

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the Wren Room, Hinchingsbrooke Country Park, Huntingdon on Thursday, 12 March 2009.

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.

IN ATTENDANCE Councillor D Harty.

127. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th February 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

128. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillor Bates declared a personal interest in Minute No 130 by virtue of his membership of the Cambridgeshire Horizons Board.

129. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

The Cabinet received and noted a report by the Acting Head of People, Performance and Partnerships (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) which reviewed the Council's performance against targets within the Corporate Plan - "Growing Success".

Having considered the information contained therein, together with a summary of achievements, service performance data for priority objectives, progress against the council's improvement plan and the deliberations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels (Service Support and Service Delivery) on the matter, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report now submitted be noted.

130. LOCAL INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

With the assistance of a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered the development of a Huntingdonshire Local Investment Framework which had been compiled to determine the level of local and strategic infrastructure required to meet the target of new homes identified for Huntingdonshire in the Core Strategy up to 2026.

In discussing future initiatives Members supported the proposed creation of a St Neots Delivery Board, similar to the boards set up to deliver growth in the Cambridge area, which would consider social

infrastructure requirements and how delivery options associated with potential housing developments could be located based on existing facilities and accessibility levels. Having noted that member involvement would be crucial in the delivery of such a board, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the contents of the report be noted and the work programme outlined in Section 3 of the report be approved; and
- (b) that further progress reports be submitted to Cabinet in due course.

131. ST. NEOTS MARKET TOWN STRATEGY

With the aid of a report by the Head of Planning Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered the contents of the St. Neots Market Town Transport Strategy, which forms part of the Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan (LTP) 2006 - 2011.

In so doing, Executive Councillors were acquainted with the responses received to public consultation exercise on the Strategy and the steps to be taken to implement the schemes identified. Members raised concerns over the lack of bus layover space and the impact of congestion generally and in terms of air quality. It was noted that initial discussions had begun with local bus operators to address problems, specifically the linking of bus and train timetables. At the same time, the Executive Councillor for Resources and Policy recorded his concern that the strategy did not address transport needs given the likely future population growth. Having received assurances that the strategy will be reviewed between now and 2011 to take into account emerging pressures and possible development scenarios around St Neots, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the St. Neots Town Transport Strategy, as appended to the report now submitted, be approved.

132. PROPOSED SERVICE ENHANCEMENTS - THE TRANSFORMATION FROM DEVELOPMENT CONTROL TO DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

A report by the Head of Planning Services was submitted (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding a proposal to formalise the transformation of the development control function to one of development management.

It was reported that the nature of the Local Development Framework had prompted a change in emphasis with focus now being placed on the importance of a sustainable and deliverable development in the District as opposed to the "negative" and "reactive" reputation held formally about the development control function.

Having considered issues surrounding the potential to charge for pre-application discussions and in stressing the need to effectively communicate any changes to the Town and Parish Councils, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the proposed transformation from Development Control to Development Management be endorsed and the Head of Planning Services authorised to implement all necessary administrative and procedural changes required;
- (b) that the Head of Planning Services be requested to investigate the possibility of introducing charges for pre-application discussions; and
- (c) that the Head of Planning Services be requested to invite Town and Parish Councils to the workshop sessions being arranged to discuss the change to a development management approach.

133. REVIEW OF S106 AGREEMENTS

(Councillor D Harty, Member of the Section 106 Working Group, was in attendance and spoke on this item)

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 the Panel regarding the current Section 106 agreement mechanism from the negotiation of agreements to the expenditure of money received.

Executive Councillors were acquainted with the key findings of the Group in relation to the negotiation of agreements, member notification, the role of town and parish councils, arrangements for monitoring the receipt of funds and their expenditure and the undertaking of enforcement action. In so doing, Members' attention was drawn to the potential impact of the proposed Community Infrastructure Levy and variable infrastructure tariff which were expected to be implemented in the near future. Members were advised that the introduction of the levy would empower local authorities to place a new charge upon most types of development in their area. The proceeds of the levy would be spent on local and sub regional infrastructure to offset the impact of the development on a local area. Having noted also the introduction in April 2008 of new legislation which enables the local planning authority to require draft heads of terms for S106 Agreement to be submitted as part of the application validation process, usually for larger developments, it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that a guidance note be prepared and drawn to the attention of Members to illustrate how they can comment on applications and the potential heads of terms for Section 106 Agreements by reference to the weekly planning list notification;

- (b) that clear guidance be given to town and parish councils on how to comment on the potential content of agreements for development in their areas as part of the normal consultation arrangements and speaking at Development Management Panel meetings;
- (c) that Parish Councils be advised of the introduction of a marker on the planning weekly list and reminded to review these on a regular basis with a view to making comments on the potential heads of terms of Section 106 Agreements in their areas;
- (d) that copies of the quarterly report prepared by the People, Performance and Partnership Division detailing income and expenditure from Section 106 money be provided to all Members and suggested changes to the content of the report implemented at the earliest opportunity;
- (e) that the remit and terms of reference of the Section 106 Advisory Group be expanded to include monitoring of agreements and meetings convened on a more regular basis with dates reserved in the Council's calendar one week prior to each Development Management Panel as set out in the terms of reference appended at Appendix D to the report;
- (f) that copies of the monitoring report be submitted to the Section 106 Advisory Group on a quarterly basis and also to the Development Management Panel with any comments from the Advisory Group;
- (g) that the Executive Councillor for Finance and the Environment be responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of processes for securing payments and the expenditure of receipts under Section 106 Agreements, with individual Executive Councillors remaining accountable for the delivery of benefits and projects relevant to their portfolios; and
- (h) that the S106 Working Group be invited to consider the likely effects of the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy and make recommendations on processes to implement the system.

134. CONSULTATION ON CODE OF RECOMMENDED PRACTICE ON LOCAL AUTHORITY PUBLICITY.

With the aid of a report by the Communications and Marketing Manager (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered a suggested response on behalf of the Council to a consultation paper issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government on proposed changes to the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (the Code). Members noted that the Code was first issued in 1988 to cover the

content, style, distribution and cost of local authority publicity from public meetings to council publications, advertising and the website.

In considering the content of the Code and the consultation document, Executive Councillors recorded their concern that the code offers no specific guidance in relation to individual ward members who may not hold a particular responsibility with the Council, but whose work with their constituents is of significant importance, nor addressed the growth in electronic communication. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report be noted and the Council's response to the Department of Communities and Local Government endorsed.

Chairman