

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**Meeting held at Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City  
on 28 February 2006**

**Minutes**

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

**IN ATTENDANCE:** *Chief Executive, Strategic Director of Financial and Regulatory Services, Strategic Director of Customer Services, Head of Community Development and Cultural Services, Head of Financial Services, Head of Planning and Building Control, Head of Legal & Democratic Services, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance, Head of Revenues and Benefits, Legal and Democratic Manager and Committee and Member Services Officer.*

**ALSO PRESENT:** *Councillors J. Cunningham (Chairman of PARC), Mrs Sarah Wren (Children and Young People's Champion), S.K. Jarvis and Lawrence Oliver.*

**170. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors W.M. Davidson and A.D. Young.

**171. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the meetings of Cabinet held on 17 and 31 January 2006 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and signed by the Chairman.

**172. NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman informed Cabinet that the following items had been circulated prior to the meeting:

- Agenda item 10 – Community Management of Hitchin Town Hall
- Recommendation to Cabinet from the Finance Scrutiny Sub Group meeting on 23 February 2006.

**173. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

**174. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

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

**175. ITEM REFERRED FROM THE MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE, AUDIT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE – 24 NOVEMBER 2005 – DEVELOPMENT OF A LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT FOR HERTFORDSHIRE – PROGRESS TO DATE**

The referral from the Performance, Audit and Review Committee was noted. It was agreed to consider this referral under item 12 on the agenda.

**176. ITEM REFERRED FROM THE MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE, AUDIT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE – 24 NOVEMBER 2005 – EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE**

The Chairman of the Performance, Audit & Review Committee (PARC) presented a Minute of the meeting of PARC held on 24 November 2005 in respect of the Equality and Diversity Development update (Minute 71 refers). A copy of the report considered by PARC was included with the agenda.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the proposal to re-schedule dates for the achievement of Level 4 to 31 March 2007 and the achievement of Level 5 at 31 March 2008 of the Local Government Equality Standard be agreed;
- (2) That future updates regarding Equality and Diversity Development be referred to the Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs.

**177. REGIONAL AND STRATEGIC PLANNING ISSUES**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport introduced a report of the Head of Planning and Building Control that apprised Cabinet of the current 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.
- Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan 2006/07 – 2010/11.

The Head of Planning and Building Control advised Cabinet that with reference to paragraph 4.13 of the report, increase in capacity was bench marked by noise contours, not number of passengers and that Luton Airport had not broken the rules. The following documents were appended to the report:

Appendix A - BAA Stansted Generation 2, Consultation by BAA.  
Appendix B - *Text of response to HCC* Re: Local Transport Plan.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That officers be authorised to respond to the Stansted consultation as set out in Appendix A to the report;
- (2) That the other items listed in the report be noted;
- (3) That the response to the Local Transport Plan as set out in Appendix B to the report be endorsed.

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

**178. DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT: VEHICLE PARKING PROVISION AT NEW DEVELOPMENT AND ASSOCIATED SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL AND STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transport introduced a report of the Strategic Director of Financial and Regulatory Services that sought the adoption by Council of the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Vehicle Parking Provision at New Development following completion of the public consultation period. The SPD with proposed changes shown was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The following documents were appended to the report:

Appendix 1 - Supplementary Planning Guidance on Vehicle Parking Provision at New Development incorporating proposed changes.

Appendix 2 - Statutory Consultation Phase – Representations.

**RESOLVED:** That the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Vehicle Parking Provision at New Development be agreed.

**RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:** That the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Vehicle Parking Provision at New Development be adopted.

**REASON FOR DECISIONS:** There is a need for the Council to adopt guidance on vehicle parking at new development to avoid a policy vacuum and ensure local interpretation of strategic, regional and national policy and standards on parking provision at new development.

**179. CHILDREN'S TRUST PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS FOR HERTFORDSHIRE AND CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN**

Councillor Mrs Sarah Wren (Children and Young People's Champion) presented a report of the Head of Community Development and Cultural Services that apprised Cabinet of the latest developments on the County Council's Children's Trust Partnership arrangements and the new Children and Young People's Plan for Hertfordshire 2006/2007.

Cabinet agreed that any request for funding to support this initiative should be carefully considered as and when received.

