

CABINET

MONDAY, 12 DECEMBER 2022 - 2.00 PM



PRESENT: Councillor C Boden (Chairman), Councillor Mrs J French (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor S Clark, Councillor S Count, Councillor Miss S Hoy, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor Mrs D Laws, Councillor C Seaton and Councillor S Tierney

CAB42/22 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2022 were confirmed and signed as an accurate record.

CAB43/22 DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN 2023/24

Members considered the Draft Business Plan 2023/24 report presented by Councillor Tierney.

Councillor Tierney stated that he was pleased to commend what he regarded as a well presented and good report.

Councillor Boden said that as the document will be going out to public consultation there is one point he would like to raise and see reflected in the document and that is the importance of the new transformation process that the Council will be undertaking as to the way in which decisions are made and the way in which this council operates. That is going to be of fundamental importance to the future of the Council and is something that will be initiated in the next financial year, and it is his view that it needs greater prominence in the report than it does currently.

Proposed by Councillor Tierney, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and Cabinet AGREED to approve the Draft Business Plan 2023-24 for public consultation.

CAB44/22 DRAFT BUDGET & MTFS 2023/24

Members considered the Draft Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Boden said he wanted to pay particular credit to Mark Saunders, Chief Accountant, as well as other officers, for putting this report together saying that is getting more difficult each year to produce a meaningful and accurate set of figures at this stage of the process.

Councillor Mrs French said she too congratulated officers for an exceptional job, but she also wanted to thank Councillor Boden for overseeing and scrutinising every penny that goes through the Council.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Benney and Cabinet AGREED that:-

- (i) the draft budget proposals for 2023/24 be approved for consultation;**
- (ii) the revised General Fund Budget and revised Capital Programme for 2022/23 be approved; and**

(iii) the proposed Capital Programme for 2023-2026 be approved.

CAB45/22 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT & ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY MID-YEAR REVIEW 2022/23

Members considered the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Mid-Year Review 2022/23 report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Tierney said when a council has gone wrong and finances and borrowing are out of control, then people focus on that but when a council is well managed and finances are stable, then we should also recognise the good work done by people who know what they are doing so he paid tribute to officers and Councillor Boden for their sound financial decisions and he thanked all involved in the work behind this report. Councillor Boden thanked Councillor Tierney, stating that the day-to-day operational decisions about where the Council places its funds are made entirely by officers and all credit is due to them. However, what members and officers have done collectively is to ensure the Council maintains as much cash balance as possible and that means we are able to earn that much more in investment income.

Cabinet AGREED to note the report.

CAB46/22 FDC FORMAL RESPONSE TO FENS RESERVOIR CONSULTATION

Members considered the FDC Formal Response to Fens Reservoir Consultation report presented by Councillor Laws.

Councillor Laws said it needs to be registered that Fenland District Council recognises the effort by Anglian Water, acting together with Cambridge Water, to engage and collaborate with the council and other stakeholders in the plans for the Fens Reservoir. This is a project for long-term water security in the region that also impacts on various cross-boundary issues such as transport, flood risk, environment, and community. The Council also recognises the pressure it places to expedite this project. Councillor Laws added that the Council is very keen to engage in working with Anglian Water and Cambridge Water to develop this project in collaboration.

Councillor Mrs French said she fully supports the scheme. She attended a flood meeting just this morning attended by Middle Level and Anglian Water. The chairman of the Navigations Committee pointed out the hundreds of thousands of pounds it has cost Middle Level over the years to pump, so she asked if they would be looking to pump into the reservoir to save such a vast sum of money, and the answer is yes they are working together. Councillor Boden said that was very positive to hear.

Councillor Count said he agreed with the responses made on behalf of this Council and the letter sent but he would like to draw attention to the word 'potential'. Here is a proposal from Anglian Water to build a reservoir for the supply of water to homes. The consultation papers show drawings of people windsurfing, fishing, rowing a boat etc. However, when looking at the detail behind those parts of the consultation, the words 'potential', 'work with partners' and 'could be made to happen' are used. Councillor Count stressed that as we go through this process it is essential that those move from potentials to deliverables. He said it will be a fantastic asset for us all if so, but if it just delivers the core purpose then it will be an eyesore on a very bland landscape. Therefore, we should embrace this opportunity and keep a close eye on converting potentials into reality.

Councillor Tierney said this is fantastic news, of course we need the water but the aspects for leisure are incredible and will be such a boon for the area. However, Councillor Count raises an important point because there is a danger of slippage on some projects like this where early promises are never fulfilled, and we must keep an eye on this. It will be awesome if it delivers as

promised.

