
Cabinet

Report of the meeting held on 18th October 2012

Matter for Decision

23. LEADERSHIP DIRECTION

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panels and by way of a report by the Corporate Team Manager, the Cabinet has been acquainted with the Council's themes and aims contained in the Leadership Direction. As this item is considered elsewhere on the Council's agenda, the Cabinet

RECOMMEND

that the Council adopts the Leadership Direction.

Matters for Information

24. FINANCIAL MONITORING CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2012/13

The Cabinet has been acquainted with variations in the capital programme in the current year and has considered cost variations and timing changes for 2013/14.

25. FINANCIAL MONITORING REVENUE BUDGET 2012/13

The Cabinet has noted the expected revenue budget variations already identified in the current year. Executive Councillors were advised that the expected outturn for revenue expenditure was £22m which represented a slight increase in that previously forecast due to reductions in a number of income streams including estate properties, planning fees, car parks, markets and search fees.

26. CHARGING FOR A SECOND GREEN BIN

Consideration has been given by the Cabinet to a proposal to reduce the cost of the refuse and recycling service by introducing an annual charge of £40 for an additional green waste bin. Members noted that under the proposals the free collection of the first green bin for all residents will remain but the collection of additional green bins will be regarded as a premium service for which a charge will be levied.

As part of their deliberations, the Cabinet had regard to representations made at the meeting by Councillor I C Bates and to the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) (Item No. 18 of their Report refers). Councillor Bates explained that the waste collection service is a highly valued service and any charge for an additional bin will damage the public perception of the Council and will result in fly tipping. He stressed that the proposal may impact on the level of green waste collected at a time when the Council should be looking to increase performance by promoting recycling. In acknowledging that the Council needs to make further savings, Councillor Bates suggested that these should focus on non-statutory services such as leisure.

In discussing the information before them, Executive Councillors reiterated that the Council constantly reviewed all services to identify savings as part of the budget process. Members were of the view that the charge would impact on a very small percentage of the District's population. With regard to alternative saving streams, the Cabinet reported that a Business Plan for the future of the One Leisure Service would be considered at the Cabinet's December meeting.

Having received a request by the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being), that the Panel be given an opportunity to consider the proposal, the Cabinet deferred the matter to their next meeting to enable this to happen.

27. PROPOSED CIL GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES

Having regard to the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) (Item No.22 of their Report refers), the Cabinet has approved a proposed governance structure for dealing with CIL expenditure.

In endorsing a proposed governance structure, the Cabinet has supported the development of a framework and draft business plan by partners through the Huntingdonshire Strategic Partnership. The business plan will be created by the Growth and Infrastructure arm of the Partnership and will be a living document, able to adapt to development proposals that will emerge as part of the implementation phase. Members noted that the final document will be endorsed by the Partnership Board prior to it being formally signed off or renegotiated by the Cabinet. With this in mind, the Cabinet has requested the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy to liaise with the Heads of Finance and of Legal and Democratic Services to agree procedural and management protocols.

28. HOUSING STRATEGY 2012-2015

Having regard to the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) (Item No.22 of their Report refers), the Cabinet has endorsed the content of the Housing Strategy 2012-15 for Huntingdonshire. The Strategy provides a short analysis of the key housing and related issues facing the District and sets out the

Council's plans for working in partnership over the next few years to meet identified needs.

29. DRAFT TENANCY STRATEGY

Further to Item No.23 of the Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) the Cabinet has endorsed the contents of the draft Tenancy Strategy for Huntingdonshire. The Strategy is a requirement of the Localism Act 2011 and sets out the matters to which registered providers of social housing in the district should have regard to when formulating policies relating to the granting and renewal of tenancies. Particular attention was drawn to the Strategy's seven key principles which social housing providers will be encouraged to support within their policies. These relate to the offer of fixed term tenancies, affordable rents, conversions and housing management.

30. COMMUNITY RIGHT TO CHALLENGE

Along with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) (Item No.21 of their Report refers), the Cabinet has considered proposed arrangements for the operation of the new Community Right to Challenge. The Localism Act 2011 introduces a right for defined organisations and persons to submit an expression of interest in taking over the provision of a service on behalf of the Council. Members noted that where a valid expression is received, the Council will be required to undertake a procurement exercise for that service which may lead to the Council awarding a contract for the service provision. Having considered the proposed process for dealing with expressions, the Cabinet has authorised the Managing Directors, after consultation with the appropriate Heads of Service and the relevant Executive Councillor, to accept or reject an expression of interest on behalf of the Council.

31. UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE TRAVEL PLAN

Having regard to the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) (Item No.19 of their Report refers), the Cabinet has endorsed the content of the updated Corporate Travel Plan for 2012-18. The plan promotes four main objectives aimed at lowering costs for the authority, reducing traffic congestion in the District and improving the health and well-being of the Council's employees.

In discussing the document, the Cabinet has considered a suggestion by the Scrutiny Panel that the Council should explore the possibility of providing a bus service from the main settlements to Pathfinder House. Executive Councillors were of the opinion that such an arrangement was not viable in terms of its environmental impact and the percentage of employees it would reach. However, Executive Councillors concurred with the Panel that greater emphasis should be placed on home working and the Council's objectives and targets revised so that they are more challenging.

**32. HOUSING BENEFIT –
INTRODUCTION OF RISK BASED VERIFICATION**

(The following item was considered as a confidential item under paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.)

Along with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) (Item No.19 of their Report refers), the Cabinet has considered a proposal to introduce Risk Based Verification for new Housing and Council Tax Benefit claims that are submitted through the Council's online claim facility. The scheme is a tool to reduce fraud and error by focusing on claims where the risk of the claimant providing incorrect information or evidence is deemed to be high.

Having noted that the process will be monitored by the District Council's Auditors to ensure that it works correctly and that the level of fraud should reduce as a result of its implementation, the Cabinet has supported the arrangements and the content of a Benefits Risk Based Verification Policy.

J D Ablewhite
Chairman