The following documents were appended to the report:

Appendix 1 - Proposals for Governance and Accountability Arrangements for the Hertfordshire Children's Trust Partnership

Appendix 2 - Hertfordshire Children's Trust Partnership Framework

Appendix 3 - Hertfordshire Children's Trust Planning Framework.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the arrangements that had been put in place to establish a Children's Trust Partnership for Hertfordshire be agreed and that the Director of Children's Services be advised accordingly;
- (2) That the Hertfordshire Children and Young People's Plan 2006/2007 be agreed and that it be noted that a more detailed plan for North Hertfordshire would be submitted for consideration in the near future;
- (3) That the Non Statutory Guidance on the Role of District Councils in Improving Outcomes for Children be noted;

- (4) That any request for funding to support the Children's Trust Partnership would be referred to appropriate Heads of Service and Portfolio Holders for a decision.

**REASON FOR DECISIONS:** To ensure compliance with key legislation to improve the well-being of children and young people as set out in the Children Act 2004 and the Every Child Matters – Change for Children programme.

#### **180. HITCHIN TOWN HALL – UPDATE**

The Head of Community Development and Cultural Services tabled a report that apprised Cabinet of the revised proposals submitted by the Hitchin Town Centre Initiative (HTCI) for the lease of the Town Hall and transfer of management responsibility from the Council to the Hitchin Town Centre Initiative Community Interest Company with effect from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2006.

Cabinet was asked to consider the HTCI proposal in the light of the need for consideration of alternative options for the future use of the Town Hall.

Cabinet agreed that there was still insufficient information about the proposals submitted by the HTCI and that time should be taken to ensure that the right decision was made. The Chairman of Cabinet expressed the view that HTCI should not feel depressed that there may be other interested operators.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That it be noted that a multi-strand approach to the future of the Hitchin Town Hall was being progressed and would be investigated further, namely:

That the Strategic Director of Finance & Regulatory Services will undertake initial market testing to identify whether there are any other interested operators who would be prepared to consider taking on the management or leasing of the Hitchin Town Hall.

- (2) That, if deemed necessary, an emergency meeting to determine the most appropriate course of action to be taken would be convened.

**REASONS FOR DECISIONS:**

- (1) The option presented by the HTCI to manage the Hitchin Town Hall from a more community perspective offers an improved opportunity to bring in external investment for the premises and develop a new, expanded programme of activities. Consideration of this proposal within a wider options appraisal will enable the Council to determine the best approach to this matter;
- (2) This also helps the Council make the savings it requires under the Service and Financial Planning process 2006/7, without losing the service provision.

#### **181. IMPLEMENTATION OF 'ALCOHOL FREE' ZONE FOR ROYSTON**

The Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Rural Affairs introduced a report of the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance that sought the endorsement of the establishment of an Alcohol Free Zone in Royston Town Centre.

The Head of Policy, Partnership and Performance confirmed that there was support from Herts Constabulary for this initiative and further advised that its progress could be monitored through existing community safety performance reporting.

The following document was appended to the report:  
Appendix 1 – Map of proposed zone at Royston.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the establishment of an alcohol free zone in Royston for an initial two year period be approved and that an appropriate order be made and publicised;
- (2) That the expenditure of £1720 as detailed at 6.1 of the report be approved;
- (3) That the effectiveness of the alcohol free zone in Royston be reported to Cabinet on a six monthly basis from the date of its establishment.

**RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:** That an alcohol free zone in Royston Town Centre be established for an initial two year period and that an appropriate order be made and publicised.

**REASON FOR DECISIONS:** That the establishment of an alcohol free zone would reduce the impact of antisocial behaviour through drinking in Royston Town Centre and particularly, the Priory Memorial Gardens.

**182. DEVELOPMENT OF A LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT FOR HERTFORDSHIRE – REPORT ON PROGRESS AND AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE TO PARTICIPATE**

The Chairman of the Performance, Audit and Review Committee (PARC) presented a report of the Head of Policy, Partnerships and Performance that updated Cabinet on the progress on the development of the Local Area Agreement for Hertfordshire. The report also contained information regarding the potential for resourcing a number of the targets still to be established, together with proposals regarding how this Authority and its partners could benefit in financial terms from participating in this Agreement.

The referral from the Performance, Audit and Review Committee was considered with this item.

At paragraph 4.5 of the report, it was agreed that the word 'equally' be deleted from the sentence that commenced 'The remaining 50% will then be allocated ...'

