

Decision Digest

Edition 157

Monthly summary of the decisions taken at meetings of the Council, Cabinet, Overview & Scrutiny and other Panels for the period 1st to 31st July 2015.

COMMUNITY CHEST GRANT AID AWARDS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS 2015/2016

The following applications for Community Chest Grant Awards for 2015/2016 have been approved:

ORGANISATION	AMOUNT
7th & 8th Cambridgeshire FSE Marine Scout Group, St Ives	£1,095
Abbotsley Village Hall	£1,691
Applepips Pre-School, Offord	£4,000
Bluntisham Allotments & Leisure Gardeners Association	£600
Brampton Scout Hut	£2,330
Covington Amenities Committee	£1,250
CIFA Majorettes, St Ives	£390
Eaton Socon Cricket Club	£2,000
Ellington Gala	£575
Fusion Family & Youth Project	£4,245
Great Staughton Playing Field Committee	£175
Great Staughton Pre-School (Piglets)	£4,500
Holy Cross Yelling PCC	£750
Houghton & Wyton Scout Hut Fund	£5,000
Huntingdon Boat Club	£1,184
Huntingdon Commemoration Hall Charity	£940
Huntingdonshire Society for the Blind	£1,250
Huntingdon Swimming Club	£2,500

Hunts Community Youth Orchestra	£3,400
Needingworth Cricket Club	£1,600
Norris Museum, St Ives	£2,500
Old Weston Village Hall	£3,400
Sawtry Methodist Indoor Bowls Club	£750
Southoe Village Hall Management Committee	£2,125
St Ives Carnival & Music Festival	£1,500
St Neots Lawn Tennis Club	£5,000
The Friends of St Peters Church Offord D'Arcy	£600
Wheatfields Nursery Association, St Ives	£3,400
Yelling Parish Council	£1,250

STATUTORY DISMISSAL PROCEDURES FOR HEADS OF PAID SERVICE, MONITORING OFFICERS AND THE RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER

Further to the meeting of the Employment Panel, the Corporate Governance Panel has recommended to the Council that the Constitution be amended to reflect the new regulations, and to incorporate the requirements of the new Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015.

The Regulations amend the statutory disciplinary and dismissal procedures of English Local Authorities' Heads of Paid Service, Monitoring Officers and Chief Financial Officers, and replace

the current statutory Designated Independent Person (DIP) process, outlined in the current Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001.

The new Regulations require Authorities to have in place the new process '*no later than the first ordinary meeting of the Authority falling after 11th May 2015*'.

The Regulations state that before an Authority considers whether to dismiss an officer, it must convene a Panel made up of Councillors and at least two Independent Persons.

PREPARING THE 2014/2015 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

The process to be followed in preparing the 2014/15 Annual Governance Statement (AGS) has been agreed.

The Corporate Management Team (CMT) wish to streamline the review stage by increasing the involvement of the Senior Management Team (SMT) in the evidence and documentation review process.

Following the SMT review and challenge, a report will be prepared for the Corporate Governance Panel that summarises the outcome of the review and details those areas of the Code that SMT consider have not been met or require improvement.

If issues are identified during the SMT review, the Panel will determine which of these are significant enough to include in the AGS. Following which the Internal Audit and Risk Manager will prepare a draft AGS, and after obtaining CMT, SMT and the External Auditors comments, invite the Panel to make comments on its contents at an informal meeting of the Panel. This will allow a final version of the AGS to be prepared prior to its submission to the Panel in September 2015.

DISPOSAL AND ACQUISITION POLICY: CHANGE TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Corporate Governance Panel has recommended to Council that the Constitution be amended to reflect the new Disposal and Acquisitions Policy as approved by the Cabinet at its June meeting.

As the former thresholds and procedures within the Constitution were considered too restrictive, and to enable a more commercial approach to the management of the Council's property portfolio, a new Disposal and Acquisitions Policy and governance arrangements has been agreed by the Cabinet through which the Council is able to manage its estate of land and buildings within a commercial environment.

