
Cabinet

Report of the meetings held on 22nd July and 16th September 2010

Matters for Decision

20. FINANCIAL FORECAST

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) (Item No 11 of their Report refers) and by way of a report by the Head of Financial Services, reproduced separately on the agenda, the Cabinet has been acquainted with the present position in relation to the Council's financial forecast for the period up to 2018/2019.

The Cabinet has been informed of potential variations in a number of sources of income and other factors that could affect the Council's financial position. Members were advised that there remains a number of uncertainties including the level of reduction in government funding, the size of the Council's current deficit in relation to limited revenue reserves and low Council Tax which will require the Council to make sizable reductions in the scale of its spending.

In acknowledging that if no action were to be taken the total gap between income and expenditure could rise to over £8 million for the financial year 2014/15, Members were of the opinion that radical decisions will need to be taken which will affect all services in some way and could change the Council fundamentally.

Attention having been drawn to a timetable for agreeing savings, Members have acknowledged the need to produce detailed objectives, consult with Town and Parish Councils and other organisations at the earliest opportunity and to involve the Overview and Scrutiny Panels and Members generally in the process. In referring to the updated Redundancy Policy and Voluntary Release Scheme, Members have noted that these will be considered at the next meeting of the Employment Panel prior to their implementation.

Having approved the annuity basis for the calculation of Minimum Revenue Provision, the Cabinet

RECOMMEND

that the Council notes the contents of the report now submitted.

**21. FORMAT OF THE COUNCIL'S EXECUTIVE –
THE CHOICE OF EXECUTIVE LEADER OR ELECTED MAYOR**

In conjunction with the Corporate Governance Panel and by way of a report by the Head of Democratic and Central Services, the Cabinet has considered a change in governance arrangements in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement Act 2007. A separate report appears elsewhere on the agenda for the Council meeting and the Cabinet therefore

RECOMMEND

that the proposals for a change in governance arrangements to an Executive Leader and Cabinet Executive be approved.

Matters for information

**22. REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING:
2009/10 OUTTURN AND 2011 BUDGET**

The Cabinet has noted the final outturn for revenue expenditure for 2009/2010 and the variations already identified in the current year. Executive Councillors were advised that £1,913,000 has been transferred to a special reserve to finance any "invest to save" proposals. In discussing the main variations to the programme, Executive Councillors have noted, in particular, a reduction in income from schools using the leisure centre facilities and the impact of the Government's announcements that a number of grants awarded for 2010/11 will now be withdrawn.

At the same time, the Cabinet's attention has been drawn to an increase in the total amount of debts written-off during the quarter from April to June 2010 for Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates as a consequence of the downturn in the economic climate.

**23. CAPITAL MONITORING:
2009/10 OUTTURN AND 2010/11 BUDGET**

The Cabinet has been acquainted with variations in the capital programme in the current year. Executive Councillors were advised that the level of Local Public Service Agreement performance reward grant is now likely to be considerably less than has been budgeted. At the same time, Members have been apprised of plans announced by the Government to abolish Go-East and the possible implications for the Authority.

24. CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) (Item No. 7 of their Report refers), the Cabinet has been acquainted with the background to the option of introducing Civil

Parking Enforcement (CPE) as a way of improving the level of on-street parking enforcement throughout the county.

In considering the key aspects of CPE, Executive Councillors have been reminded that the District Council's management of off-street parking is of a high standard but that there is little enforcement of on-street restrictions by the police, with no likelihood of any improvement unless CPE is introduced. The Cabinet has been advised that the Department of Transport prefers a co-ordinated approach to on- and off-street parking enforcement and that initial discussions have been held with Cambridgeshire County Council to explore possible operational scenarios for a joint scheme. Having agreed that these discussions should continue, Executive Councillors have stressed that any change should not be to the detriment of the existing off-street arrangements. The Cabinet's attention also has been drawn to the potential impact of any change on the street ranger service which currently combines parking enforcement with a range of other frontline services, the cost-effectiveness of which may be affected by its separation from parking enforcement.

25. PUBLIC CONVENIENCES - RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

The Cabinet has received three petitions from the Shopmobility Group in Huntingdon, Godmanchester Community Association and Ramsey residents regarding the closure of public conveniences across the District. Two of the petitions had been presented to Council on 21st April and 23rd June 2010. The Council decided to refer the petitions to the Cabinet and the person submitting the Ramsey petition which was received too late to be considered by Council in June, agreed that it could be submitted to Cabinet in conjunction with the others on the same subject.

In discussing the petitions, the Cabinet has had the benefit of the views expressed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) which are summarised in Item No. 8 of their Report on the Agenda.

As part of its deliberations, the Cabinet has been reminded of the background to the decision to reduce expenditure on the maintenance of public conveniences, which was taken both on financial grounds and as a result of an acknowledgement that the service should be more appropriately dealt with by town and parish councils.

