

Minutes of a meeting of the **CABINET** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Tuesday, 13 February 2024 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

C N Worth (Leader)

G J Taylor (Deputy
Leader)
T A Carter (Deputy
Leader)
J R Astill

H J W Bingham
A Casson
P A Redgate

E J Sneath

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillor J Tyrrell.

The Joint Chief Executive, the Deputy Chief Executive – Corporate Development (S151), the Deputy Chief Executive – Communities, the Assistant Director - Strategic Growth and Development, the Assistant Director – Regulatory, the Strategic Finance Manager, the Head of Revenues and Benefits, the Housing Transformation Manager (HRA), the Business Intelligence and Change Manager, the Group Manager – Communications and Engagement, the Democratic Services Manager and the Democratic Services Team Leader.

In Attendance: Councillor B Alcock (Chairman, Performance Monitoring Panel), Councillor A C Beal (Chairman, Governance & Audit Committee), Councillor R A Gibson (Leader, Independent Group), Councillor A R Woolf (Chairman, Policy Development Panel).

51. MINUTES

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 17 January 2024 were agreed and signed by the Leader.

52. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

Councillor Carter did not have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, but in the interests of transparency declared that, in relation to agenda item 15, that she was a voluntary trustee for one of the groups receiving funding from the Community Lottery.

53. QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE PUBLIC UNDER THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION (STANDING ORDERS).

Action By

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There were none.

54. TO CONSIDER ANY MATTERS WHICH HAVE BEEN SUBJECT TO CALL-IN.

There were none.

55. TO CONSIDER MATTERS ARISING FROM THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING PANELS

There were none.

56. ANNUAL BUDGET REPORT 2024/25 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY, CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND CAPITAL STRATEGY, AND ANNUAL DELIVERY PLAN

Consideration was given to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive – Corporate Development (S151) which presented the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budgets for 2024/25 including the use of reserves, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Capital Programme and Strategy, and Fees and Charges for 2024/25, and the Annual Delivery Plan.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercialisation, UKSPF and Levelling Up presented the report.

The following points were raised:

- What was the Authority's current situation with regard to the Authority's VAT status?
 - Officers responded that with regard to VAT, there were currently no 'de-minimis' issues however, the situation was continuously monitored, particularly in light of the forthcoming investment in leisure.
- Efficiency targets were reflected within Section 12 of Appendix 1 – were these figures exactly as they appeared within Table 16, and were they a figure for each year only, or were they cumulative?
 - Officers responded that each year, the efficiency targets were in their own right so once the savings had been made, this eroded the savings requirement flowing across the page - the figure was not cumulative.

The Leader thanked all involved in the production of the Budget for their work in bringing it together, and in the identification of savings. Once the Budget was agreed, the priority would be to turn these proposals into reality and to monitor progress.

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DECISION:

- a) That the minutes of the Joint Performance Monitoring Panel and Policy Development Panel held on 25 January 2024 (Appendix 8) be noted.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL:

- b) That Cabinet approve the following recommendations for onward referral to Full Council on 29 February 2024:
 - 1) That the Revenue Estimates for the General Fund, HRA and Spalding Special for 2024/25 (Appendices 1, 1a, 1b and 1c) be approved.
 - 2) That the Council Tax for a Band D property in 2024/25 be set at £201.42 (£6.03 per annum increase on 2023/24 levels).
 - 3) That the Spalding Special Expenses for a Band D property be set at £25.83 for 2024/25, (previously £25.47 in 2023/24).
 - 4) The additions to and use of reserves (as detailed at Appendix 1) be approved.
 - 5) The Medium Term Financial Strategy (at Appendix 1) be approved.
 - 6) The Draft Capital Programme and Capital Strategy (Appendices 1 and 2) be approved.
 - 7) The Fees and Charges Schedule 2024/25 (Appendix 4) be approved.
 - 8) That the uplift to the Real Living Wage (Appendix 1) be approved.
 - 9) That Cabinet re-affirms its previous decision in respect of long-term empty properties, detailed in Appendix 1, and makes a determination for the introduction of the premium for substantially furnished with no resident (second homes), to be introduced at the earliest point, 1 April 2025.
 - 10) The Annual Delivery Plan for 2024/25 (Appendix 5) be approved.
 - 11) That Cabinet notes the results of the Budget Consultation process at Appendix 6.
 - 12) That the alignment of constitutional financial limits across the partnership (Appendix 7) be approved.