As the Council is required to generate £8million of savings by 2019/2020 a way of generating additional income is via selling assets or purchasing capital assets within the commercial environment.

As the Panel has responsibility for considering changes to the Constitution, which includes the Code of Financial Management and Code of Procurement, the Panel has recommended to Council that the Constitution be amended to reflect the requirements of the Disposal and Acquisitions Policy.

In addition to amendments to the thresholds for the disposal and acquisition of land and property, the Cabinet has approved the formation of a Treasury and Capital Management Group which must be reflected in the Constitution.

As a further safeguard for good governance the Corporate Governance Panel has recommended to the Council

that the Treasury and Capital Management Group be constituted to include a third member of the Cabinet in the event of the Leader or Deputy Leader holding the Resources Portfolio, to ensure that three Cabinet Members always have a seat on the Treasury and Capital Management Group.

The Panel has enquired whether the Council has a sufficient level of expertise to realise the value of its assets and for negotiation purposes. It has been explained that a Commercial Investment Strategy is being developed that will identify such matters as well as establish proposed investment levels, risk appetite and other factors that are essential in such a strategy.

INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE: ANNUAL AUDIT REPORT

As required by the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) the Panel has been provided with an Annual report and opinion.

The report details the work undertaken by Internal Audit during the period 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015 to support the opinion statement that the Council's internal control environment and systems of internal control as at 31st March 2015 provide adequate assurance over key business processes and financial systems.

21 audits have not been delivered due to the loss of 147 auditor days during the year. The reasons for this were listed in the Officer's report which includes an Auditor post being vacant from mid October 2014 and being unable to recruit a suitable person or source cover arrangements with another authority or the Internal Audit Contractor.

One Audit that raised particular concern relates to the E-Recruitment software system which is managed by LGSS. The Auditors have 'read only' access to the software and therefore can only

undertake a limited amount of testing and have to rely on gathering evidence from discussions with Recruiting Managers and successful Applicants. As no assurance has been received from LGSS that the system is working as intended, and without sufficient testing evidence, it is not possible to issue an opinion on the effectiveness of the E-Recruitment system.

The Panel discussed at length issues surrounding the E-Recruitment software system. The Panel has been informed that the Employment Panel are equally unhappy with the performance of the system and have been for some time. The Corporate Team Manager is currently liaising with LGSS in order to address the various issues. However, the Council is tied into a two year contract. Whilst interviewing a number of successful candidates on their experiences of using the E-Recruitment software, Internal Audit were informed by a number of individuals that they had contemplated abandoning the application due to the software. The Panel has expressed strong concerns regarding the inadequacies of the LGSS E-Recruitment system.

The Annual Report also refers to the previously advised problems encountered whilst migrating the SharePoint based systems and the loss of data stored within the Audit Actions Database. The system is not currently operational to enable Officers from all services to input data directly into the system and it is unlikely to be resolved in the near future. Therefore Internal Audit has been advised to source commercial software externally which following cursory investigations is likely cost approximately £6500.

An Auditor has been recruited to the vacant post and is already commencing three of the audits listed within the report as not having been undertaken. It is expected that the 2015/16 Audit

Plan will be delivered providing there are no further resourcing issues.

INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE: ANNUAL EFFECTIVENESS AND CHARTER REVIEW

The Panel has considered a report detailing the outcome of the review of the effectiveness of the Internal Audit Service and the Internal Audit Charter.

The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) require that the Internal Audit Service has in place a Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme (QAIP) and an Audit Charter.

The QAIP consists of two types of assessment – internal assessment and external assessment.

One of the internal assessments is the periodic assessment against the PSIAS, designed to assess conformance with the Internal Audit Charter and the efficiency and effectiveness of the service. The Panel has been presented with a report detailing the outcome of the Internal Audit and Risk Manager's assessment of this and with the results of the action plan arising from the external 'independent validation' of Internal Audit, that was reported to the Panel in May 2014.

