the eligibility criteria to allow applications of this type to be considered.

46. PROMOTING BETTER HEALTH IN OLDER PEOPLE THROUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Further to Item No. 46 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on the 27th September 2006, the Cabinet's attention has been drawn by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) to the operational and financial implications of participation by the Council in providing enhanced services in the District for older people. In discussing the development of Council services and the potential for a pilot programme of exercise for older people, supported by the Luminus Group, the Cabinet has requested further clarification as to the associated budget requirements and the anticipated cost to the Council. Subject to receipt of the latter, the Cabinet has –

- ◆ noted the arrangements that have been put in place for Officers to support the “Out and About” Steering Group;
- ◆ endorsed the importance of promoting “Out and About” through the Council's leisure services and District Wide;
- ◆ noted “Out and About's” targets to establish a programme of exercise for older people at Luminus sheltered housing and extended to hub villages and the progress being made towards them;
- ◆ endorsed the financial arrangements relating to a programme of development, the provision of facilities at Leisure Centres for external trainers promoting classes for those over 65 years and the associated marketing material;
- ◆ noted the current position with regard to the “Active at 50” project bid;
- ◆ endorsed the introduction of measures to ensure continuity of existing classes provided by the voluntary sector;
- ◆ supported the compiling and maintenance of a comprehensive and up to date database of exercise services and facilities for older people;
- ◆ requested that Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership's Culture and Leisure Thematic Group consider adopting the promotion

of physical exercise amongst older people as one of its objectives; and

- ◆ requested that a review of progress on the above be submitted to the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) in the near future.

47. REPRESENTATION ON COMMITTEES/ADVISORY GROUPS

The Cabinet has appointed Councillor Dew to the Ramsey, St Ivo and Sawtry Leisure Centre Management Committees to replace Councillors Bucknell, Rogers and Hyams respectively. The changes have arisen following Councillor Dew's appointment as Executive Councillor for Leisure Centres.

48. FINANCIAL MONITORING – REVENUE BUDGET

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

49. MONITORING OF THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2007/08

The Cabinet has been acquainted with variations in the Capital Programme in the current year.

50. CAR PARKING STRATEGY – DRAFT ACTION PLAN

Following an earlier meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support), the Cabinet has considered the contents of a draft Car Parking Strategy Action Plan for Huntingdonshire which sets out the short and long term proposals for improving car parking in the District. Recommendations also were made by the Overview & Scrutiny Panel, details of which are contained in Item No. 20 of their Report. In approving the document for public consultation, the Cabinet has highlighted a number of issues that require further consideration including –

- ◆ the recommendations of the Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Service Support);
- ◆ the potential use of the car park to be provided in St Ives for the proposed guided bus service other than by users of the service;
- ◆ the possible use of the District's leisure centre car parks by non-customers;
- ◆ the application of charging for Members and staff of the District Council who use car parks in conjunction with their official duties or employment;
- ◆ the introduction of resident permit zones within designated areas around St Neots and Huntingdon Railway Stations;
- ◆ the effect of differential charging rates to reflect off-peak hours; and
- ◆ the management and level of disabled parking.

The Cabinet has requested that the Members' Car Parking Working Group be reconvened to consider these issues and the

recommendations of the Panel in light of the outcomes of the public consultation.

51. PUBLIC EMERGENCY WARNING SYSTEM

The Cabinet has noted a proposal to establish a text messaging and e-mail warning system for the public on occasions of flooding and other major emergency incidents. Huntingdonshire residents will be able to sign up to receive either a free text message or an e-mail advising them of an incident in the area and directing them where to obtain further information. The scheme will be publicised through press releases, the Council's website and Districtwide. It is anticipated that the cost of the system to the Council will be minimal and can be covered through the existing Emergency Planning budget.

**52. ST IVES CONSERVATION AREA:
CHARACTER STATEMENT AND BOUNDARY REVIEW**

Having been acquainted with the responses received from the consultation exercise on the Character Statement and Boundary Review for the St Ives areas, the Cabinet has agreed to adopt the documents for use as material considerations in planning decisions and project work. The Cabinet also has authorised the Head of Planning Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Environment and Transport to make any minor consequential amendments to the text and illustrations as necessary.

