

# Forest Heath District Council

**MINUTES** of the **CABINET** held at the District Offices, College Heath Road, Mildenhall on Tuesday 3 July 2012 at 6.00pm.

## **PRESENT:**

Councillors:

|                           |             |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| J E Waters (Leader)       | S J Edwards |
| N A Roman (Deputy Leader) | W Hirst     |
| D W Bowman                | R J Millar  |
| Mrs R E Burt              |             |

Councillors T J Huggan, C Noble and N Williams were also in attendance.

Also in attendance:

I Gallin, Chief Executive  
P Heard, Legal Services Manager  
R Littlechild, Head of HR and Corporate Support  
K Marley, Head of Environmental Services  
N McCurdy, Strategic Director (Services)  
S Phelan, Head of Community Services  
L Pope, Head of Finance, ICT, Internal Audit and Procurement  
J Rees, Head of Corporate Development  
H Hardinge, Committee Administrator

## **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence.

### 072. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no questions/statements from members of the public.

### 073. **CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 May 2012 were unanimously accepted by the Cabinet as an accurate record and signed by the Leader.

### 074. **MINUTES OF JOINT COMMITTEES, WORKING GROUPS AND OTHER GROUPS**

The minutes of the following Working Group were received:

Local Development Framework Working Group

8 May 2012

075. **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK WORKING GROUP – 8 MAY 2012 – MINUTE NO 238. ‘CORE STRATEGY POLICY CS7 SINGLE ISSUE REVIEW “ISSUES AND OPTIONS”, (REGULATION 18) CONSULTATION’ (REPORT NO LDF12/085)**

Members were requested to note the recommendations listed under this item, as they were subject to a future report to be presented to Cabinet.

Councillor N Williams raised a question with regard to this item and asked whether an amended housing figure had been agreed upon for Newmarket and, if so, what perceived impact this was likely to have on the town’s surrounding villages. The Cabinet Member for Families and Communities responded to the question, in his capacity as Chairman of the Local Development Framework Working Group, and explained that no amended figures had been confirmed for the District as they were subject to the public consultation process and he encouraged all present to encourage the community to take part in this important conversation.

076. **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK WORKING GROUP – 8 MAY 2012 – MINUTE NO 239. ‘LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – JOINT AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT’ (REPORT NO LDF12/086)**

Members were requested to note the recommendation listed under this item, as it was subject to a future report to be presented to Cabinet.

077. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

With the vote being unanimous, it was

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the respective Working Group be approved, as amended, and that authority is hereby given for such action to be taken as necessary to give effect thereto.

**KEY DECISIONS**

078. **INTERIM HOUSING STRATEGY AND LOCAL TENANCY STRATEGY (REPORT NO CAB12/010)** (Forward Plan Reference JUL12(A)/06)

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Housing and Transport explained that the Strategy seeking Cabinet’s approval aimed to directly deliver one of the Council’s strategic priorities ‘Housing – Meeting the District’s Housing Need’; and the actions within the Strategy were framed around that priority.

The interim Strategy had been developed to cover the period until a joint housing strategy was developed with St Edmundsbury Borough Council; the joint review process being due to commence later in 2012.

The Cabinet Member drew attention to page 6 of the Strategy, attached as Appendix 1 of Report No CAB12/010, and the reference therein to Mildenhall's population. She explained that the figure listed for the town as 8,361 was incorrect and would be amended to read 9,906.

The Cabinet Member also made reference to a document which had been tabled to the meeting which set out some amendments in respect of page 23 of the Strategy, concerning a paragraph under the sub-heading 'Land Availability' which had now been amended to read:

- *"Further sites **which have subsequently become** capable of being developed (**garage sites**) were included in the transfer to the new organisation although not factored into the valuation of the transfer. The Local Investment Plan agreed with the Homes and Communities Agency is largely based on the development of these sites within the ownership of Flagship housing. However these sites are not being brought forward for development at this time **and the Council will seek to continue to work positively to enable development where possible.**"*

Councillor Huggan raised a query with regard to the proposed amendment, above, and asked that in the event of the development of garage sites that due consideration be given to allowing adequate alternative parking for any displaced vehicles. The Head of Community Services took the point on board and explained that in the instances where garage sites had been developed, to date, it had been at sites where the garages were unused and redundant.

Lastly, the Cabinet Member asked that her thanks be recorded to the Officers from across the Council who had assisted in the development of the Strategy, in particular the Strategic Housing Service Manager and Councillor D W Bowman, in his capacity as former Member Champion for Affordable and Accessible Housing.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

**RECOMMENDED:**

That:-

1. The Interim Housing Strategy, including those amendments as advised at the meeting, be approved;
2. The Local Tenancy Strategy be approved for public consultation; and
3. Officers be requested to bring back a paper setting out the options for the Administration's longer term position with regard to the provision of new affordable housing in the District.