(Other options considered:

- *No other options were considered.*

Reasons for decision:

- *To comply with the budgetary and policy framework and legislative*

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requirements).

57. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2024/25

Consideration was given to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive – Corporate Development (S151) which sought a Cabinet decision on the final proposals for the 2024/25 Council Tax Support scheme, to be presented to Council for approval on 29 February 2024.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercialisation, UKSPF and Levelling Up presented the report.

DECISION:

- 1) That Cabinet recommends Full Council approves:-
 - i) the continuation of the current Council Tax Support scheme, including uprating in line with DWP's annual update of allowances and premiums for 2024/25, and
 - ii) the provision for Care Leaver support under this scheme to be increased to age 25.
- 2) That Cabinet delegates approval for the 2024/25 final scheme policy to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, including administrative and minor changes.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL:

That Full Council approve:

- i) the continuation of the current Council Tax Support scheme, including uprating in line with DWP's annual update of allowances and premiums for 2024/25, and
- ii) the provision for Care Leaver support under this scheme to be increased to age 25.

(Other options considered:

- *The 'do nothing' option was considered, which would see the current scheme retained without uprating;*

Reasons for decision:

- *Full Council must make any revision to its scheme, or any replacement, and agree its final scheme no later than 11 March 2024 in respect of the 2024/25 financial year;*
- *Continuation of the current scheme would align the CTS scheme and uprating for working age customers with DWP*

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provisions for Housing Benefit and the CTS scheme for pensioners. This had been consistent each year since the introduction of the local scheme, and would maintain that position for 2024/25, pending a fundamental review of the scheme for future years).

58. LONG TERM PLANS FOR TOWNS

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Economic Growth which proposed the formation of a Town Board to support the preparation of a Long-Term Plan for Spalding.

The Leader presented the report.

The following points were raised:

- Members were delighted to see these proposals coming forward and it was hoped that work commenced soon, undertaking some ‘quick wins’ as well as attempting to resolve some more long-term issues. The Authority had been attempting to address long-term plans for the town for a number of years and it was hoped that the formation of a Town Board and its supporting funding would assist to move this forward.
- It was noted that Councillor Gibson had initiated a survey to gain public feedback on parking in the Market Place – before any conclusions were arrived at, some work should be undertaken on the economic benefit or otherwise of the changing status of the Market Place. It was also important to concentrate not only on the Market Place but on other areas of the town that would benefit from investment.
 - The Leader responded that it was helpful on this occasion to be in receipt of a significant amount of funding to undertake positive change. It was also clarified that the area covered was almost the whole of Spalding and included some residential areas, not just the town centre. Finally, the Town Board would be made aware of any pieces of work undertaken to date which would assist with future plans. Consultation would be an important part of the Town Board’s role moving forward.
- What were the proposed scrutiny/governance arrangements with regard to monitoring?
 - Officers responded that plans for scrutiny/governance were being worked on and members would be advised of arrangements in due course.

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- Whilst the proposals were welcomed, it was important to ensure that the Town Board could make decisions quickly. In addition, there were a number of groups/forums that could all feed into this work – how could it be ensured that all relevant areas/forums with an interest could be involved to move things forward?
 - The Leader expected that all these groups would have representation on the Town Board. With regard to the progression of its work, the Town Board had to agree a three-year investment plan to be signed off by the Authority, the local MP and DLUHC and once this had been agreed, work could start to progress.
- How would the Board be supported administratively, were the resources available for this and would the funding contribute?
 - Officers responded that administrative support would be provided at a District level, and part of the funding was to support the Town Board in this capacity.

DECISION:

- 1) That the formation of a Town Board for Spalding to support the submission of the Long-Term Plan, and the appointment of Mr Robin Hancox as Chair of the Spalding Town Board, be agreed;
- 2) That the delegation of power to the Chief Executive to formally confirm the appointments to the Spalding Town Board and to submit confirmation of the establishment of the Board to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) by 1 April 2024 be agreed.

(Other options considered:

- *The formation of the Town Board was a requirement from Government to enable Spalding to benefit from support and funding up to £20m. No other options have been considered;*

Reasons for decision:

- *To enable the creation of an inclusive and effective Town Board for Spalding and to support the development of the Long-Term Plan (comprising 10-year vision and 3-year investment plan) for submission before 1 August 2024. DLUHC would assess the plan and once approved would release funding.)*

59. HOUSING LANDLORD STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director –

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Housing which requested adoption of the Housing Landlord Strategy 2024 – 2026.