Councillor Boden said that the comments made by Councillor Count and Councillor Tierney are highly valid and that we must all be alert to the danger that what has been promised somehow slips away. What has not been mentioned is the effect this will have on jobs and skills; this construction process will probably be the largest in Fenland since the 17th century when the Fens were drained. Some of the skills involved are in short supply so this will involve much training and a lot of planning and will provide many transferable skills that residents will be able to obtain and utilise for the future.

Councillor Laws added that there have been significant discussions around the focus on employing local people, but it is important to note that apprenticeship opportunities will be offered to provide young people with a chance to gain skills. Councillor Boden agreed and added that there will also be massive opportunities in the supply chain to many local businesses for years to come and we must ensure that both Fenland businesses and residents are in the strongest possible position to take the maximum advantage of this once in a generation opportunity.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Benney and Cabinet AGREED that:

- **the Council's formal response to the Fens Reservoir consultation and the draft letter from the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth be approved and recommended to Council for agreement; and**
- **authority be delegated to the Corporate Director in consultation with the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth to make any changes that may be required.**

CAB47/22 CARBON REDUCTION AND CLIMATE ADAPTATION

Members considered the Carbon Reduction and Climate Adaptation report and action plan presented by Councillor Tierney.

Proposed by Councillor Tierney, seconded by Councillor Hoy and Cabinet AGREED that:

- **it be recommended to Council that the adoption of the Carbon Reduction and Climate Adaptation report and related action plan be approved;**
- **Appendix A of Part 3, Table 4 of the Constitution is amended so as to also include reference to the Environment Act 2021 and so as to enable officers to fulfil Fenland District Council's obligations under that Act in accordance with their ordinary delegations; and**
- **authority be delegated to portfolio holders to take forward the actions in the plan in line with their portfolio holder responsibilities.**

CAB48/22 LAND TRANSFER - WISBECH & CHATTERIS

Members considered the Land Transfer – Wisbech and Chatteris report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Mrs French said she welcomed this report; we have been talking about this land in Wisbech for years so hopes that when it is transferred, something happens with it.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Hoy and Cabinet AGREED to:

- **approve the land transfer of FDC owned land at The Elms, Chatteris at the value of £200,000 to FFL as determined by the independent red book valuation in Appendix A;**
- **approve the land transfer of FDC owned land at Nene Waterfront, Wisbech at the value of £1 to FFL as determined by the independent red book valuation in Appendix**

B; and

- **instruct the FDC Legal Team to prepare land transfer documents.**

(Councillor Boden, Councillor Tierney, and Councillor Benney declared their membership of the Investment Board but stated they were not predetermined and would keep an open mind).

CAB49/22 WISBECH HIGH STREET UPDATE

Members considered the Wisbech High Street update report presented by Councillor Seaton.

Councillor Hoy said if we do go down the affordable route in respect of 11-12 High Street, then she would be keen for there to be a local lettings policy. Councillor Seaton agreed that would not be a problem and thanked Councillor Hoy.

Councillor Count said that he noted in respect of 24 High Street, it references that the CPCA wants affordable housing; it references separately that there will be a specific lettings policy. He asked if the only difference with the lettings policy is in relation to the fact that this is for affordable tenure and that there are no other differences to be made aware of. Councillor Hoy said that she believed this had been put in at her request because her concern was that if there was not a local lettings policy in place and it was just left as affordable, we could not control who the properties were let to. Given the central location of the property and some of the issues in the town centre perhaps we should be selective about who we let the units to. Councillor Count thanked Councillor Hoy for the clarification and said that makes perfect sense. Councillor Boden added that the reference to affordability is just a matter of percentage of market rental value, which would be a maximum of 80%.

Councillor Tierney stated that he is relaxed about the final use within the specification that Councillor Hoy has already raised but what the people of Wisbech want is to see the buildings looking nice again and that gateway into town looking like it used to.

Proposed by Councillor Seaton, seconded by Councillor Tierney and Cabinet AGREED that:

- **the current position in relation to these two significant projects in Wisbech High Street be noted;**
- **the S151 Officer be authorised to enter into a grant funding agreement with the Combined Authority to accept the grant funding of £210,000 to support 24 High Street's development costs; and**
- **the 6 residential units in High Street would be let with a specific lettings policy for these flats being developed upon build completion and that the policy will conform with the grant funding agreement.**

CAB50/22 DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Councillor Boden presented the Cabinet Forward Plan for information.

2.38 pm

Chairman