
Cabinet

**Report of the meetings held on 21st February,
13th March and 3rd April 2008**

Matter for Decision

74. ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY AND 2008/09 ACTION PLAN

Reproduced as an Appendix is a proposed Environment Strategy for Huntingdonshire which sets out a series of aims to overcome the following three principal environmental challenges –

- ◆ tackling climate change;
- ◆ using resources efficiently; and
- ◆ protecting and improving the environment.

The Strategy has taken twelve months to develop which has allowed meaningful engagement with local communities and interested parties. In discussing the content of the Strategy proposals, Executive Councillors have stressed the importance of partnership working including the involvement of local traders and the need to promote and encourage sustainability within the home. In discussing the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate and Strategic Framework) (Item No.10 of their Report refers) the Cabinet has acknowledged the benefits of linking the value of projects against national performance indicators and noted the Panel's concerns over the protection of agricultural land.

Having noted the requirement for further refinement of some proposals contained in the strategy, its priorities and project plan, the Cabinet has authorised the Director of Environmental and Community Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Environment and Transport, to approve the release of the relevant Medium Term Plan provision for that purpose. The Cabinet has also requested a further report identifying the linkages between the priorities in the Strategy, those in the Council's Corporate Plan, "Growing Success" and the provision available in the Medium Term Plan. In so doing, the Cabinet

RECOMMEND

**that the Environment Strategy be approved and adopted by
the Council.**

75. CAR PARKING STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

Further to Item No. 71 of their Report to the meeting of the Council held on 20th February 2008, the Cabinet has been advised of the deliberations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) in relation to their call-in of the Cabinet's decision (Item No.38 of their Report refers).

The Panel had expressed its disappointment that the Cabinet had decided to accept the Car Parking Working Party's recommendation to introduce a 25% reduction in the cost of a car parking season ticket for vehicles with CO² emissions of 120g/km or less. The Panel was of the opinion that the Cabinet should have adopted a more innovative approach and introduced greater incentives to encourage motorists to purchase and use low emission vehicles. In response, the Cabinet has taken the opportunity to reconsider the level of charges to be introduced for car parking in the summer, given the financial implications of introducing a higher reduction for season ticket holders with low emission vehicles. With regard to the Panel's view that any surplus income generated by increased car parking should be ring-fenced to provide integrated, sustainable and accessible transport, the Cabinet has reiterated its view that this would be inappropriate in that the Council's expenditure on highways and transportation issues far exceeds any surplus that might be made from car parking charges.

In discussing arrangements to review the Car Parking Action Plan, Executive Councillors have recognised the need to consider climate change issues within the forthcoming Environment Strategy and have agreed that it would be appropriate to reconsider the implications for the action plan earlier than previously intended. Having thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) for their input into the subject, the Cabinet has

- ◆ noted the views expressed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support);
- ◆ agreed to introduce a reduction of 50% in the cost of a car parking season ticket for cars with CO₂ emissions of 120g/km or less as part of the implementation of the Car Parking Action Plan from 1st June 2008;
- ◆ requested that the wider issues of encouraging the use of low emission vehicles, public transport, cycling and walking be dealt with in the development of the Environment Strategy and in the next review of the Car Parking Action Plan;
- ◆ confirmed that surplus income from car parking charges would not be ring-fenced for integrated, sustainable and accessible transport;
- ◆ amended their previous decision to introduce car parking charges based on the first option contained in the Working

Party's report and agreed to introduce the second option instead;

- ◆ amended their previous resolution to review arrangements after twelve months and agreed that issues relating to climate change in the action plan should be reconsidered following a period of six months after the introduction of the revised charges; and
- ◆ requested that further consideration be given by the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy, Environment and Transport a representative of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) and relevant Officers to the initial scoping for the next review of the Car Parking Action Plan.

Subsequently, a Notice of Motion was submitted by seven Executive Councillors which enabled the Cabinet to reconsider their decision in respect of the introduction of car parking charges. In discussing the options available, the Cabinet has recognised the potential impact that option 2 charges will have on the overall delivery of the action plan, the environment strategy and the local economy in the District's market towns. Having considered a new hybrid option range of charges and in noting the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) thereon, the Cabinet has rescinded its previous decision to introduce the second option and has agreed to introduce a hybrid of option one instead.

76. CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY, COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING STRATEGY, CUSTOMER SERVICES STRATEGY

The Cabinet has approved the contents of the Customer Services, Communications and Marketing and Consultation and Engagement Strategies. The documents have been updated following the adoption of a revised version of "Growing Success" the Council's Corporate Plan in June 2007.

In considering the documents, the Cabinet has been advised that although some of the actions in the strategies overlap, the plans have been individually prepared for the purpose of inspection and external audit. Having referred to the need to identify savings within the plans and in view of the absence of measures/targets within the Customer Service action plan, the Cabinet has requested that a further report be submitted as and when the supporting action plans are developed.

77. RIVERSIDE PARK, HUNTINGDON: FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

The Cabinet has approved the masterplan for the Riverside Park, Huntingdon as the basis for further discussion and consultation. The document details a scheme to enhance parking including new planting, footpath and cycleways, additional recreational areas, new hard surfacing, moorings and signage. In discussing the overall cost of the proposals, Executive Councillors have suggested that investigations be undertaken into the possibility of external funding for the scheme.

