

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

**Meeting held at Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City
on 20 December 2005**

Minutes

PRESENT: *Councillors F.J. Smith (Chairman), Mrs A.G. Ashley, W.M. Davidson, Tricia Gibbs, T.W. Hone, I.J. Knighton and R.A.C. Thake.*

IN ATTENDANCE: *Chief Executive, Strategic Director of Customer Services, Strategic Director of Financial and Regulatory Services, Head of Financial Services, Head of Planning & Building Control, Head of Revenues and Benefits, Corporate Legal Manager, Project Manager (Leisure) and Committee and Member Services Officer.*

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor J. Cunningham, Chairman of Performance, Audit and Review Committee (PARC).

Councillor A.D. Young joined the meeting at 8.07 p.m.

129. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

Councillor A.D. Young had advised Cabinet that he would be joining the meeting later.

130. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 15 November 2005 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chairman, subject to the name of Councillor A.D. Young being recorded as submitting his apologies for absence for the meeting.

131. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was submitted for consideration by Cabinet.

132. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors F.J. Smith, Mrs A.G. Ashley, W.M. Davidson, Tricia Gibbs, T.W. Hone, I.J. Knighton and R.A.C. Thake and A.D. Young declared personal interests at agenda item number 11, Members' Allowances 2006/2007.

Councillor R.A.C. Thake declared a personal interest at agenda item number 7, A New Timetable for Preparing Planning Polices: Revision to the Local Development Scheme.

133. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No items were presented for consideration by Cabinet under public participation.

134. REFERRAL FROM PARC COMMITTEE – 24 NOVEMBER 2005 – RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Chairman of the Performance, Audit and Review Committee (PARC), Councillor J. Cunningham, introduced a referral from the meeting of PARC that was held on 24 November 2005 regarding Risk Management.

The following documents were appended to the report:

Appendix A - New top risk for CPA

Appendix B - Risk Matrix

Appendix C - Summary of changes to the Risk Management Strategy

Appendix D - Risk Management strategy 05/06

Appendix E- Terms of reference for the Risk Management Group.

During a discussion that took place, the following comments were made:

- At Appendix D, 'Roles and Responsibilities, 7.12 Full Council', this should read 'Cabinet is to receive an annual report on the risk management that would be referred to Council';
- At Appendix E, that the Head of Policy, Partnership and Performance would address this issue.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the removal of the Top Risk 'Delivery of Projects' as a completed action within the CPA Improvement Plan be approved;
- (2) That the increase in the impact and probability score for the risk of Medium to Long – Term Financial Planning be approved;
- (3) That the reduction in the assessment of the risks of Recruitment and Retention, Full Compliance with Health and Safety Legislation, Organisational Development, the Delivery of the Corporate Plan and the Community Strategy be approved;
- (4) That the changes to the Risk Management Strategy as presented at Appendix D be noted;
- (5) That the changes to the Risk Management Group Terms of Reference as presented at Appendix E be noted.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: The recommendations contained within paragraph 10 of the report were in accordance with the Council's adopted risk management strategy,

135. REFERRAL FROM BALDOCK COMMITTEE – 12 DECEMBER 2005 – AGREE A STRATEGY FOR BALDOCK TOWN CENTRE

The Chairman of Baldock & District Committee, Councillor I.J. Knighton, introduced a referral from the meeting of Baldock Committee that was held on 12 December 2005 regarding the Baldock Town Centre Strategy Revised Draft.

The following documents were appended to the report:

Appendix A – Baldock Town Centre Strategy Revised Draft – December 2005

Appendix B – Summary of comments to Baldock town Centre Strategy Consultation Draft – September 2005

Appendix C - Baldock Town Centre Strategy Draft Action Plan – December 2005

The Chairman of Baldock & District Committee advised Cabinet that the Strategy was the culmination of many pieces of work that had been carried out in consultation with stakeholder groups and local residents and that the members of the Baldock & District Committee were wholeheartedly in favour of the recommendations. He added:

