

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the the Civic Suite, 0.1A, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Thursday, 14 February 2013.

PRESENT: Councillor J D Ablewhite – Chairman.
Councillors B S Chapman, J A Gray,
N J Guyatt, T D Sanderson and D M Tysoe.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor T V Rogers .

94. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 24th January 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

95. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

96. BUDGET 2013/14 AND MEDIUM TERM PLAN 2014 TO 2018

(Councillor T V Rogers, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel) (Economic Well-Being) was in attendance and spoke on this item).

Further to Minute No.12/72 and by way of a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were acquainted with a number of variations to the assumptions made previously for the purpose of preparing the Medium Term Plan, the budget and associated level of Council Tax for 2013/14.

Attention was drawn to the latest government grant figures, Executive Councillors noted that the level of Revenue Support Grant and retained Business Rates was as predicted but that two new specific grants have been awarded which would marginally increase the revenue reserves by £226k.

In discussing the contents' of the report, Members' attention was drawn to the conclusions reached by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being). In that respect, Members concurred with the Panel that Council Tax levels should be increased by £4.67p in order to meet unavoidable inflation and to preserve the Council's reserves and valued services as far as possible both this year and in the future.

Executive Councillors were advised that the overall budget was 4.8% higher than the original budget for 2012/13 as a result of multiple factors with inflation being a major contributor. Reference also was made to the introduction of more efficient working practices and the need to constantly strive to find efficiencies. In that respect, Executive Councillors were advised that the Panel would be

examining, in detail, the future budget process once the current budget has been completed.

Particular attention was drawn to the grant allocation to Town and Parish Councils towards their loss in income following the introduction of the Government's Local Council Tax Support Scheme. In noting the Panel's concerns over the abuse of the grant by some Councils, the Cabinet has reiterated that similar grants in future years could not be guaranteed.

In acknowledging the contributions of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and having thanked Councillor Rogers for his attendance, Executive Councillors suggested that the Chairmen of the relevant Panel be invited to attend future Cabinet meetings when an item from their Panel is being considered.

Having noted that the business community supported the proposed Council Tax increase at a recent consultation meeting, the Cabinet

RECOMMENDED

- (a) that, subject to appropriate adjustments to Annex D to reflect the final settlements in relation to special and specific grants, the proposed budget, Medium Term Plan and Financial Plan appended to the report now submitted be approved; and
- (b) that an increase of £4.67 in Council Tax, representing a level of £133.18 for a Band D property for 2013/14 be approved.

97. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2013/14

By way of a report by the Head of Financial Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet was invited to consider the contents of the Treasury Management Strategy for 2013/14. The Strategy had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) whose comments were relayed to the Cabinet.

Particular attention was drawn to a new element of the Strategy which allows the Council to provide loan finance to local organisations that can support Council services or to organisations where the Council may make a margin on the loan subject to adequate safeguards. Having been advised that discussion on the criteria for such loans would be considered at the Treasury Management Advisory Group and that each loan would require Cabinet approval, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that subject to appropriate adjustments to the Planned Borrowing Table as a consequence of the final settlement in relation to special and specific grants, the Council be recommended to approve:-

- ◆ the Treasury Management Strategy for 2013/14; and
- ◆ the Treasury Management Indicators and Prudential Indicators for 2013/14.

98. PROCURING A GREEN DEAL PARTNER RELATIONSHIP FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Further to Minute No. 12/40 and by way of a report by the Head of Environmental Management (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were acquainted with the background to a proposed Green Deal Partnership Scheme for Cambridgeshire aimed at improving the energy efficiency of homes and commercial buildings across the County.

The Executive Councillor for Environment explained that the Home Energy Act required all local authorities to actively promote and report on local Green Deal activity in their area whilst also playing a lead role in its delivery. Members were advised that the most effective way of achieving this locally would be through a single Cambridgeshire brand establishing a partnership relationship with a fully accredited Green Deal provider.

In discussing a business case for a countywide scheme, Members' attention was drawn to the conclusions reached by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) on the matter. In that respect, Executive Councillors concurred with the Panel that the Provider should be selected on the basis of their ability to deliver high quality energy serving measures in a responsible way that meets the needs of customers. Having also supported the Panel's view that safeguards need to be put in place to ensure that the scheme does not operate in a way that might damage the Council's reputation, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the establishment of a Green Deal Partnership Scheme for Cambridgeshire be approved subject to detailed approval of a Memorandum of Understanding between the local authorities involved at Public Service Board;
- (b) that a procurement exercise and the subsequent award of contract(s) to one or more Green Deal Providers be approved to be let on a Countywide basis and in collaboration with Cambridgeshire Local Authorities;
- (c) that the Head of Paid Service and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, be authorised to negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding governing joint working and to enter into a contract with the chosen Green Deal Provider, after consultation with Executive Councillor for the Environment; and
- (d) that the Head of Paid Service be requested to clarify the terms under which the Council could withdraw from

the Partnership should the implemented scheme not be meeting its objectives.

99. DELEGATED POWERS - ENVIRONMENTAL ENFORCEMENT

The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) regarding a series of proposed amendments to the powers delegated to Officers in respect of the enforcement of environmental crime such as littering, fly tipping and abandoned vehicles.

Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that the proposed delegated powers for environmental enforcement, appended to the report now submitted be approved and the scheme of delegation amended accordingly.

100. ST NEOTS RAILWAY STATION FOOTBRIDGE

(The Chairman announced that he proposed to admit the following urgent item in accordance with Section 100B (3) and (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 given the need to ensure the contract for the provision of the footbridge at St Neots Railway Station can proceed)

By way of a report by the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were acquainted with the background to a request for a capital contribution towards the costs of a new footbridge at St Neots Railway Station.

Members were advised that the proposed footbridge was a critical element of the new infrastructure for St Neots, providing an important link for pedestrians and cyclists travelling between the St Neots Expansion area, the railway station and the rest of the town. It was reported that a renegotiation of the BCIS index had resulted in a reduction in the Section 106 funding and the cost of the original project, initiated in 2005/06 had increased. In order for the project to proceed any additional funding would need to be financed by the District Council as the contributions from the County Council and the developer, Network Rail, were fixed. Given that no specific schemes have been identified to proceed from the Town Centre Developments capital provision of £290,000 and a number of efficiencies have been identified in the 2013/14 revenue budget for Planning Services, the Cabinet

RECOMMENDED

that the Council approves a capital contribution of £316,069 towards the St Neots Rail Footbridge project to be funded by way of a transfer of £290,000 from the capital provision for Town Centre Developments and £26,000 from the Planning Services revenue budget.

Chairman