079. **HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY (REPORT NO CAB12/011)** (Forward Plan Reference JUL12(A)/04)

The Cabinet Member for Planning, Housing and Transport explained that Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council had similar priorities in terms of their overall approach to housing and both Councils offered equivalent types of financial assistance/grant around meeting these objectives; therefore the

revised Policy before Cabinet sought to combine these into one document. Furthermore, in view of the ongoing shared services agenda, developing a common policy and approach to providing housing assistance was seen as a sensible way forward.

Cabinet's attention was drawn to Paragraph 9 of Report No CAB12/011, which set out the main changes to the Policy and the Cabinet Member thanked Environmental Services Officers from both authorities for their input into the development of the document.

Questions were raised with regard to the reallocation of social housing which had been subject to some form of grant funded modification, the Head of Community Services assured Cabinet that when a home became available and was able to be bid upon by those on the housing register any special adaptations were indicated so that the most suitable new tenant could be matched to the property.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

**RECOMMENDED:**

That:-

1. The Policy be approved for implementation from 1 October 2012; and
2. The Head of Service, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Housing and Transport, be authorised to make any minor typographical, factual, spelling and grammatical changes to the document, provided they do not materially affect the substance or meaning of the Strategy.

080. **COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT LOCALISATION (REPORT NO CAB12/012)** (Forward Plan Reference JUL12(A)/02)

The Cabinet Member for Resources, Governance and Performance advised Cabinet that Central Government required councils to consult on their draft scheme for council tax support that they intend to operate from April 2013.

In line with DCLG advice, the report recommended that Forest Heath consults on a variant of the current scheme, given the timescale available to develop a fully local scheme in this first year of change.

Further to questions raised by Councillor T J Huggan, the Head of Finance, ICT, Internal Audit and Procurement spoke in detail on the anticipated timeline that Officers were working to. She also advised Cabinet that a Project Manager had been appointed to manage implementation of the scheme for each of the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership authorities.

The Cabinet Member advised of minor amendments to the wording of the recommendations, as set out in Report No CAB12/012, following which it was duly proposed and seconded and with the vote being unanimous, it was

**RESOLVED:**

That:-

1. The Chief Financial Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Governance and Performance and Leader, be given Delegated Authority to determine the consultation requirement, process and draft scheme; and
2. A draft local council tax support scheme be published for consultation, in order to meet the statutory timetable to approve a final scheme before the end of January 2013 and to model affordability as part of the Council's medium term financial planning.

081. **JOINT WORKING WITH CANCER OR CRITICAL ILLNESS POLICY (REPORT NO CAB12/013)** (Forward Plan Reference JUL12(A)/05)

The Cabinet Member for Resources, Governance and Performance advised Cabinet that a joint policy had been developed in order to give guidance and support to employees who were diagnosed with cancer or any other critical illness.

It also covered Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury's approach to employees who had a family member diagnosed with cancer and/or who became carers for someone diagnosed with cancer.

Cabinet were advised that the Policy had been previously presented to UNISON and the Joint Consultative Working Group, both of whom had endorsed the document.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

**RECOMMENDED:**

That the Working with Cancer or Critical Illness Joint Policy be adopted.

082. **REVIEW OF THE FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS (REPORT NO CAB12/014)**

The Leader of the Council asked Cabinet to review the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period July 2012 to March 2013.

The Chief Executive and Solicitor jointly advised on the following amendments which were to be made to the Plan:

- *3 July 2012 – Ref Jul12(a)/08 'Home of Horseracing – Implementation of Construction Project'*  
This item had been deferred from 3 July 2012 to the Cabinet meeting on 31 July 2012.
- *31 July 2012 – Ref Jul12(b)/01 'Adoption of Management Team Restructure Proposals'*  
This item was to be reported straight to Council without a prior report to Cabinet.
- *31 July 2012 – Ref Jul12(b)/03 'Adoption of Shared Service Business Plan for Procurement'*

This item was to be deferred from 31 July 2012 to the Cabinet meeting on 4 September 2012.

- *31 July 2012 – Ref Jul12(b)/04 ‘Draft Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement’*

This item was to be reported straight to Council without a prior report to Cabinet.

- *31 July 2012 – Ref Jul12(b)/07 ‘Air Quality Strategy’*

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee had requested consideration of this report, therefore, in order to enable this to take place this item was to be deferred from 31 July 2012 to the Cabinet meeting on 6 November 2012.

With the vote being unanimous, it was

**RESOLVED:**

That the Forward Plan of Key Decisions, for the period July 2012 – March 2013, attached as an Appendix to Report No CAB12/014, be noted subject to the amendments as advised verbally at the meeting.

The meeting closed at 6.35pm.