The Internal Audit Charter is reviewed periodically by the Internal Audit and Risk Manager and there are a number of amendments required to reflect legislative changes and the introduction of operational shared services for ICT, Building Control and Legal Services. Significant amendments were proposed within the following sections of the Charter -

- relationship with Members and Senior Management;
- roles and responsibilities; and

- quality and assurance programme.

The Panel has been updated on the Improvement Plan as agreed following the 2014 external assessment of the Internal Audit Service and the Improvement Plan following the 2015 review, which incorporates a deadline date for when the actions should be complete.

There were no issues that require inclusion in the Annual Governance Statement following the 2015 review.

Regarding Shared Services the Panel has been informed that the Internal Audit Charter incorporates detail where the Council provides 'shared services' to, or receives 'shared services' from other organisations and the Internal Audit and Risk Manager shall liaise with the other organisations Internal Audit Service and agree the scope of the assurance that is to be provided or received to take account of that requirement when preparing the Annual Audit Plan.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE MARKETING STRATEGY

The Overview and Scrutiny (Economic Well-being) Panel has considered and endorsed a report on a proposed Marketing Strategy and branding for Huntingdonshire. The Panel has been informed that the Strategy is a working document for the team rather than external-facing marketing material.

Members of the Panel have queried timescales for implementation of the Marketing Strategy and have been informed that the external work will be starting immediately, subject to approval from the Cabinet.

The Cabinet has endorsed the implementation of the Marketing Strategy and Branding profile for the

promotion of Huntingdonshire subject to an amendment to the 'Weaknesses' section of the SWOT analysis regarding 'Low Aspirations' and 'Deprivation'.

The Cabinet approved the Huntingdonshire Economic Growth Plan 2013 - 2023 in July 2013 and one of the key short-term actions was the development of a Marketing Strategy for the promotion of the District as a location of choice to live, work and invest.

In considering the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) the Cabinet accepted the additional recommendations that progress on the implementation of the Marketing Strategy be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) at six monthly intervals; and an annual report on the impact of the Marketing Strategy work programme be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being).

Now the Strategy has been approved by the Cabinet preparation of the external facing marketing materials and branding profile will begin.

The Strategy is an internal document for use by Officers in promoting the District and is not for circulation externally.

REVIEW OF THE RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Risk Management Strategy is reviewed annually and the Cabinet has considered and approved the Strategy following the review.

The Risk Management Strategy previously included two risk appetite statements – one that referred to the appetite surrounding health and safety risks and a second 'catch-all' statement for all other areas. However, in order to better reflect the Corporate Plan the two former risk appetite statements have been deleted and replaced with seven

individual statements, each of which reflects the different types of risk that the Council could face and which could impact on its ability to meet both its statutory requirements and strategic outcomes.

The seven risk areas relate to Transformation; People and Culture; Financial; Operational/Service; Reputation; Compliance and Regulation; and Health and Safety.

The Strategy includes the risk appetite levels for each of these areas and work will now commence on mapping the 142 risks against the seven risk areas.

SHARED SERVICES OVERVIEW

The Overview and Scrutiny (Economic Well-being) Panel and the Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-Being) Panel have received a report outlining the overall approach to the development of the first phase of the Shared Services programme. Both Panels endorsed the report, with the Environmental Panel also recommending that the Cabinet consider the following recommendations;

- consider whether the full cost of an exit strategy and associated risks if any of the shared services are dissolved are known and understood;
- consider the need to ensure that the costs of introducing any new ICT systems to support the shared services are well managed; and
- consider whether the safeguards in the sovereignty guarantee are sufficient to allow the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Panels to scrutinise topics related to shared services.

The Cabinet has approved the recommendations for the first phase of the partnership arrangement between Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC), South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) and Cambridge City Council (CCC) regarding shared service proposals for ICT, Legal Services and Building Control.