- That work had already commenced on some of the initiatives referred to in the report;
- That it was opportune that work on the Baldock Bypass had neared completion as this would have a positive impact on the Strategy;
- That Recommendation 3 had been included because there might be future financial implications over and above those included in the budget;
- That the car parking difficulties that had been identified in the Strategy that were experienced by shop owners, businesses and local residents of Baldock Town Centre would be addressed as a matter of some urgency.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Baldock Town Centre Strategy Revised Draft as set out at Appendix A to the report be endorsed and recommended to Full Council for adoption as the Council's Statement of Policy;
- (2) That the draft Action Plan as set out at Appendix C to the report be included as a separate appendix to the final adopted version of the Baldock Town Centre Strategy;
- (3) That the provision of additional capital funding for the enhancement of Baldock town centre be approved in principle subject to Cabinet approval of the Council's capital programme (2006/07 & 2007/08) at the January 2006 meeting.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That the Baldock Town Centre Strategy Revised Draft as set out at Appendix A to the report be adopted as the Council's Statement of Policy.

REASON FOR DECISION: To enable the Council to adopt a Strategy following 'public' involvement that provided an overall framework for guiding development and enhancement opportunities within the town centre over the next 10 years, and in doing so, contributed towards achieving the Council's strategic objectives.

136. REFERRAL FROM ROYSTON & DISTRICT COMMITTEE – 16 NOVEMBER 2005 - DISPOSAL OF COUNCIL-OWNED LAND AT GREENBURY CLOSE, BARLEY

The Chairman of Royston & District Committee, Councillor W.M. Davidson, introduced a referral from the meeting of the Royston & District Committee held on 16 November 2005 regarding the disposal of Council owned land at Greenbury Close, Barley.

The following document was appended to the report:
Appendix A – Location plan showing the extent of the Council's land holding in Greenbury Close, Barley.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That at 6.1 of the report, the word 'tights' be changed to read 'rights';
- (2) That the support of the Royston & District Committee for the proposed disposal of Council-owned land at Greenbury Close, Barley be noted;
- (3) That the Council-owned land at Greenbury Close, Barley be disposed of on the terms outlined in the report, to the Howard Cottage Society for the construction of a further phase of affordable homes.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: So that the views of Cabinet could be given as part of the consultation process.

137. REFERRAL FROM ROYSTON & DISTRICT COMMITTEE – 16 NOVEMBER 2005 - DISPOSAL OF COUNCIL-OWNED LAND AT MEADOW WAY, THERFIELD

The Chairman of Royston & District Committee, Councillor W.M. Davidson, introduced a referral from the meeting of the Royston & District Committee held on 16 November 2005 regarding the disposal of Council owned land at Meadow Way, Therfield.

The following document was appended to the report:
Appendix A – Location plan showing the extent of the Council's land holding in Meadow Way, Therfield.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the support of the Royston & District Committee for the proposed disposal of Council-owned land at Meadow Way, Therfield be noted;
- (2) That the Council-owned land at Meadow Way, Therfield be disposed of for a nil consideration on the terms outlined in the report, to the Howard Cottage Society for the provision of affordable housing.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: So that the views of Cabinet could be given as part of the consultation process.

138. A NEW TIMETABLE FOR PREPARING PLANNING POLICIES: REVISION TO THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport presented a report of the Head of Planning and Building Control that sought to revise the current Local Development Scheme (LDS) in the light of various changed circumstances since it was published in March 2005.

The Head of Planning and Building Control advised Cabinet that he had met with Government Officials regarding the timetable for the East of England Plan and was awaiting a formal response.

The following document was appended to the report:
Appendix A – Revised LDS.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Revised Local Development Scheme be submitted to the Secretary of State;
- (2) That the Head of Planning and Building Control, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport, be granted delegated powers to agree any amendments to the LDS following comments from GOEast.

REASON FOR DECISION: To keep the LDS up to date.

