

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, 17 July 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor I C Bates – Chairman.

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

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors P L E Bucknell and K J Churchill.

42. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 26th June 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

43. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor I C Bates declared a personal interest in Minute No 49 by virtue of his membership of the Cambridgeshire Horizons Board.

44. REVENUE MONITORING: 2007/08 OUTTURN AND 2008/09 BUDGET

A report by the Head of Financial Services was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which contained details of the outturn of revenue expenditure for 2007/08 and the variations between the original and the revised budget for that year.

In congratulating officers on the total net variation of £2.5m from the original budget and noting the action to be taken to enhance the budget monitoring process in the future, Executive Councillors raised concerns over the increasing level of fuel and utility costs and the impact of the current economic downturn on land charges income. Councillor Rogers drew attention to the potential implications on future levels of Council Tax and the budget for 2009/10 in the event of the Government failing to acknowledge the impact of the increasing costs and loss of income in the award of Revenue Support Grant.

Having noted a summary of debts received and amounts written off during April to June 2008, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the spending variations for the revenue budget 2007/08 be noted; and

- (b) that the position on debts collected and written off as set out in Annex C to the report now submitted be noted.

45. CAPITAL MONITORING : 2007/08 OUTTURN AND 2008/09 BUDGET

A report by the Head of Financial Services was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) detailing outturn capital expenditure during 2007/08 and adjustments for 2008/09.

In discussing the main variations in the programme, Executive Councillors' attention was drawn to an increase in the level of Government grant for disabled facilities. However, Members were alerted to the possibility of a reduction in grants awarded in the current year as a shortage of occupational therapists employed by the PCT locally which was likely to result in fewer assessments being undertaken. Remedial action was being investigated and the Chief Executive reported on discussions held with his counterpart at the Cambridgeshire Primary Care Trust, regarding the possibility of using therapists based in neighbouring districts to undertake assessments in Huntingdonshire.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the capital scheme's monitoring report reproduced at Appendix B to the report now submitted be noted; and
- (b) that the spending variations referred to in paragraphs 2.3 and 2.4 of the report be noted and the revenue element of the Community Facilities grant be increased by £43,000.

46. CAR PARKING ORDERS

Further to Minute No. 07/117, the Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Administration (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) outlining the responses received following the advertisement of proposals to introduce two new orders governing the use of car parks operated by the Council.

Members were advised that the Road Traffic Regulations Act 1984 enabled a local authority to decide whether to convene a local inquiry before determining an order. Having acknowledged that the matters raised in respect of the car parks where charging applied had been largely addressed during the previous deliberations on the Car Parking Strategy, and no representations had been received in respect of the order for the free car parks, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that a local inquiry to consider the representations received be not held; and

(b) that the orders as advertised be approved.

47. RAISING SPONSORSHIP AND ADVERTISING REVENUES FROM COUNCIL WEBSITE

By way of a report by the Director of Commerce and Technology (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered an opportunity to generate revenue from the sale of sponsorship and advertising space on the Council's website and, in future, other e-channels.

In discussing issues surrounding a proposed advertising trial, Members were informed that it was likely that advertising and sponsorship would become increasingly important as a way of funding the provision of information services or developing websites. Having noted that a report on the outcome of the trial would be submitted to Cabinet in February 2009, Members

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Director of Commerce and Technology, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for IT and Customer Service, be authorised to appoint an agency to manage web advertising on behalf of the Council; and
- (b) that a review of the advertising initiative be undertaken in January 2009 and a further report thereon submitted to the meeting of Cabinet scheduled for 19th February 2009.

48. PARISH CHARTER FOR HUNTINGDONSHIRE

A report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which summarised the findings of a study by a Panel working group regarding the adoption of a Parish Charter in respect of the Council's relationship with town and parish councils in the District.

In considering the results of a questionnaire distributed to all town and parish councils on a draft charter, Members were advised that only 43% had responded and of those only 77% had been in favour of a parish charter, with even less (47%) being interested in delegated services. Under the circumstances, the Cabinet concurred with the Panel's conclusion that there appeared little value in pursuing the introduction of a charter at the present time.

A number of Members referred to recent ministerial announcements suggesting a devolution of service responsibility from the centre to county and district councils who would then be expected to further devolve responsibility to parish councils. As the scrutiny investigation had suggested that there appeared little enthusiasm on the part of parish councils for additional powers and duties, the Head of Administration was requested to draw the attention of the Local Government Association to the results of the consultation exercise

locally.

RESOLVED

- (a) that no further action be taken to develop a Parish Charter with the town and parish councils in Huntingdonshire at the present time for the reasons outlined in the report now submitted;
- (b) that an explanation be given to the town and parish councils of the reasons for the Cabinet's decision; and
- (c) that the Head of Administration be requested to inform the Local Government Association of the Cabinet's views on the devolution of service responsibility to parish councils.

49. DESIGN BRIEF FOR MAYFIELD ROAD, HUNTINGDON

The Cabinet considered a report by the Planning Policy Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) outlining the responses received to a consultation on a design brief for the re-development of an area of open space adjoining Mayfield Road, Huntingdon. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the content of the design brief for Mayfield Road, Huntingdon be approved as interim planning guidance; and
- (b) that the Head of Planning Services be authorised to make any minor consequential amendments to the text and illustrations in the brief, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport.

50. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that the public be excluded from the meeting because the business to be transacted contains exempt information in respect of the financial or business affairs of any particular person, including the authority holding that information.

51. NEW ACCOMMODATION DELIVERY - MID-PROGRAMME REVIEW

With the assistance of a report by the New Accommodation Project Co-ordinator (a copy of which is appended in the Annex to the Minute Book), the Cabinet were updated on progress of the delivery of the new accommodation project. An addendum to the report was circulated regarding options for the redevelopment of an area of land fronting St Mary's Street.

Having considered issues associated with the proposed development of latter and the programme's overall expenditure, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the progress made on the delivery of the new accommodation project and the programme of work in the current year be noted;
- (b) that the actual expenditure in 2007/08 be approved;
- (c) that the requirement, when the Medium Term Plan is next reviewed, to revise the currently approved medium term plan estimate to provide for the forecast outturn for 2008/09 be noted;
- (d) that a virement from the Headquarters repairs and renewals fund of £170,000 to the MTP scheme 300B be approved;
- (e) the Chief Executive, after consultation with the Deputy Leader, be authorised to enter into contract(s) for the supply of furniture for the new headquarters; and
- (f) that various options be investigated regarding the re-development of an area of land fronting St Mary's Street and a report thereon to include the financial implications of any proposals be submitted to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

Chairman