

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (CORPORATE AND STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK) held in the Council Chamber, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Tuesday, 11 November 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor J A Gray – Chairman.
Councillors M G Baker, E R Butler,
P J Downes, P M D Godfrey, D Harty,
L W McGuire, M F Newman, Mr T V Rogers
and R J West.

APOLOGY An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor J E Garner.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor T V Rogers.

10. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd September 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

11. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

12. BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM PLAN 2009 - 2014 DRAFT PROPOSALS

(Councillor T V Rogers, Executive Councillor for Finance and Environment was in attendance for this Item).

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Panel reviewed the draft 2009/2010 budget and the Medium Term Plan to 2013/14 within the context of a long term financial forecast covering the period up to 2023/2024, in advance of their consideration by the Cabinet and final determination by the Council.

The Panel was reminded of the difficulties and uncertainties created by the current economic climate in drafting the budget and informed that Executive Councillors had been fully involved in the process of examining the draft, together with any proposals which affected their portfolios. Members' attention was drawn in particular to the increase in spending between the 2008/09 and the 2009/10 draft budget which had arisen from a range of circumstances largely beyond the control of the Council.

Members commented on the risks to the successful achievement of

the proposed MTP and, in light of the continuing depletion of the capital reserves, the requirement to borrow to fund future capital projects from 2009/2010 onwards. Having noted that Officers would be continuing to seek to secure efficiency savings where possible, Members were reminded that whereas the District Council had been fortunate in previously having significant capital reserves from the sale of its housing stock most Councils had relied on borrowing to fund capital schemes for many years. An assurance was given that the risks associated with long term Council borrowing in terms of interest rates, the financial viability of lenders etc would be managed satisfactorily in the future.

The Panel asked a number of questions relating to the possible impact of a reduction in National Non-Domestic Rates, comparative MTP expenditure between towns and rural areas and investment in housing provision. Members were reminded that their individual comments were also welcome before the draft budget was finalised for submission to Council.

Arising from a question by Councillor P J Downes as to the source of the funding for the highway safety scheme at the A141 Kings Ripton Road junction, he was informed that a detailed reply would be provided after the meeting.

Having been advised that a further report would be submitted to its meeting in January 2009, the Panel expressed its support for the recommendations to be submitted to the Cabinet meeting on 20th November prior to consideration by the Council on 3rd December 2008.

Chairman