

CABINET

THURSDAY, 12 MAY 2022 - 2.00 PM



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

APOLOGIES: Councillor Mrs D Laws

CAB57/21 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held 22 March 2022 were agreed and signed.

CAB58/21 DRAFT LOCAL PLAN

Councillor Boden announced that owing to national announcements made over the last few days regarding planning, it was proposed that this agenda item be withdrawn to allow officers time to assess the implications and whether any amendments may be required. The report could then be returned duly amended for consideration at the next Cabinet meeting.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs French, seconded by Councillor Lynn and Cabinet AGREED to defer the Draft Local Plan report to the next meeting of Cabinet on 13 June 2022.

CAB59/21 UPDATE ON WISBECH LEVELLING UP FUND REGENERATION BID

Members considered the Wisbech Levelling Up Fund Regeneration Bid update report presented by Councillor Seaton.

Proposed by Councillor Seaton, seconded by Councillor Lynn and Cabinet AGREED to note the contents of the Wisbech Levelling Up Fund update report and ongoing progress in developing a LUF bid to Government.

CAB60/21 FENLAND TRANSPORT STRATEGY

Members considered the Fenland Transport Strategy report presented by Councillor Seaton.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Hoy said having previously read the report at County Council, she finds it sad how people, particularly in the rural areas of Fenland, have little access to some vital services. As a district council we are aware of how reliant people are on roads but what happens if the road infrastructure is not there; it is all well and good providing electric buses, but people still need to use roads. All has gone quiet on the A47 and the number 68 bus in Wisbech seems to have been given a stay of execution; there are a lot of things we need to work on going forward. There is also the Wisbech Access Strategy, where around £10.5 million seems to have been wasted on some designs. This does not make good reading for our area and although we are not a transport authority, we do need to push the message that more infrastructure is needed.
- Councillor Seaton thanked Councillor Hoy for her comments and said he could not disagree with anything she said. He is still waiting to see a paper at the Combined Authority on the way

forward for the A47, but road infrastructure is something he constantly raises.

- Councillor Tierney agreed we need to keep in mind we are a rural area; we cannot immediately switch to various sustainable modes of transport as other councils may think. We cannot do away with cars as that would be disastrous and the infrastructure is not even close to being there. For the good of Fenland, we need to push back on these plans a little and ensure that anything that moves forward does so sensibly with our communities in mind. He echoes the comments made by Councillor Hoy on the Wisbech Access Strategy. It is shocking that all these years and all that work down the line, those millions of pounds have amounted to nothing and, although it is outside of this council's authority, in his opinion heads should roll. Councillor Boden said it is no longer the responsibility of the County Council, this sits with the Combined Authority, and it seems there is no interest in pursuing any further transport work for Wisbech or even March.
- Councillor Seaton said that he also could not disagree with Councillor Tierney. He continually tells the Combined Authority's Transport Committee that we are extremely rural and cannot suddenly turn to electric transport; we still need cars and road infrastructure.
- Councillor Boden asked Councillor Seaton if, considering the comments made by Councillor Hoy and Councillor Tierney, he would approve a proposed alteration to the priority of the objectives in the report and a suggested amendment to the position of the primacy of the car in the medium and shorter term in Fenland, which can be fed back to the Combined Authority. Councillor Seaton agreed this would be appropriate.
- Councillor Boden suggested therefore that the order of the four objectives as outlined in the report should be changed so that Objective 2 becomes the primary objective, and that Objective 3 become Objective 2, and Objective 1 becomes Objective 3. Councillor Seaton accepted that alteration. Therefore, the objectives be rewritten as follows:
Objective 1 – Support the needs of the local economy by developing better connectivity to places of education, retail, employment and healthcare.
Objective 2 – Reduce the impact of rural isolation on the day-to-day life and future prospects of Fenland residents by developing better access solutions to key services and facilities.
Objective 3 – Enable residents to live fit and healthy lifestyles, as they are able, by developing and promoting a connected, safe and viable active travel network and improving wellbeing.
Objective 4 – Meet the challenge of climate change and enhance the natural environment by encouraging people to travel more sustainably.
- Councillor Seaton said he was happy with that alteration, adding that in fact, it is what had been requested to be changed in the report, but the amended report had not come to Cabinet in time.
- Councillor Boden suggested that we also relay to the County Council that any realistic transport strategy for Fenland must acknowledge the primacy of the car in the short and medium term. Councillor Seaton agreed that was acceptable.
- Councillor Tierney asked if, in respect of the fourth proposal, we could add something like, 'where affordable in difficult financial climates.' He is concerned that we show we understand the difficulties of some peoples' situations. Councillor Boden asked Councillor Seaton if it was therefore acceptable to add: 'in circumstances where it is affordable taking into account the current financial circumstances.' Councillor Seaton agreed that he found this acceptable.

Proposed by Councillor Seaton, seconded by Councillor Tierney and Cabinet AGREED to note the:

- **progress to date on the development of the draft Fenland Transport Strategy and its amended contents, and to note the next steps for the development of the strategy towards adoption in 2023.**
- **proposed stakeholder and public engagement timetable with the additional comments.**

(Councillor Mrs French declared an interest stating that she sits on the Highways and Transport Authority at Cambridgeshire County Council and took no part in this discussion).

CAB61/21 24 HIGH STREET, WISBECH

Members considered the 24 High Street, Wisbech Project update report presented by Councillor Seaton.

Councillor Tierney said it would be remiss of him not to say this is a very important project for Wisbech. A lot of good work is going on in Wisbech currently; there is still much work to be done but already the look of the High Street has improved. This will be the icing on the cake if we can get it right. He thanked the officers and councillors who are working to make this happen.

Proposed by Councillor Seaton, seconded by Councillor Hoy and Cabinet AGREED to note the current position in relation to the 24 High Street project.

CAB62/21 DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Councillor Boden presented the draft 6-month Cabinet Forward Plan and stated that the deferred agenda item 5 regarding the Draft Local Plan would need to be added for June.

Councillor Hoy said that the Housing Enforcement Policy should be moved from June to July Cabinet as the consultation only finishes on 8th June. Councillor Boden noted the amendment.

CAB63/21 ANGLIA REVENUES PARTNERSHIP - S.113 AGREEMENT (CONFIDENTIAL)

Members considered the confidential Anglia Revenues Partnership – S.113 Agreement report presented by Councillor Mrs French.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs French, seconded by Councillor Seaton and Cabinet AGREED to recommend Council approve the Head of the ARP and the ARP Operational Improvement Board negotiating and entering into a renewed Section 113 agreement to enable ARP officers to provide ongoing fraud services to Norwich City Council.

(Members resolved to exclude the public from the meeting for this item of business on the grounds that it involved the disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972)

2.26 pm

Chairman