The Councils intend to share services as there are significant risks in doing nothing. Each Council must find significant savings as well as protecting and preserving services and retaining skilled staff in a competitive market place. Shared services offer a way of mitigating these risks.

A Lead Authority model is being used for the shared service arrangements as it best reflects the current vision for shared services and the starting position of each partner Council

The main risks associated with sharing services across the three Councils were highlighted in the Officer's report.

A Joint Committee with no delegated powers or functions is to be established to oversee the operation of shared services, supported by an Officer Board. The remit of the Joint Committee is to provide advice, oversight, challenge and endorsement of the shared services business plans and budget. The Joint Committee will receive regular updates on the operation of the shared services and will take reports and recommendations for decision to their respective Executives (and Full Council, if appropriate), at agreed points and with the engagement of each Council's Scrutiny Committees. The membership will consist of the Leaders of each Council with a nominated Deputy attending in their absence. The Cabinet has appointed Councillor Howe to deputise for the Leader on the Joint Committee.

The Cabinet has endorsed the Sovereignty Guarantee to give confidence to individual Councils' Executives that they will retain sovereignty of their organisations, as well as Executive decision-making powers.

Formal consultation commences with Staff Council and the affected staff on 24th July until 1st September 2015 regarding ICT, Legal and Building Control shared services.

There are strategic and financial benefits to all three partners in creating a range of shared services and each of the respective reports for the shared services included a detailed financial model showing how savings will be achieved against the baseline budget.

LEGAL SHARED SERVICES BUSINESS CASE

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has received a report on the business case and has concluded that this clearly shows the benefits of a shared Legal service between the three Councils.

The Cabinet has approved the business case and has delegated authority to the Managing Director, in conjunction with the Executive Councillor for Strategic Economic Development and Legal, to make decisions and to take steps which are necessary, conducive or incidental to the establishment of the Legal shared service in accordance with the detailed business case.

In discussing the financial detail it has been noted that external legal costs were not incorporated into the level of spend figures and recharges are yet to be incorporated into the financial information.

The three Councils have been awarded funding from Government via the

Transformation Challenge Award to support the work towards a range of shared service arrangements.

ICT SHARED SERVICES BUSINESS CASE

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) has received a report on the business case and has concluded that this clearly shows the benefits of a shared ICT service between the three Councils.

The Cabinet has approved the business case and delegated the authority to the Managing Director, in conjunction with the Executive Councillor for Customer Services, to make decisions and to take steps which are necessary, conducive or incidental to the establishment of the shared service in accordance with the detailed business case.

Each Authority will be the Lead Authority for a shared service and HDC is acting as the Lead Authority for the ICT shared service.

BUILDING CONTROL SHARED SERVICES BUSINESS CASE

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) has considered a report on the business case and has recommended that Cabinet approve the recommendation in the report.

The Cabinet has approved the business case and delegated authority to the Managing Director, in conjunction with the Executive Councillor for Strategic Planning and Housing, to make decisions and to take steps which are necessary, conducive or incidental to the establishment of the shared service in accordance with the detailed business case.

Due to changes in EU Procurement Rules it is possible that an advert may be

required in the Official Journal of the European Union. Further legal advice is being sought and if this is the case the Cabinet will be informed.

BUDGET MONITORING 2015/2016 (REVENUE AND CAPITAL)

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) considered a report on revenue and capital forecast outturn for 2015/16. Feedback on the report has been positive, with discussion focusing on the progress made since the previous report.

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the revenue and capital forecast outturn for 2015/16 based on information available at the end of May 2015.

As at the end of May, the year-end forecast outturn is £0.681m less than planned and to date little has been spent from the capital programme.

REPRESENTATION ON ORGANISATIONS 2015/16

The Cabinet has made appointments/nominations in relation to representation on a variety of organisations/partnerships and has authorised the Corporate Team Manager, after consultation with the Deputy Executive Leader of the Council, to make any changes that may be required throughout the year.