The Portfolio Holder – Communities and Operational Housing presented the report.

DECISION:

- 1) That the Housing Landlord Strategy 2024 – 2026 be adopted;
- 2) That minor operational amendments to the Strategy be delegated to the Assistant Director – Housing in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Operational Housing.

(Other options considered:

- *Do nothing – do not adopt the Landlord Strategy. This option was not recommended – it was good practice to have a Landlord Strategy to ensure that Officers, Members and Tenants understood the priorities and objectives;*

Reasons for decision:

- *To ensure the Council had a clear approach for the delivery of its Landlord Service into the future;*
- *To ensure Members, Officers and Tenants understood the vision for the Service, and progress towards its achievement could be demonstrated).*

60. REVIEW OF THE SHELTERED HOUSING OFFER FOR THE HRA

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Housing which requested that Cabinet note and support recommendations and changes, including increasing the HRA Establishment.

The Portfolio Holder – Communities and Operational Housing presented the report.

The following points were raised:

- How was the charging formulated? Charges at Trinity Court seemed comparatively higher than other sites.
 - Officers advised that the charges were higher at Trinity Court than at other flat schemes because it was a bigger building and there were additional charges in place.
- Why were tenants being charged for Health and Safety compliance? Did this not fall within the Authority's landlord

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responsibilities?

- Officers responded that Health and Safety was a landlord responsibility however the charges were for communal areas (flat scheme charges for responsibilities such as fire panels, risk assessments, fire safety etc). It was good and common practice to add these as service charges. These functions were still a landlord responsibility however they were taken out of service charges rather than rent.
- Would charges be reviewed each year rather than automatically increased in line with RPI?
 - It was clarified that the review was long overdue and that this would be a scheduled review in the future, rather than an automatic increase.
- How long would the trial of the two digital notice boards be for; where would they be located; what action would come from the trial; and who would update the noticeboards?
 - The trial would be undertaken over a year to see if they were liked and used. Updates could be undertaken from the office. The boards would be positioned facing outwards where possible so information could be viewed from outside the building. Confirmation regarding the two sites was not available however, officers would advise members of this information in due course.

DECISION:

That Cabinet:

- 1) Noted the extensive review undertaken, initial service improvements made and those proposed to be implemented.
- 2) Supported the installation of digital notice boards, as a pilot in two communal areas to improve communication to our tenants and a marketing budget to help promote the new service, £13,000 to support these items was included in the draft 2024/25 budget.
- 3) Supported the implementation of a response service at a cost of £29,000 as included in the draft 2024/25 budget.
- 4) Supported Communal TV Aerial changes through capital investment of £111,000, generating an on-going revenue saving of £15,000 which was included within the draft 2024/25

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budget.

- 5) Supported an increase in the Sheltered Housing Budget of £290,000 and noted that this would be funded through service charges to residents. As set out in the draft 2024/25 budget.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL:

That Cabinet Recommend to Full Council:

- 6) To increase the establishment as set out in the body of the report.
- 7) To approve new service charge categories with an increase in these to sheltered tenants, of no more than £0.88 per week as attached at Appendix A. Tenants would be formally consulted through service of statutory notice.

(Other options considered:

- *Do nothing: The option to leave SHDC's Sheltered Housing service as it currently was and not upgrade the equipment, i.e., do nothing, had been considered. Informal Cabinet decided in 2020 that a review was required of the wider sheltered housing service offer to ensure that it was fit for purpose and met SHDC's Corporate aims and objectives.*
- *The decision to upgrade the equipment was made following investigation into the usage and need of the tenants. Lack of investment in the service offer to compliment this investment over the longer term posed significant risk to tenants and the sustainability of sheltered housing to attract future tenants.*

Reasons for decision:

- *To ensure that the South Holland District Council's Sheltered Housing assets were made the best use of and remained safe and secure. In addition, the service offered a preventative model, working in partnership with Health and other key services, helping to keep tenants independent for as long as possible. By working in this way, their needs would be met and by continued engagement, their views would be taken into account. These options would also ensure that Sheltered Housing was attractive to any future tenants, ensuring that it was a sustainable, modern, fit for purpose model.*
- *In addition to provide greater clarity and transparency in relation to the Sheltered Housing Service offer and charges, which highlighted that we have listened and delivered to the tenants the services they have told us they wanted and needed).*

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61. RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Governance which requested a review of a revised Risk Management Framework.