139. REGIONAL AND STRATEGIC PLANNING ISSUES

The Head of Planning and Building Control presented a report that updated Cabinet about the positions regarding:

- West of the A1(M) at Stevenage;
- The draft East of England Plan;
- Growth Area Liaison for the Luton conurbation;
- Luton & Dunstable Northern Bypasses;
- London Luton Airport and Stansted Airport.
- Cambridge Sub-Region

The following document was appended to the report:
Appendix A – Luton Northern Bypass Route Options/Junction Strategy.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Hertfordshire dwelling figure of 66,000 for the period 2001-2021 and a distribution that would result in North Hertfordshire accommodating 9,700 of these be endorsed;

- (2) That concern be expressed that the Luton Northern Bypass Study did not make clear whether a bypass was needed and, if so, what role it should perform. In addition, the study was not clear on whether the benefits of a full bypass outweighed the impacts on important environmental designations, especially between the A6 and A505. Those points should be addressed as part of the public consultation;
- (3) That the approach as outlined in paragraph 4.39 to growth at Royston be endorsed and that representations to the East of England Plan Public Examination on this basis be made.

REASON FOR DECISIONS: To ensure that the Council's views were taken into account and to ensure that Cabinet was aware of current developments.

140. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2006/2007

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented a report of the Head of Revenues and Benefits that apprised Cabinet that, in accordance with the Local Authority (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992, each December or January, Cabinet is required to set the Council Tax Base for the following financial year.

The following document was appended to the report:
Appendix A, Tax Base 2006/2007 – Council Tax Base by Parish.

The Chairman of Cabinet expressed his thanks to the Council Tax-payers of the district and to relevant officers for the excellent collection rate that was achieved in 2005/2006.

RESOLVED: That the amount calculated by the Council as its Council Tax Base for 2006/2007 shall be £47,952.1 in total and that the individual sums shown in Appendix A of the report for each Parish be agreed.

REASON FOR DECISION: To comply with the legal requirements detailed in 5.1 of the report.

141. SAFETY AND SECURITY IN AND AROUND LETCHWORTH MULTI STOREY CAR PARK

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Waste Management presented a report of the Head of Financial Services that apprised Cabinet about action taken to limit the effects of recent high levels of vandalism in and around the Letchworth multi storey car park and requested that Cabinet make recommendations with regard to other target hardening measures.

The following document was appended to the report:
Appendix A – Photographs depicting the extent of coverage of the CCTV camera recommended in paragraph 4.3 of this report.

The view was expressed that as community safety was of prime concern, the recommendations contained in the report were the right way to proceed.

RESOLVED: That the action taken by officers to reduce the level of vandalism in and around the Letchworth Multi Storey Car Park be endorsed and that the proposed additional target hardening works covered by the budget proposals outlined in paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2 be agreed.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

- (1) To meet the Council's strategic objective to create safer communities with less crime and less fear of crime;

- (3) To reduce the increasing risk of injury to members of staff and public using the car park each day.

142. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES 2006/2007

The Portfolio Holder for Policy presented a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services that sought to assist Cabinet in recommending to Council a Members' Allowances Scheme for 2006/2007.

The following documents were appended to the report:
Appendix 1 Summary of Herts District Councils current Allowances.
Appendix 2 Draft Allowances Scheme 2006/7.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

- (1) That the rates contained within the Scheme of Members' Allowances for 2005/6 be increased by 2.5% and form basis for calculation the Scheme for 2006/2007;
- (2) That the draft Scheme of Members' Allowances for 2006/2007 as set out within appendix B to the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, be approved;
- (3) That the Independent Remuneration Panel be called to consider Allowances for the Licensing and Appeals Committee and the Standards Committee early in the financial year 2006/2007.

REASON FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To ensure that the Council was able to set a viable Scheme of Members' Allowances for 2006/2007.
- (2) To ensure that other potential allowances were kept under consideration.

143. NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE CAPITAL STRATEGY

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented a report of the Head of Financial Services that sought Cabinet's approval of the 2005 Capital Strategy and recommendation that this be adopted by Council.

The following document was appended to the report:
Appendix A – Capital Strategy 2005/06.

RESOLVED: That the Capital Strategy as set out in Appendix A be agreed.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL: That the Capital Strategy as set out in Appendix A be adopted.