**78. MEDIUM TERM PLAN:
REQUEST FOR THE RELEASE OF FUNDS**

The Cabinet has agreed to release appropriate funding from the Medium Term Plan for the replacement of network and server equipment.

79. STATE OF THE DISTRICT ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the findings of a review by a Working Group appointed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) into the potential benefits of holding events to engage Huntingdonshire residents in discussing the Council's strategies and services. In noting the Group's proposals to hold four events per annum around the District, the Cabinet has recognised that these far exceed the original concept of a biennial "State of the District" half-day conference. Having queried the accuracy of the predicted resource and financial implications and the lack of any link to the Council's Consultation and Engagement Strategy, the Cabinet has requested that a further report be submitted to a future meeting addressing these issues.

80. LOCAL PETITIONS AND CALLS FOR ACTION

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the implications for the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function of the Local Government and Public Involvement and Health Act 2007 and the Police and Justice Act 2006 which are likely to be implemented later this year. The Cabinet has noted that changes are intended to enhance the powers of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

At the same time, the Cabinet has been acquainted with a consultation paper from the Department for Communities and Local Government on local petitions and calls for action and, having discussed a suggested response, the Cabinet has authorised the Head of Administration to reply to the paper on behalf of the Council.

81. ENFORCEMENT POLICIES

The Cabinet has been informed of the publication of a Regulators' Compliance Code by the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform. The new Code will form a central part of the Government's better regulation agenda with the aim of ensuring a risk based, proportionate and flexible approach to regulatory inspection and enforcement that allows and encourages economic progress. The Cabinet has authorised the relevant Heads of Service to review their enforcement policies having specific regard to the content of the new code and to approve any necessary changes after consultation with the relevant Executive Councillor.

82. CYCLING

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the findings of a Cycling Working Group appointed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel

(Service Support) to investigate the Council's expenditure on cycling in Huntingdonshire and its effectiveness in providing dedicated cycle paths and promoting cycling as a means of transport. In noting the Working Group's recommendations (details of which are contained in Item No. 44 of their Report) Executive Councillors have requested that a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Cabinet addressing the wider issue of Section 106 funding and partnership working and that discussions be held with Cambridgeshire County Council regarding their offer to update the Huntingdonshire Cycling Strategy and the issue of partnership working for cycling provision.

83. TRAVEL PLAN

The Cabinet has received a report by a Working Group appointed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) to investigate the Council's Travel Plan. In considering the Working Group's recommendations, Executive Councillors have questioned the suggestion to change mileage allowances for Members only and not employees. Furthermore, Cabinet was of the opinion that further work should have been undertaken into alternative forms of travel to work. In the meantime, the Cabinet has approved the Group's recommendations and have requested that they be investigated in the context of the emerging Environment Strategy, the car parking action plan and travel plan.

84. GROWING SUCCESS

Having noted the Council's performance against targets within the Corporate Plan – "Growing Success", the Cabinet has been advised that the timing of the preparation of a new Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement will facilitate a review of the Corporate Plan in late summer for submission to Council in September 2008.

85. SHARED SERVICES

The Cabinet has noted progress being made in the development of a shared services initiative by Huntingdonshire, East Cambridgeshire, South Cambridgeshire and Fenland District Councils. Initially, two services, financial software and payroll, have been discussed by the Shared Services Project Board. Having recognised the possible scope for achieving efficiency savings and the potential for extending the concept to other services, the Cabinet has authorised the Director of Commerce and Technology, after consultation with the Executive Councillors for Finance and for Resources and Policy, to finalise arrangements for sharing financial accounting software and payroll services.

86. SUPPORTING COUNCILLORS: A MANIFESTO FOR COUNCILS

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the content of "Supporting Councillors: A Manifesto for Councils" which has been published by the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) to promote and enhance the role of councillors.

The manifesto sets out twelve actions that it is asking all Councils and Councillors to implement. In considering their introduction, the Cabinet has recognised that several of the actions already have been implemented by the Council and that there is likely to be resource implications in introducing the additional measures, some of which will be dependent on legislative change. Having discussed the recommendations of a Councillors Commission, established by the Department of Communities and Local Government, to investigate the incentives and barriers to serving on Council's, the Cabinet has :-

- ◆ recognised that Councillors have a valuable representative role which helps to ensure that local people have an active role in the development and delivery of council services;
- ◆ noted the recommendations of the Councillors Commission report and awaits with interest the Government's formal response; and
- ◆ welcomed the LGIU's document "Supporting Councillors: A Manifesto for Councils"; considers it important to support actions that will help make a real difference to existing and future Councillors; calls on Government to help people be active and effective Councillors; and agrees to support and act on the twelve action points set out in the manifesto so that local democracy is strengthened.

87. TOWN CENTRE INITIATIVES

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the outcome of a review by a Working Group appointed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) into the purpose, cost and achievements of the Town Centre Initiatives across the District (Item No. 50 of their Report refers). In acknowledging that the work of the Partnerships has been extremely beneficial to the District, attention was drawn to their funding arrangements. To ensure their long-term stability and effectiveness, the Cabinet has agreed to invite the Partnerships to enter into three year funding agreements which, in return for the maintenance of existing grants and other assistance from the Council, will require each Partnership to produce a three year business plan with annual action plans and targets designed to support delivery of the Local Economy Strategy and to sustain and encourage the economic viability of the town centres.

I C Bates
Chairman