

## **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, AT 10.00AM ON 4 SEPTEMBER 2012**

Present:

<b>Councillors</b>	<b>Cabinet Member responsibility</b>
P J Martin	Leader of the Council (Chairman)
D M Finch	Deputy Leader, Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation Programme (Vice Chairman)
J Aldridge	Adults Social Care
K Bentley	Economic Growth, Waste and Recycling
S C Castle	Education, Lifelong Learning and the 2012 Games
R Gooding	Children's Services
D J Louis	Highways and Transportation
J R Lucas	Customer Services, Environment and Culture

Councillors M Mackrory and Mrs T Higgins were present as Opposition Observers.

Councillors Mrs A Brown, G Butland, Mrs P Channer, W J C Dick, R Howard, N Hume, M Page, J Pike, C Pond, Mrs I Pummell, C Riley, S Walsh and R Walters also attended.

### **1. Leader's Opening Remarks**

The Leader of the Council highlighted the Council's commitment to openness and transparency and referred to the following developments:

- This was the first Cabinet Meeting at which Members who were neither Cabinet Members or Opposition Observers would have the opportunity to question Cabinet Members on the items under consideration. He described the procedure to be followed during the meeting.
- The Council would shortly become the first to publish details of all its expenditure. This was in excess of the current requirement to publish details of expenditure above £500 and the proposed reduction of this limit to £250.

### **2. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors J Jowers and A Naylor.

### **3. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2012 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **4. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

#### **5. Economic Growth Strategy**

The Cabinet considered report FP/869/06/12 by the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Waste and Recycling which sought agreement to the Essex Economic Growth Strategy (EGS) The proposed Strategy was attached to the report as an appendix. In introducing the report, the Cabinet Member thanked officers and members for their work in preparing it.

Councillor Mackrory welcomed the Strategy and referred to the significant work that would be involved in its implementation and delivery. He highlighted the importance of addressing issues such as the gap between the skills possessed by young people leaving school and those required by employers, capability in engineering and traffic congestion (as part of efforts to encourage employers to locate in Essex).

In reiterating the importance for Essex residents to acquire appropriate skills, the Cabinet Member for Education, Lifelong Learning and the 2012 Games stated that the issue was being addressed as part of the work on community budgets. He stressed the need for central government support to facilitate new ways of working.

The Leader of the Council expressed his support for the Strategy and thanked all involved for their work.

#### **Resolved:**

- (1) That the Essex Economic Growth Strategy document attached as an appendix to the report be agreed.
- (2) That the priority actions identified in the report be progressed through the budget-setting process during Summer 2012 in preparation for the financial year 2013/14.
- (3) That, once developed, the implementation plan to support the delivery of the Strategy be submitted to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

#### **6. Country Parks Strategy**

The Cabinet considered report FP/900/08/12 by the Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Environment and Culture which advised of the intention to advertise the opportunity of taking a commercial lease of Marsh Farm visitor attraction and separately, the opportunity to enter into a service or concession/partnership arrangement for the future operation of Cressing Temple Barns heritage site..

Arising from consideration of the report, the Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Environment and Culture advised that the decision to grant any lease or award any contract would be brought back to a future meeting.

In response to questions by Councillor Mrs Higgins, the Cabinet Member advised that TUPE would apply to any staff transferred to a new employer and that developments in respect of Marsh Farm and Cressing Temple would be progressed as soon as possible (although the process in respect of Cressing Temple was likely to take longer).

Also in response to a question by Councillor Mrs Higgins it was agreed that Cabinet reports should in future include links to Equality Impact Assessments.

In response to a questions by Councillor Butland and Councillor Pond concerning Cressing Temple, the Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Environment and Culture commented on the consultation process that had been followed and agreed to consider the establishment of an advisory group of interested bodies.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That approval be given to advertise for bids for a commercial lease of Marsh Farm visitor attraction to be run as a family visitor attraction in line with existing user rights.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Director of Essex Property and Facilities, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation Programme and the Cabinet Member for Customer Services, Environment and Culture, to negotiate the final terms of the lease.
- (3) That the land surrounding the visitor attraction known as Marsh Farm County Park remain under the management and in the ownership of Essex County Council.
- (4) That opportunities be advertised for partnership working by way of a service contract or concession at Cressing Temple Barns heritage site.
- (5) That Cressing Temple Barns remain under the management and in the ownership of Essex County Council.
- (6) That the grant of the lease or award of any contract be submitted to a future meeting of the Cabinet for approval.

**7. Essex Countywide Traveller Unit**

The Cabinet considered report FP/868//06/12 by the Cabinet Member for Communities and Planning (presented in his absence by the Leader of the Council) which provided an update on the development and funding arrangements for the Essex Countywide Traveller Unit (ECTU) partnership and

sought agreement for the Council to enter into Joint Committee arrangements with partner authorities across Essex. The Cabinet was required to agree to accept delegation of powers from these authorities in order for it to carry out the functions of the Joint Committee.

In response to Councillor Mrs Higgins, the Leader of the Council agreed to make the Cabinet Member for Communities and Planning aware of her comments regarding the need for the Joint Committee to include Member representation and as to whether it may be possible to seek Government action to allow Primary Care Trusts and their successors to become full members. He commented that the ECTU's performance would be monitored at the regular meetings held between Leaders of the Councils in Essex.

In response to a question by Councillor Mrs Pummell, the Cabinet Member for Education, Lifelong Learning and the 2012 Games commented on the importance of increasing the participation rate for children of traveller families in education beyond Key Stage 2 and described ongoing work on the issue.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That approval be given to enter into a Joint Committee for the purposes of providing an operational unit which will establish a sustainable service which will co-ordinate and, where appropriate, undertake or contract for work relating to traveller issues throughout Essex, including fire safety on sites, improving education outcomes, health and social care, management of local authority sites and management and enforcement of unauthorised encampments;
- (2) That delegated powers be accepted from partner authorities across Essex to act on their behalf in respect of the above functions; and
- (3) That the Council oversee the day to day operation of the functions through the already-established ECTU.

**8. Community Asset Transfer Policy**

The Cabinet considered report FP/884/07/12 by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation Programme which sought approval to adopt a Community Asset Transfer Policy.

Community Asset Transfer is the process by which smaller parcels of land assets held by Essex county Council (EC) are transferred to local community groups. This has the advantage of empowering the community (in line with the Government's Localism agenda) and also of reducing the ongoing maintenance costs to the Authority where there is limited medium or longer term use of the asset proposed. The proposed policy had been developed to provide a clear transparent basis for the consideration of applications for the transfer of assets to the community.

In introducing the report, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation Programme advised that the Chairman of the Executive Scrutiny Committee had agreed that the Committee would review the effectiveness of the policy in six to twelve months' time.

In response to questions by Councillor Mrs Higgins and Councillor Mackrory , the Cabinet Member advised that the list of Council assets was due to be made available online shortly and he offered clarification as to the method for determining the current use value of assets in a poor state of repair.

**Resolved:**

That the Community Asset Transfer Policy attached an appendix to the report be adopted.

**9. Decisions taken by or in consultation with Cabinet Members**

The Cabinet received report FP/878/07/12 by the Secretary to the Cabinet listing the decisions taken since the last meeting.

The meeting closed at 10.40am.