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## **Cabinet**

### **Report of the meeting held on 24th January 2013**

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#### **Matters for Information**

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#### **52. FINANCIAL MONITORING – REVENUE BUDGET 2012/13**

The Cabinet has noted the expected revenue budget variations already identified in the current year, together with the payments written-off in the year for Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates.

With regard to the New Homes Bonus Scheme, Executive Councillors were mindful of the possibility that the forecast for delivery of new homes may not materialise thereby affecting the level of bonus allocated by the Government. Members were advised that the level of development will be monitored closely and the likelihood of achieving forecast amounts included in future quarterly reports.

#### **53. MONITORING OF THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2012/13**

The Cabinet has been acquainted with variations to the approved programme in the current year and the consequential estimated revenue impact.

#### **54. HOUSING BENEFIT CHANGES AND THE POTENTIAL IMPACT ON HUNTINGDONSHIRE**

**In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) (Item No.42 of their Report refers)** the Cabinet has been updated on the Government's Welfare Reform Programme and the impact of changes to the Housing Benefits system upon Huntingdonshire residents.

Executive Councillors were advised that many households will be affected by one of the welfare reforms being introduced in April 2013. The changes include the introduction of a benefit cap, the abolition of Council Tax benefit and changes to the calculation of the Local Housing Allowance and to the assessment of Housing Benefit for working age people living in social housing. It was reported that some residents may experience a significant reduction in their benefit entitlement. In that respect, Executive Councillors were assured that all claimants have been contacted to advise them of their personal changes. Furthermore, the Council will continue to offer advice and help to anyone affected.

Having noted an increase in statutory homelessness applications, Members were advised that a Medium Term Plan bid has been made for extra funds to cover the cost of homelessness.

**55. ALLOCATION OF COUNCIL TAX SUBSIDY GRANT**

The Cabinet has endorsed the use of the District Council's Council Tax Subsidy Grant to compensate Town and Parish Council for a reduction in income. The decision stems from changes to the Government's Council Tax Benefits Scheme which will result in a reduction in the Parish and Town Council's taxbase from 2013/14. In approving the grant allocations, Executive Councillors have stressed that they are not able to guarantee that a similar grant will be given in future years.

**56. LOAN TO HUNTINGDON GYM**

*(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 views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) (Item No.44 of their Report refers)** the Cabinet has approved terms for a loan to Huntingdon Gym to enable them to erect a second gymnasium. In that respect, Executive Councillors have approved a supplementary capital estimate for the loan and agreed that the revenue impact be met from the loan repayments. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services has been authorised to complete the necessary legal documentation.

In discussing the risks associated with the loan Executive Councillors have recognised the difficulty of securing a charge on the building because the freehold is owned by Huntingdon Town Council. With this in mind, the Cabinet has requested Officers to instigate discussions with the Town Council with a view to them agreeing some form of guarantee for the loan.

**57. ONE LEISURE - BUSINESS PLAN**

*(The following item was considered as a confidential item under Paragraphs 3 and 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.)*

**Along with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) (Item No.40 of their Report refers)**, the Cabinet has discussed a range of options for the future of One Leisure.

In so doing, Executive Councillors were of the opinion that the focus for the leisure centre budgets should remain on controllable net expenditure. At the same time, Members emphasised the need to ensure that the practice of recharging between services was equitable across the Council.

The Cabinet has queried why forecast returns for One Leisure Huntingdon were significantly lower than those for One Leisure St Neots and St Ives. Members were advised that the level of investment at One Leisure Huntingdon has been considerably lower than the other centres and the fitness studio, spa and pool were smaller. Furthermore, expansion of the Centre was limited partly due to land ownership issues.

Having acknowledged the steps being taken to improve controllable income and expenditure, the Cabinet has authorised the General Manager (One Leisure), in consultation with the Head of Paid Service, to achieve a level of savings in the order of £250,000. The savings reflect the Business Plan for One Leisure and will be the subject of appropriate consultation procedures.

J D Ablewhite  
Chairman