REVIEW OF BENEFITS RISK BASED VERIFICATION POLICY

The Risk Based Verification Policy has been revised to be applied to changes of circumstance in addition to new claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support.

Since the introduction of the Risk Based Verification Policy it has proved successful in focusing resources on

claims for benefit most likely to contain fraud and/or error.

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has commented positively on the report and gave its endorsement to Cabinet.

The Cabinet has been pleased to note that the fraud and error detected by the Council is exceeding the baseline established by the Department for Work and Pensions.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT APPLICATIONS

The Development Management Panel has considered eight applications. Seven of the applications have been approved and one has been refused. One of the applications was approved contrary to the Officer's recommendation.

One of the applications to have been approved is the creation of a new marina on land North East of 31, Great North Road, Stibbington, which involves the excavation of a new marina basin and the creation of 123 river berths. It will include the construction of a new amenity block, the change of use of a wet dock building, the change of use of existing agricultural buildings to provide workshop facilities and chandlery and the provision of winter storage for boats and of a new access.

CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES UPDATE

The Overview and Scrutiny (Social Well-Being) Panel has received a report from Mr L Miller, Senior Programme Manager for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Mental Health Services (CAMHS) which outlines the challenges faced by the service, described measures already taken and longer term plans for improvement.

The key points to the report are as follows:

- ◆ Waiting times in specialist CAMHS are too long, with some cases waiting for over 52 weeks.
- ◆ Waiting lists have been temporarily closed for Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) referrals where there are no associated Mental Health needs.
- ◆ CAMHS Emergency assessments in Emergency Department settings have increased threefold in recent years.

The Panel has questioned whether the closure of waiting lists for ASD and ADHD is advisable due to the amount of staffing resources that are used for emergency care when vulnerable Children and Adolescents are unable to access the preventative services and may require hospital treatment. Mr Miller has responded by assuring the Panel that the waiting list for services will not be closed to those with other Mental Health problems such as anxiety and depression. The Panel has noted that working on decreasing the waiting lists will positively impact on the number of NHS admissions.

Additional resources equivalent to an 11% increase in funding have been invested into the service for 2015/16, aimed at clearing the waiting list backlog and sustaining this. However, urgent redesign work is required across the whole pathway for Emotional Health and Wellbeing and proposed improvement actions include redesigning the pathway as soon as possible. This will involve services currently commissioned by the CCG and Local Authority commissioned services. The CCG has agreed to employ a Project Lead (currently being

advertised) to enable this redesign work to take place quickly and effectively.

The Panel has considered and noted the report and has requested future reports from CAMHS to monitor the progress made.

LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION REVIEW

The Overview and Scrutiny (Environmental Well-Being) Panel has received a report by the Head of Development updating them on the key issues arising from the recent targeted consultation on the Local Plan. This report brings a fuller picture on the results and details of the next steps planned, as requested by the Panel when they received a position statement on the Local Plan in April.

The report sets out a number of key issues to be addressed. Some of these issues were raised through the consultation and others have been identified from reviewing the outcomes of examinations elsewhere.

The Panel has been informed of continuing work on the preparation of the Local Plan, including resources focussing on highways and transport modelling and analysis. It is expected that the majority of the work to complete the evidence base will take 6 to 9 months. The work needs to be undertaken in order, with flooding and highways work to take place before the new Retail Study is commissioned. The Local Plan will also need to be consistent with the results from the Environment Agency's new lower Great Ouse modelling due to be published in August 2015.

The Panel has suggested that the Council needs to ensure that contributions from developers are adjusted where extra homes are added after developments and contributions are

approved. It has also been suggested that creating bus stop areas in new housing sites would encourage bus companies to route services through new developments. The Head of Development has agreed to consider these suggestions in discussion with local bus companies.