

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Thursday, 17 October 2013.

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Ms L Kadić and R West.

36. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th September 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

37. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

38. A14 IMPROVEMENTS - HIGHWAYS AGENCY CONSULTATION

(Councillors Ms L Kadić and R West were in attendance and spoke on this item)

With the aid of a report by the Assistant Director, Environment, Growth and Planning (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Cabinet considered the Council's response to consultation by the Highways Agency on the proposed A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme. The report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) whose comments were relayed to the Cabinet.

By way of background, Members were advised that the Council's response would be endorsed as part of the Highway Agency's non-statutory public consultation exercise. A further statutory public consultation on the detailed design of the whole scheme would be undertaken in spring 2014.

Executive Councillors were reminded that the scheme would be supported by a local finance package of £100M comprising of contributions from various partners including the County Council and the local enterprise partnership, with the District Council contributing up to £5M over a 25 year period. In that respect, Executive Councillors reiterated that the District Council's financial contribution would be conditional on the overall scheme including the removal of the Huntingdon Viaduct, the creation of an improved new local road network for Huntingdon and the construction works commencing by 2016.

The Cabinet's attention was drawn to a proposal to introduce a Toll

Road between the A1/A14 junction and Swavesey. Executive Councillors agreed that if the scheme has to include a tolling element, that this must be collected in a free-flow fashion and that the daily charge must be maintained at a level which is as low as possible at a lower end of the charging scale i.e. £1 for cars and £2 for HCV's over an appropriate extended time period to be agreed between all the funding partners.

Councillors Kadić and West addressed the Cabinet in support of the improvement scheme. However, Councillor West was of the view that tolling would create an additional tax for residents. Reference was made by Councillor Kadić to the need to effectively communicate the benefits of the scheme to residents as there was a general perception that local roads will become gridlocked.

Having expressed their support for the scheme and in noting that the Council would have a significant role to play in the determination of the Development Consent Order application which it was hoped would be given approval in late 2014, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the Assistant Director, Environmental, Growth and Planning be authorised to respond to the Highways Agency along the lines described in the foregoing preamble and paragraphs 11.5 and 11.6 of the report relating to funding and tolling.

39. CUSTOMER SERVICES STRATEGY 2013-18

By way of a report by the Head of Customer Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were acquainted with the content of a draft Customer Services Strategy for 2013 – 2018, which had been produced as part of the Council's commitment to deliver good quality customer services and value for money for the taxpayer.

In introducing the report, the Executive Councillor for Customer Services explained that the existing Strategy had expired. The new Strategy reflected the different economic and demographic circumstances facing the authority and would assist with the re-engagement of the "front" and "back" office.

In considering the contents of the Strategy, Executive Councillors queried the need to create a business case for the relocation of the call centre to Pathfinder House. They also raised concerns over the timescale for the publication of customer service performance information. Members expressed the view that performance data should be readily available and the dates within the action plan reviewed. It was also suggested that the Council should be aspiring to provide a high level of service rather than achieving excellence.

Having expressed their thanks to staff for their efforts in producing the new Strategy and to the Working Party of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) for their involvement, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that, subject to the inclusion of the suggested amendments referred to in the text of the preamble hereto, the contents of the Customer Services Strategy be approved.

40. JOINT MATERIALS RECYCLING FACILITY PROCUREMENT INVITATION TO TENDER

Further to Minute No. 13/34, the Cabinet received a report by the Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) on the joint procurement of a Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) service for the bulking, sorting and onwards processing/sale of recyclable materials.

In considering the information in the report, Executive Councillors were reminded of their previous request for the final Invitation to Tender (ITT) document to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) prior to final approval being given by the Cabinet. Members were advised that the ITT had yet to be released and there would not be sufficient time for the Panel and the Cabinet to comment on the final draft. It was reported that Members would have an opportunity to review the tenders once they had been received and that the Council's Section 151 Officer would be actively involved in the procurement process.

Executive Councillors discussed the risk associated with the contract and expressed their dissatisfaction that a risk sensitivity analysis had not been completed. Having also requested further clarification over the financial implications for the Council of introducing the new arrangements, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the approval of the Invitation to Tender document for the procurement of the Materials Recycling Facility contract, be delegated to the Head of Operations, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for Environment.

41. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY INVOLVEMENT IN IDENTIFYING PRIORITY AREAS FOR SAVINGS

Further to Minute No. 13/36, the Cabinet considered a report by the Assistant Director, Finance and Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) outlining a suggested process for a detailed review of service areas by the Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

Having received an updated programme of meetings for the Panels and in noting that the process would be the subject of an external assessment (Peer Review) by the East of England Local Government Association, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the suggested programme for reviewing service areas be endorsed.

42. STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING - IMPLEMENTATION OF CHARGES

By way of a report by the Head of Environmental Management (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered a proposal to introduce a charge for Street Naming and Numbering Services.

Members were reminded that under the provision of the Public Health Act 1925, the District Council has to provide street names for new streets and numbering for new properties. The Act also gives the Council a duty to maintain and replace damaged, missing or illegible street name plates.

In considering a schedule of charges, Executive Councillors expressed concern over the lack of reference to the cost of providing the service or alternative charging options available to the authority. Given their unease, the Cabinet suggested that the proposals be deferred until the next meeting to enable these issues to be addressed. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

that consideration of the proposals be deferred to the next meeting of the Cabinet.

43. PAY REVIEW - PROGRAMME PLAN

By way of a joint report by the Managing Director and the HR Consultant (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet were updated on the progression of the Pay and Grading Framework which was moving from the job evaluation exercise to the first stages of employee consultation.

Having noted the timetable for consultation, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the contents of the report now submitted be noted.

Chairman