

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the Council Chamber, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Thursday, 13 December 2007.

PRESENT: Councillor I C Bates – Chairman.

Councillors P L E Bucknell, D B Dew, A Hansard, C R Hyams, Mrs D C Reynolds, T V Rogers and L M Simpson.

83. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd November 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

84. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

85. USE OF ONLINE MEDIA: PROCEDURAL IMPLICATIONS

Consideration was given to a report by the Working Group appointed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) to look at ways of promoting and communicating the work of the Council's scrutiny panels and the use of information and communication technology.

Having noted the Working Group's recommendations with regard to "blogs", on-line forums, on-line petitions and other means of external communications, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that Councillors be encouraged to make use of the personal website facility on the Council's website as a means of communicating with ward residents and the availability of a "blog" facility should they wish to use it;
- (b) that on-line forums be not hosted by the Council because of the substantial resource implications involved and that officers look for cost-effective ways of increasing opportunities for meaningful interaction through the Council's website.
- (c) that on-line petition facilities be introduced using the Modern.Gov software system when this becomes available;
- (d) that on-line petitions be processed under the existing constitutional arrangements, subject to a maximum of three petitions being presented at any meeting;
- (e) that in the event of an on-line petition not having the

requisite number of signatories or the organiser not being prepared to present it to Council, the petition be submitted for consideration to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Panel, subject to the petition containing the names and addresses of at least 10 persons who live, work or own property in the District;

- (f) that, in the event of an excessive number of petitions being organised by one individual, the Corporate Governance Panel be requested to consider amending the vexatious complainants procedure accordingly; and
- (g) that Council be recommended to approve the necessary constitutional changes.

86. MEDIUM TERM PLAN - REQUESTS FOR THE RELEASE OF FUNDS

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered a request for the release of funding for three Medium Term Plan schemes relating to the Huntingdon and St Neots Leisure Centres.

Having been informed that the County Council had agreed to make a contribution of 26.15% towards all agreed schemes within the Leisure Centres' Condition Survey, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the release of £114,000 towards the cost of re-surfacing the synthetic pitch at St Neots Leisure Centre be approved;
- (b) that the release of £42,000 towards the cost of repairs to the pool roof at Huntingdon Leisure Centre be approved; and
- (c) that the release of £38,000 towards the replacement of the dry-side boiler plant and accessibility improvements at St. Neots Leisure Centre be approved.

87. 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 by the remaining external fund manager and the internal fund management team during the quarter 1st July to 30th September 2007 in managing the investment of the Council's capital receipts.

At the same time, the Executive Councillor for Finance drew Members' attention to the provisional 2008 - 2011 revenue support grant settlement announced by the Government and the implications for the authority. Having reiterated the need to review critically all budgets and Medium Term Plan schemes, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the contents of the report now submitted be noted; and
- (b) that future levels of performance be reported to Cabinet on a six monthly basis.

88. POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS UNDER THE ANIMAL WELFARE ACT 2006

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Cabinet were acquainted with the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and the implications for the District Council.

Whilst the Act extended the powers of the Council to deal with animal welfare issues, Members expressed concern that no direct additional funding was likely to be made available by the Government to assist in its implementation. Whereupon, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the powers set out in the Animal Welfare Act 2006 be adopted;
- (b) that authority be delegated to the Director of Operational Services and the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services to appoint officers as inspectors under Section 51 of the Act;
- (c) that authority be delegated to appointed officers to exercise all of the powers set out in the Act in the course of their duties; and
- (d) that authority be delegated to the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Housing and Health, to initiate legal proceedings under the Act.

89. HUNTINGDON CONSERVATION AREA: BOUNDARY CHANGES AND CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Cabinet considered a report by the Planning Policy Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) outlining the consultation responses to the draft character statement and boundary review for the Huntingdon Conservation Area.

Having considered the schedule of responses and amendments outlined in the appendices to the report, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that, subject to the incorporation of changes identified in the appendix to the report now submitted, the character statement and boundary review for the Huntingdon Conservation Area be approved; and

- (b) that the Head of Planning Services be authorised to approve any minor consequential amendments to the text and illustrations as a result of the changes referred to in (a) above after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Environment and Transport.

90. SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP

The report of the meeting of the Safety Advisory Group, held on 14th November 2007 was received and noted.

91. RISK REGISTER - OPTION APPRAISAL FORM

Consideration was given to a report by the Audit and Risk Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was attached an option appraisal form in respect of the potential delay of the construction of the new A14, which had been identified as high risk for the Council. While acknowledging the implications for any delay on the long term economic, environmental and social development of the district, and the need to continue to lobby for a start on the scheme, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that, in all the circumstances the level of risk identified in the report now submitted be accepted.

Chairman