

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Thursday, 23 January 2014.

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 K J Churchill and
R J West.

58. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 12th December 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

59. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

No declarations were received.

60. RENEWAL OF GREAT FEN PROJECT COLLABORATION AGREEMENT

Further to Minute No. 09/34 and with the assistance of a report by the Assistant Director, Environment, Growth and Planning (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet was invited to consider the Council's ongoing role in the Great Fen Project, which aims to restore over 3,000 hectares of wetland around the Woodwalton Fen and Holme Fen Nature Reserves. The report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) whose comments were relayed to the Cabinet.

Members were reminded that the Council was one of five core Project Partners alongside the Environment Agency, the Middle Level Commissioners, Natural England and the Wildlife Trust. The Partners had entered into a Collaboration Agreement which was due to expire in March 2014.

In considering the information before them, Executive Councillors were reminded that the Council supports the project by way of a contribution of £20k per annum and officer time and support. It was reported that the next stage in the Projects delivery, including the development of visitor facilities, would be fundamental in terms of maximising its local economic development potential. Having recognised the active role the Council will play in ensuring that an appropriate emphasis is placed upon the delivery of tangible economic, social and environmental benefits and in noting that the Council's commitment would be reviewed when the new Agreement expires, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the Great Fen Project Collaboration Agreement be renewed for a further 5 year period.

61. RECONNECTIONS POLICY FOR HOMELESSNESS PEOPLE WITH NO LOCAL CONNECTION

By way of a report by the Head of Customer Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Cabinet was invited to consider the content of a Reconnections Policy which aimed to assist with the prevention of homelessness by reconnecting homeless people to an area where they have a local connection. The Policy had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) whose comments were relayed to the Cabinet.

Having recognised that homeless people at risk of rough sleeping were more likely to have a positive outcome to their situation in an area where they have support networks through family and friends, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the content of the Reconnections Policy for Homelessness People with No Local Connection be approved.

62. DISCHARGING A HOMELESSNESS DUTY THROUGH THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Customer Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) to which was attached a policy outlining how the Council will discharge its homelessness duty through the private rented sector.

Members were advised that the policy had been prepared in response to the Localism Act 2011 and subsequent regulations which allow the Council to end its "duty" to a household accepted as homeless by making an offer of suitable private rented sector accommodation in the district.

Having received the views of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) on the document, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that the Policy to Discharge the Council's Homelessness Duties Through the Private Rented Sector be approved.

63. STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING - IMPLEMENTATION OF CHARGES

Further to Minute No 13/42 and 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 Number 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 give the Council a duty to maintain and replace damaged, missing or illegible street name plates.

In considering a schedule of possible charges, Executive Councillors were mindful of the fees introduced by neighbouring authorities for such a service. Whereupon, it was

RESOLVED

(a) that the proposed street naming and numbering charges outlined as option B in the table at paragraph 3.2 of the report be approved and implemented from 1st April 2014; and

(b) that the charges be reviewed in 12 months.

64. SAFETY ADVISORY GROUP

In receiving and noting the report of the Safety Advisory Group held on 27th November 2013 particular attention was drawn to the issue of low humidity in Pathfinder House. Executive Councillors were advised that this was a problem affecting a very small number of staff and that investigations into the cause of the problem were ongoing.

65. PAY REVIEW FRAMEWORK

(In view of the late circulation of the supporting papers for this item, the Chairman announced that he proposed to admit the item as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972, given the need for the Cabinet to approve the pay model to enable the necessary changes to be implemented to pay and grading arrangements with effect from 1st April 2014).

Further to Minute No. 13/43 and by way of a joint report by the Managing Director and the Assistant Directors (Finance & Resources) and (Environment, Growth and Planning) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet was invited to consider the content of a proposed new pay model for all Council employees, including a job evaluation appeals process and a proposal to remove essential car user payments and attendance allowances with effect 1st April 2014. The proposals had been prepared following staff consultation and negotiations with Staff Council representatives.

Members were advised that the existing pay model was now regarded as not being financially sustainable and inequitable leaving the Council at risk of equal pay claims. Executive Councillors were encouraged to note that the new pay framework was judged to offer the best combination and solution for the Council being affordable, equal and consistent. Executive Councillors were advised that the changes would impact on all 692 permanent employees of the

Council with 42.3% enduring a pay reduction and 57.5% experiencing a neutral impact or an increase in salary. Members noted that staff would have a right of appeal against their grading and that provision had been made for pay protection of 3 months full pay or 6 months half pay if the employee prefers.

With regard to the financial implications for the authority, compared against the current pay structure, there would be an additional cost in 2014/15 of £184k. Executive Councillors were advised that savings would follow in subsequent years rising to 452k by 2020/21. However, when compared to the current budget provision, there would be a saving of £776k in 2014/15 rising to £2,017k in 2020/21.

In the discussion that ensued, Executive Councillors reiterated their commitment to deliver a fair and equitable pay scheme and expressed their satisfaction with the proposed Appeals Procedure.

Having thanked the Staff Council, Employment Panel and Managing Director for their valuable contribution to the Pay Review, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the pay model set out in Appendix 1 of the report now submitted be approved for implementation in respect of all Council employees from 1st April 2014;
- (b) that the Managing Director be authorised, in consultation with the Executive Leader, to implement the necessary changes to individual's pay and grading arrangements in accordance with the process outlined in Appendix 2 of the report; and
- (c) that Essential User Allowances for Senior Managers and attendance allowances for certain operations staff be removed with effect from 1st April 2014.

Chairman