The Portfolio Holder – Corporate, Governance and Communications presented the report.

DECISION:

That the Risk Management Framework at Appendix A be supported and recommended for adoption.

(Other options considered:

- *Do nothing. It had already been agreed by Councillors via the Annual Delivery Plan that a Risk Management Framework for the Partnership should be developed for consideration. As such, this option was discounted.*

Reasons for decision:

- *To provide an aligned and consistent approach to risk management at South Holland District Council, focused on best practice across the Partnership).*

62. REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 - PARTNERSHIP POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Regulatory which sought approval for the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 – Partnership Policy for South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership.

The Portfolio Holder – Corporate, Governance and Communications presented the report.

The following points were raised:

- The report stated that information was retained for six years – what happened to the information after this period?
 - Officers advised that the information was automatically deleted from the public record, in line with the Retention Policy.

DECISION:

- 1) That the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000 - Partnership Policy be approved;
- 2) That the Assistant Director Regulatory / Senior Responsible

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Officer, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, be given delegated authority to make such amendments to this policy as may from time to time be required in order to (i) reference any links or amended links to other documents as may be required; and (ii) reflect any issues over which the Council has no discretion including, but not limited to, references to any legislative changes and amended guidance. Any material amendments to the policy would be subject to the usual approval process in line with the Constitution.

(Other options considered:

- *To retain independent, sovereign policy to meet the obligations imposed by RIPA on South Holland District Council.*
- *This option had not been explored as economies of scale, efficiencies and shared learning could be optimised by harmonising our approach to RIPA across the Partnership. This sub regional approach also accorded with the objectives set out in the Memorandum of Agreement and the Business Case for the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership.*

Reasons for decision:

- *To ensure that Members were aware of the duties imposed on the Council by the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and the requirement to adopt a Policy that was up to date, relevant and fit for purpose.*
- *To ensure Members were informed about RIPA activity, policy and procedures demonstrates good governance and an organisational commitment to the obligations imposed by RIPA on public bodies).*

63. HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY - GENERAL STATEMENT OF INTENT AND ARRANGEMENTS

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Regulatory which sought approval for the Health and Safety Policy.

The Portfolio Holder – Corporate, Governance and Communications presented the report.

DECISION:

That the Health and Safety Policy be approved.

(Other options considered:

- *None. The Council has a legal obligation to provide a Health and Safety Policy.*

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Reasons for decision:

- *To ensure that Members were aware of the duties imposed on the Council by the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the requirement to maintain a Health and Safety Policy that was up to date, relevant and fit for purpose*
- *That Members were informed of their responsibilities, and those of Officers, as set out within the Health and Safety Policy).*

64. SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL'S COMMUNITY LOTTERY - 1 YEAR PROGRESS

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership which provided an overview of the first year of the South and East Lincolnshire Community Lottery Scheme.

The Portfolio Holder – Communities and Operational Housing presented the report.

The following points were raised:

- In response to a question regarding how much each group received from the lottery, it was explained that each group encouraged their friends and supporters to buy tickets and nominate them. The amount the group received would depend on how many supporters they had, and this could also fluctuate over time, dependent on whether support also fluctuated.

DECISION:

- 1) That the progress of the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Community Lottery scheme be noted and that its continuation be supported.
- 2) That the changes to the 'minimum age limits' to participate in the community lottery scheme be noted.
- 3) That the central fund income be used to support civic community pride events designed to celebrate and promote voluntary and community sector activity, including the act of volunteering within the borough of Boston and the East Lindsey and South Holland Districts.
- 4) That details of a data security incident on 8 November 2023 be noted.

(Other options considered:

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- *Draw the current scheme to a close (not recommended) and seek alternative fund raising activities.*

Reasons for decision:

- *To continue to raise funds for local voluntary and community groups across South and East Lincolnshire via the South and East Lincolnshire Community Lottery Scheme.*
- *To promote and encourage voluntary and community sector activity within the borough of Boston and East Lindsey and South Holland Districts).*

65. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE LEADER DECIDES ARE URGENT.

There were none.

(The meeting ended at 7.27 pm)

(End of minutes)

Any RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL detailed above will be submitted for consideration to the meeting of the full Council on **29 February 2024**.