Mention also was made to -

- ◆ the town councils' ability to raise their precepts in the present economic climate whereas the level of council tax for district and county councils had been frozen for 2011/2012; and
- ◆ the offer of advice and expertise from District Council Officers to those willing to accept a transfer of responsibility.

The Director of Environment and Community Services will be submitting a further report on the future of the conveniences in

Huntingdon Bus Station in October but the Cabinet concluded that the petitions contained no evidence of which the Council was unaware when the decision was taken in February to delete expenditure on public conveniences maintenance from the budget for 2010/11. Under the circumstances, the Cabinet has noted the concerns expressed by the petitions but decided not to reconsider its previous decisions on the matter.

26. 2009/2010 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Cabinet has reviewed the Council's performance against the targets within the Corporate Plan for the year ending 31st March 2010. The information will be reported to local residents via the District-Wide newsletter and the Council's website.

27. RISK REGISTER

In considering the progress being made to identify and manage corporate risks, the Cabinet has approved the actions proposed to deal with four risks identified as very high or red in the risk register. In so doing, Executive Councillors have stressed that the measures to be taken should be met from within existing resources.

28. APPOINTMENT OF HEAD OF OPERATIONS – ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DIRECTORATE

(The following item was considered as a confidential item under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).

Having been acquainted with the requirements of paragraph 4(e) of the Officer Employment Procedure Rules, the Cabinet confirmed that there was no material or well-founded objection to the Panel's proposal to offer the vacant post of Head of Operations, Environmental Services to Mr E Kendall who was previously employed by Hambleton District Council.

29. FORMER FIRE STATION SITE AND WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE, HUNTINGDON STREET, ST. NEOTS

(The following item was considered as a confidential item under paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).

Following a tendering exercise, the Cabinet has authorised the Director of Central Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillors for Finance & Customer Services and for Leisure, Law, Property and Governance, to approve the terms for the disposal of land at the former fire station site and waste recycling centre, Huntingdon Street, St. Neots. In so doing, Executive Councillors noted the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) regarding the importance of complying with the planning brief for the site and securing St. Neots Town Council's agreement over the release of land in that authority's ownership to facilitate the

development proposed. The Cabinet has also agreed that any future assignment of the lease to the successful tenderer should be subject to a condition that this should be restricted to future leisure uses only.

30. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The Cabinet has reviewed the Council's performance against targets within the Corporate Plan - "Growing Success", together with a summary of achievements, service performance, progress against the council's improvement plan and the deliberations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels (Social Well-Being, Environmental Well-Being and Economic Well-Being) on the matter.

31. THE REVOCATION OF THE REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY - IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HUNTINGDONSHIRE CORE STRATEGY 2009 AND THE JOINT CAMBRIDGESHIRE APPROACH

The Cabinet has noted the content of new national planning guidance which clarifies the status of adopted Local Development Documents following the Government's decision to revoke the Regional Spatial Strategy. The guidance strongly advocates that planning authorities should continue to prepare and bring forward appropriate development plan documents (DPDs) and confirms that adopted DPDs will continue to provide the statutory planning framework. Having regard to the Council's own DPDs, Executive Councillors have noted that the adopted Huntingdonshire Core Strategy 2009 will remain as the Council's primary planning policy document.

The Government's guidance also clarifies that local planning authorities will continue to be responsible for establishing the right level of local housing provision for their area and therefore should continue to identify enough viable land to meet their local housing needs. Whilst the guidance also stresses that local councils are best placed to assess the needs of Gypsies and Travellers and having referred to a recent consultation exercise on the Strategic Housing Land Availability (SHLAA) for this group, Members noted that no decision will be made on the possible location of any potential future sites until further clarification has been received from the Government regarding the applicable legislative framework.

At the same time, Executive Councillors have been advised of a joint response by Cambridgeshire Authorities to the changes and the work undertaken to review the current strategic policy position for the County. In that respect, the Cabinet has endorsed a joint statement made by the Cambridgeshire Authorities which sets out their current position and the effects of the recession on the delivery of key development sites. Once adopted the statement will be used to inform development decisions.

32. SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME

The Cabinet has been updated on progress made to date on the delivery of actions and targets set out in the Corporate Equality Action Plan and have endorsed a new Single Equality Scheme which

streamlines the Council's equality scheme and policy into one document which implies transparency and reduces monitoring and reporting costs in line with emerging government policy. The Scheme sets out the Council's aims and objectives and the accompanying action plan details how they will be addressed.

33. DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURE WORKING GROUP

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the findings of the Democratic Structure Working Group regarding the membership of the Employment Panel and the proposal to introduce the title of ordinary Aldermen and Alderwomen to past Members of the Council and Honorary Freemen and Freewomen to local citizens. The report and recommendations themselves are dealt with by way of a separate item on the Agenda for the Council meeting, where the report can be found in full.

Following consideration and endorsement by the Cabinet, the report will be submitted to a meeting of the Corporate Governance Panel and their recommendations will be reported to the Council meeting.

I C Bates
Chairman