REASON FOR DECISION: Council is required to approve the Capital Strategy as an integral part of its Financial Strategy and to ensure that good scores would be achieved under the CPA Use of Resources.

144. DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS 2006-2007

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented a report of the Strategic Director of Finance and Regulatory Services that apprised Cabinet about the Provisional Finance Settlement announced by Government on 5th December 2005 and its likely impact on the Council's finances for 2006-2007.

Cabinet was asked to consider the factors that contributed to the determination of the district council tax level and to recommend an indicative budget level.

The following documents were appended to the report:

Appendix B - List of Savings Items

Appendix C – List of Growth Items

Appendix D – Impact of key pressures on the Precept and Council Tax

Appendix E – Collection Fund Deficit Calculation 2005/06.

Appendix A – Feedback from consultation on Savings and Growth items – was tabled at the meeting, which included comments from area committees.

Cabinet discussed the Savings and Growth items at Appendix A in detail and made the following comments:

- At SP17 'Do not erect hanging baskets', it was agreed that greater sponsorship was needed from local businesses;
- At SP18 'Closure of Pavilions', that the costs of maintaining vandal-proof pavilions was being investigated;
- At SP21 'Reduce subsidy on Letchworth Outdoor Pool', that the intention was not to close pools but to look at the level of subsidies;
- At SP24 'Service Options', it was agreed that the wording be changed to 'Reduce the bureaucratic costs associated with the Costs of Democracy';
- At SP37 'Increase off street Parking Charges', that the letter received from the Royston ratepayers concerning this issue be circulated to Cabinet members;
- At SP38 'Increase CPZ permits', the view was expressed that these schemes should be self supporting and not subsidised by the Council;
- At CG9 'CCTV control room improvements', that East Herts District Council were entering into partnership with NHDC and Stevenage Borough Council, which should result in cost savings to the council.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the implications of the changes in the method of allocating resources to Local Authorities as outlined in the provisional finance settlement be noted;
- (2) That the position relating to the Council's General Fund balance be noted and that due to the risks identified in paragraph 4.2.3, a minimum balance of £1,200,000 had been used in the precept calculations;
- (3) That the inclusion of the Savings and Growth items at Appendix B and C in the budget estimates for 2006/07 be noted;
- (4) That with regard to the Savings and Growth items at Appendix B and C commencing in 2007/08 and onwards, it be noted that those were not included in the base budget estimates for those years but were assumed to be part of that year's savings or growth sum;
- (5) That the provisional level of Precept currently required to provide a balanced budget be noted and that this be used as the draft budget for consultation purposes;
- (6) That it be noted that a sum of £33,000 should be returned to the Collection Fund by way of a contribution from balances
- (7) That this report be referred to Scrutiny, Members via 'Members Information Service' and Business Ratepayer consultation for comment;

- (8) That the comments from the Committees and Member budget workshops on the Savings and Growth options in Appendix A be noted and the changes in the savings options itemised in paragraphs 4.5.4 and 4.5.6. be agreed;
- (9) That the proposal to fund the Strategic Priority Fund from revenue underspends in the year be noted;
- (10) That it be noted that the provisional Council Tax requirement may be subject to change at the final meeting on 31st January 2006 by which time final government grant figures should be available.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS:

- (1) To ensure that all relevant factors were taken into consideration when arriving at the proposed Council Tax precept for 2006/07;
- (2) To ensure that Cabinet recommended a balanced budget to Council on 9th February 2006.

145. PROCUREMENT PROCESS FOR HITCHIN FRIDAY FRANCHISED BRIC A BRAC MARKET

The Project Manager (Leisure) presented a report of the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services that sought Cabinet's comments regarding the procurement process for the Council's Friday Franchised Bric a Brac Market at Hitchin.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To comply with Council's Standing Order 6.1, E, 5.

146. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press were excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 7 and 10 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

147. PROCUREMENT PROCESS FOR HITCHIN FRIDAY FRANCHISED BRIC A BRAC MARKET

- (1) That Members' comments be noted;
- (2) That a single tender option for the Hitchin Friday Franchised Bric a Brac Market be agreed.

The meeting closed at 9.30 p.m.

Chairman