
Cabinet

Report of the meeting held on 19th September 2013

Matter for Decision

16. FINANCIAL FORECAST

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) (Item No.12 of their Report refers) and by way of a report by the Assistant Director, Finance and Resources, reproduced separately on the Council agenda, the Cabinet has been acquainted with the present position in relation to the Council's financial forecast for the period up to 2018/19.

The Cabinet has been informed of progress to date in the achievement of savings and acknowledged the major financial challenges facing the authority arising from the Government's Spending Review. Particular attention was drawn to the Government's limit for Council Tax increase in the current year, uncertainty surrounding the level of Government Formula Grant and a proposal that Councils will be required to pass on a significant portion of the New Homes Bonus to the Local Enterprise Partnership.

The Cabinet was conscious of the additional major financial challenges being faced by the Council as a result of the Government's Review including the ability to deliver its current portfolio of services. It was reported that uncertainty also surrounded Government Support for Councils after the 2015 General Election with a potential for a fall in grant of 2.5% per year.

With regard to existing savings proposals, Members considered whether to continue to protect Town and Parish Councils from the impact of the Government's Local Council Tax Support Scheme. Given the challenges being faced by the authority as a result of the budgetary cuts, Members concurred with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel that this grant should not be continued beyond the current financial year, subject to there being no change in Government legislation.

In considering the additional savings requirements, Executive Councillors concurred with the Panel that the focus should be on the larger areas of the Council's expenditure and acknowledged the importance of communication to ensure that Huntingdonshire residents are able to influence and be kept informed of the process.

Having noted that the Managing Director was currently developing a performance management framework to link the Leadership Direction with the Budget/MTP, the Cabinet

RECOMMEND

that Council:

- (a) notes the contents of the report and acknowledges the financial uncertainty for local authorities;**
- (b) confirms that there will be no grants relating to the impact of Council Tax Support to Town and Parish Councils in 2014/15 and subsequent years;**
- (c) supports the Financial Forecast as the basis to estimate the potential level of savings required by the authority;**
- (d) requests the Managing Director to identify proposals for additional major savings for 2015/16.**

Matters for Information

17. PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF LOCAL JOINT COMMITTEES IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE

Having regard to the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) (Item No.5 of their Report to the Council meeting held on 26th June 2013 refers), the Cabinet has been acquainted with the present position with regard to the proposed establish of Local Joint Committees (LJC's) in Huntingdonshire. Having been informed that the pilot scheme in the Norman Cross County division had attracted little interest, Executive Councillors considered a series of new principles for LJC's intended to promote local ownership of the scheme rather than a top-down approach

In discussing the proposed boundary map for the LJCs, Members noted that the Town and Parish Councils had been consulted on whom they considered to be part of their local communities. However, Executive Councillors expressed reservations over the prescriptive nature of the areas and suggested that they should be perceived as guidelines in order to allow some flexibility. With this caveat, the Cabinet has approved a revised Constitution for LJCs in Huntingdonshire. In so doing, the Cabinet were of the view that Town and Parish Councils should be notified of the opportunity to establish their own LJC's across the District and have requested each individual Ward Members of the Council to attend their respective joint committees if a meeting is called by the communities.

18. HUNTINGDONSHIRE TOWN AND PARISH CHARTER

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) (Item No.14 of their Report refers), the Cabinet has endorsed the contents of the Huntingdonshire Town and Parish Charter. The Charter sets out a framework for Cambridgeshire County Council, Huntingdonshire District Council and local Town and Parish Councils to work in partnership to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of Huntingdonshire. It explains how issues such as Neighbourhood Plans, Community Right to Buy, Community Right to Challenge and Community Infrastructure Levy will be dealt with. In that respect, the Cabinet has requested that reference be made within the Charter document to Local Joint Committees as an example of an appropriate forum in which to engage with communities.

19. MAKING ASSETS COUNT – CAMBRIDGESHIRE’S PROPOSED APPROACH TO STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT

Having regard to the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) (Item No.11 of their Report refers), the Cabinet has endorsed the key principles of the Making Assets Count project which aim to improve public service delivery by identifying opportunities and challenging decisions relating to the use and disposal of assets across Cambridgeshire. In so doing, the Cabinet has noted the County Council’s intention to proceed with the creation of a countywide publicly-owned joint venture, the MAC Public Property Partnership, as a delivery vehicle for the project. In that respect, Members noted that none of the authority’s assets will be committed to or encumbered by this without further reference to Cabinet.

At the same time, the Cabinet has positively endorsed the pragmatic approach that the District Council has taken to date in respect of maximising the use of the authority’s assets and agreed that further common sense sharing opportunities should be fully explored and expediently delivered wherever possible.

20. JOINT MATERIALS RECYCLING FACILITY PROCUREMENT

In conjunction with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) (Item No.10 of their Report refers), the Cabinet has been acquainted with the background to a proposal by the Recycling Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership (RECAP) to jointly procure a materials recycling facility to manage and process all the recycling materials collected across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The proposals relate to the bulking, sorting and onward processing/sale of recyclable materials.

Whilst the Cabinet supported the principle of the proposal, Executive Councillors have sought assurances that the authority would benefit from being part of a combined procurement with other local authorities. Mention was made of the risk associated with the contract and the lack of any financial justifications in the report. In

that respect, the Cabinet has requested that the final Invitation to Tender document be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) prior to final approval by the Cabinet and that a special meeting be called for that purpose, if necessary, to meet the timetable for the joint procurement.

In the meantime, the Cabinet has:

- ◆ endorsed the Council's commitment to the procurement and appointment of a Contractor to deliver Joint MRF services for all participating RECAP partners, unless all partners agree not to appoint;
- ◆ approved the RECAP Advance Partnership Working Charter and Governance Agreement;
- ◆ endorsed the nomination of a preferred supplier by Peterborough City Council, in collaboration with the participating partners, on behalf of the RECAP participating partners; and
- ◆ approved the RECAP approach to the Waste Framework Directive and Waste Regulations regarding the collection of recyclate materials streams from 2015.

21. FACING THE FUTURE 2013

The Cabinet has approved a process to review the future potential business options for the delivery of Council services and has agreed that they be considered in respect of all services currently provided by the Council. The proposals explore a range of options available to reform the way the authority delivers its services, with the aim of creating a sustainable solution to the stark financial difficulties facing the authority. These include generating additional income, smart investments, development of property or land assets, transfer of services, sharing services, outsourcing and possible salary reduction measures.

In welcoming the pragmatic approach being adopted by the authority, the Cabinet has requested the Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen to prepare proposals for a delivery review programme for consideration at the next meeting of Cabinet and to agree resourcing for that programme and a proposed governance structure. At the same time, the Overview and Scrutiny Panels have been requested to review all options in line with the programme and to present their conclusions and recommendations to the Cabinet.

J D Ablewhite
Chairman