

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, 20 November 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor I C Bates – Chairman.

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

APOLOGIES Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors K J Churchill and C R Hyams..

87. MR IAN LEATHERBARROW

Members welcomed Mr Ian Leatherbarrow to his first meeting of the Cabinet in his new role of Corporate Director of Central Services.

88. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 7th November 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

89. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillors I C Bates, P L E Bucknell, T V Rogers and L M Simpson declared personal interest in Minute No 95 by virtue of their age.

90. BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM PLAN 2009-2014

Further to Minute No. 08/45 and by way of a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were acquainted with the present position on the draft 2009/10 budget, the Medium Term Financial Plan for the period up to 2013/14 and the long-term financial forecast to 2023/24 together with the deliberations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate Strategic Framework) thereon.

In discussing the contents of the report, Members emphasised the need to consider a range of potential scenarios, particularly given the uncertainty as to future levels of revenue support grant and the difficulties presented by the current economic downturn. Having referred to a question raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Corporate Strategic Framework) regarding the funding of the Cambridgeshire County Council Accident Safety Scheme on the A141 Kings Ripton Road, Councillor T V Rogers, Executive Member for Finance and Environment reported that the District Council's contribution would be financed from the medium term bids for the Local Transport Plan (30K), Huntingdon Transport Strategy (5K) and Safe Cycle Routes (20K) with the balance of 20K from the LPSA reward funding not yet identified in the draft budget/MTP.

RESOLVED

that the draft budget and Medium Term (MTP) be recommended to full Council as the basis for the development of the 2009/2010 budget, the revised MTP to 2013/2014 and the financial strategy to 2023/2024.

91. GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITE DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT: INITIAL ISSUES AND OPTIONS: PRINCIPLES AND PROCESSES CONSULTATION

Further to Minute No. 08/130 and by way of a report by the Heads of Planning and of Housing Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Cabinet was invited to consider the content of the Huntingdonshire Gypsy and Traveller Sites Development Plan Document: Initial Issues Consultation Document; Principles and Processes.

Members were advised of the background to the preparation of the document, its main aims and objectives, arrangements to produce a scoping report which will form the basis of an interim sustainability appraisal and to involve Members and Town/Parish Councils in a series of workshops prior to the formal consultation. Having been advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) had considered and supported the Document, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Issues report for the Gypsy and Traveller Sites Development Plan Document be approved for public consultation;
- (b) that the Heads of Planning Services and of Housing Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, be authorised to finalise the Interim Sustainability Appraisals; and
- (c) that the Heads of Planning Services and of Housing Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Planning Strategy and Transport, be authorised to make any minor consequential amendments to the text and illustrations of the Development Plan Document as may be considered necessary.

92. HOUSING STRATEGY FOR THE CAMBRIDGE SUB-REGION

With the aid of a report by the Head of Housing Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered the content of the third Cambridge Sub-Region Housing Strategy which runs from 2008 – 2011.

By way of background, Members were reminded that the Cambridge Sub-Regional comprises seven local authorities who work in partnership on housing issues that extend across local authority boundaries. The existence of the Strategy satisfies the Audit Commissions criteria for delivering an excellent service and enables

bids for funding for housing purposes to be made at regional level.

Having noted the deliberations of and conclusions reached by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Delivery) on the content of the Strategy and in expressing caution on the achievement of the Action Plan as a consequence of the current economic climate on the housing market, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the Cambridge Sub-Region Housing Strategy 2008 – 2011 be approved.

93. DECENT HOMES FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Further to Minute No. 07/76 and by way of a report by the Heads of Housing Services, Environmental Management and Environmental and Community Health Services, (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were advised that the Council had been awarded a capital grant of £162,400 from the East of England Regional Assembly'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 improvement. Despite targeted publicity the take-up of this grant had been lower than anticipated. Nevertheless, Members were advised that the demand for these grants was expected to increase due to rises in fuel cost and the expansion of the scope of the grants. Having considered also the release of £75,000 to enable the Sustainable Homes Retro-fit scheme within the Medium Term Plan to proceed, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the 2008/09 grant of £162,400 be used in the current year for decent homes for vulnerable people – to rectify Category 1 hazards, and to provide thermal efficiency improvements; and that prior year grants be rephased as set out in paragraph 4.6 of the report now submitted for the same purposes;
- (b) that the programme for future years be reviewed once the basis and likelihood of the allocation of grant in future years is known; and
- (c) that £75,000 of the previous year's grant be used in the current year to fund the Sustainable Homes Retro-Fit Scheme.

94. GREAT FEN PROJECT GOVERNANCE

Further to Minute No. 07/55 consideration was given to a report by the Director of Environmental and Community Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) seeking approval to enter into a Collaboration Agreement in respect of the Great Fen Project.

Members were advised that the Collaboration Agreement would strengthen the existing Memorandum Agreement by defining the relationship between the partners, setting out the projects aims and objectives and summarising certain managerial/financial matters. Having noted the reservations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) regarding certain aspects of the project and in particular the need for improved transparency and accountability and in noting the work to inform local residents of the project through relevant Parish Councils, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that arrangements for the District Council to enter into a Collaboration Agreement in respect of the Great Fen Project for a renewable five year fixed term be approved; and
- (b) that the detailed content of the draft Agreement be the subject of a future report to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) prior to its submission to the Cabinet.

95. FREE SWIMMING FOR OVER 60'S AND UNDER 17'S

A report by the Leisure Centre's Co-ordinator (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) was submitted summarising the Government's incentives for local authorities to offer free swimming for over 60's and under 17's.

In considering the benefits, disadvantages and risks associated with each incentive, along with the allocation being offered to the authority by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the Cabinet were advised that free swimming for over 60's was both cost effective and manageable given the numbers likely to take up the offer. However, it was felt that free swimming for under 17's would have a significant impact upon admissions and the remuneration offered was not commensurate with the costs involved in providing the extra staff required for the anticipated demand. Having been advised that these sentiments had been conveyed to the DCMS, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the action taken by the Chief Officer Management Team to adopt the free swimming for the over 60's with effect from 1st April 2009 be endorsed.

Chairman