53. GROWING SUCCESS PERFORMANCE REPORT

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panels, the Cabinet has noted performance management information on the achievement of the objectives in the Council's Corporate Plan – "Growing Success". The Plan identifies 50 short, medium and long term objectives to help achieve aims and ambitions for Huntingdonshire's communities and the Council itself. Progress against all 50 objectives is monitored on a quarterly basis in order to identify those achieving target and those where performance is considered unacceptable, thus enabling responsive action to be undertaken. As part of this process a joint working group of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels currently reviews those objectives that are considered to be high priority and Executive Members have requested that a summary of the Panel's deliberations be appended to future monitoring reports.

54. DECENT HOMES FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Further to Item No. 24 of their Report to the Council held on 27th September 2006, the Cabinet has been advised that the Council had been awarded a capital grant of £167,000 from EERA's Housing and Sustainable Communities Panel to help improve "non-decent homes in the private sector". In discussing how the grant should be used, Members were reminded that a previous award had been reserved for thermal efficiency improvements. Despite targeted publicity the take-up of this grant has been lower than anticipated. Having been

advised that failure to spend the grant on the intended use might prejudice further allocations, the Cabinet has agreed to reserve the 2007/08 award for future years' spend on the provision of insulation improvements to private sector homes occupied by vulnerable people.

55. HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION FRAMEWORK

The Cabinet has approved a Homelessness Prevention Framework for Discretionary Payments designed to support the Council's preventative approach to homelessness. The framework enables the Council to spend relatively small amounts of money to prevent homelessness, thereby reducing the use of bed and breakfast and other forms of temporary accommodation and benefiting households by avoiding the upheaval and trauma of being made homeless.

56. PROPOSED STUKELEY MEADOWS SKATE PARK

The Cabinet has agreed to bring forward a scheme identified for inclusion in the 2009/2013 Medium Term Plan to develop a skate park at Stukeley Meadows, Huntingdon. The scheme is estimated to cost £180,000 towards which £160,000 has been secured from external sources. In that respect Members referred to the absence of any funding thus far from Huntingdon Town Council, particularly given the benefits of the proposal for the town. With this in mind, the Cabinet has requested that the Town Council be approached to consider meeting the running costs of the scheme estimated at £10k per annum. Given that some of the funding already pledged is time limited and can only be spent during the current financial year, the Cabinet has agreed to release up to £20,000 from the Capital Programme, prior to approval of the Council's Medium Term Plan to enable the scheme to proceed.

57. LOCAL ECONOMY STRATEGY

The Cabinet has approved the content of a Local Economy Strategy for Huntingdonshire. The Strategy has been developed in consultation with the business community and the Huntingdonshire Economic Forum and aims to provide a focus for investment, activities and interventions for a range of organisations working in the local economy for continued economic success. The development of the Strategy comes at an important time for the District coinciding with the review of the East of England regional economy strategy and the sub-national review of economic development and regeneration. There is a move for a regional spatial policy to be brought together on regional policies and it is important therefore that Huntingdonshire has a clear, unified vision for its local economy and how it fits into the regional and national picture.

58. DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS AFFORDABLE HOUSING: SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Further to Item No. 14 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 27th June 2007, the Cabinet has considered responses

received from the public consultation exercise on the draft supplementary planning document, "Developer Contributions towards Affordable Housing", along with an accompanying sustainability appraisal and a consultation statement. In approving the contents of the papers, the Cabinet has authorised the Head of Planning Services after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Environment and Transport to approve any minor consequential amendments to the text and illustrations as necessary.

**59. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK:
THE CORE STRATEGY – PREFERRED OPTIONS**

The Cabinet has approved for public consultation preferred options for inclusion in the Council's Core Strategy. The document describes the spatial vision for the District up to 2026 and includes references to essential housing development, stable economic growth and environmental improvements. Having noted the timescale and procedure for public consultation prior to the document's submission to the Secretary of State, the Cabinet has authorised the Head of Planning Services to make any minor changes to the document as he considers necessary, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Environment and Transport.

**60. LAND AT ST. MARY'S STREET, REAR OF 22 HIGH STREET,
HUNTINGDON**

The Cabinet has approved terms and conditions for the sale of Council owned land at St Mary's Street and to the rear of 22 High Street, Huntingdon. The land is a narrow strip of amenity land and was registered in the Council's ownership in August 2006 as part of the programme of voluntary registration of land.

I C Bates
Chairman