The following document was appended to the report:  
Appendix A - Stretch Targets analysis.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the progress made to date be noted;
- (2) That the proposals to distribute the pump priming and reward grants throughout Hertfordshire be noted;
- (3) That it be agreed in principle that NHDC should participate in this project, given that agreement to sign up to individual targets was in accordance with the Authority's existing strategic direction and objectives;

- (4) That the following recommendations from PARC be agreed;
  - (i) That the selected targets from the list of 40 overarching targets within the four theme blocks for the Local Area Agreement for Hertfordshire be agreed;
  - (ii) That the proposal for PARC to monitor establishment of and delivery against individual targets for inclusion in the Local Area Agreement for Hertfordshire be agreed.

**REASONS FOR DECISIONS:**

- (1) The funding proposals put forward by Herts County Council would help to reassure our members that the reward for effort would be equally rewarded regardless of individual ability to influence or deliver a specific target;
- (2) The proposals for consultation with districts at this stage would ensure that the views of elected members would also be taken into account with the development of targets, which were still to be finalised.

**183. REVIEW OF COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS FOR LONG TERM EMPTY PROPERTY**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented a report of the Head of Revenues and Benefits that sought agreement of a schedule of properties to be excluded from the provisions of the decision made by Cabinet on 13 January 2004 under Section 11A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as inserted by the Local Government Act 2003 to reduce the Council Tax Discount on long term empty property to zero. The report also sought agreement of a process for deciding any further additions to the schedule.

The following document was appended to the report:  
Appendix A – List of Affected Properties.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That those properties listed at Appendix A to the report be excluded from the provision under Section 11A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as inserted by the Local Government Act 2003 to reduce the Council Tax Discount on long term empty property to zero, as agreed by the Cabinet on 13 January 2004;
- (2) That those properties listed at Appendix A to the report be subject to a Discount of 50% should they remain un-occupied and un-furnished for a period exceeding 6 months;
- (3) That the decision to amend the schedule in future be delegated to the Head of Revenues and Benefits in conjunction with the Finance Portfolio Holder.

**REASON FOR DECISIONS:** To assist those charities providing accommodation for charitable purposes and to meet the strategic objectives to target resources at areas of disadvantage in the District to reduce social exclusion and improve the quality of life for everyone and to ensure that we listen to our citizens and deliver high quality, value for money, customer-focused services.

**184. APRIL TO DECEMBER 3RD QUARTERLY REVENUE MONITORING REPORT FOR 2005/06**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented a report of the Head of Financial Services that appraised the Cabinet of the summary position on income and expenditure for the period April to December 2005 for the General Fund and the Council's trading accounts.

The report highlighted only significant variances to members and included the progress of any carry forwards requested by officers for inclusion in the 2005/06 accounts, which were not projected to be spent, within this financial year.

The report also highlighted savings and growth agreed by members as part of 2005/06 Service and Financial Planning process, which were not projected to be spent or saved, within the financial year and updated members on the progress of the vacancy control and organisational restructure savings which were included within the General Fund budgets.

The following documents were appended to the report:

Appendix A - Treasury Management

Appendix B - Requested Carry Forwards 2006/07.

***RESOLVED:***

- (1) That the report be noted;
- (2) That the transfer of vacancy control savings of £53k into the strategic priorities fund be agreed and any further savings identified in February and March up to a total of £100k be agreed;
- (3) That the Carry Forward budgets in Appendix B to the report and the carry forward of the balance on the strategic priorities fund at the year end, up to a total of £100k, be agreed;
- (4) That the projected General Fund budget of £16.562million be agreed.

***REASONS FOR DECISIONS:***

- (1) Members are able to monitor and request appropriate action of Directorates who do not meet the budget targets set as part of the Service and Financial Planning process.
- (2) That changes to the Council's balances are monitored and approved.
- (3) That Carry Forward requests for 2006/07 are approved.

**185. CAPITAL PROGRAMME –2005/06 ONWARDS**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance presented a report of the Head of Financial Services that updated Cabinet on the capital programme for 2005/06, indicating its impact upon the 2006/07 programme and upon available capital funding resources. Cabinet's approval was sought to changes to individual scheme expenditure for 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08.

The referral from Finance Scrutiny Sub Group held on 23 February 2006 was considered with this item.

Cabinet agreed that steps should be taken to seek to improve the forecasting of the actual timing of capital schemes and their associated need for funding.

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

**RESOLVED:** That the changes to the provisional capital programme for 2005/2006 onwards be agreed.

**REASON FOR DECISION:** Cabinet is required to approve the revisions to the capital programme for 2005/2006 and onwards as detailed in appendix A to the report.

The meeting ended at 9.03 p.m.

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Chairman