

## CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

28 April 2016

**COUNCILLOR N J DAUBNEY - CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES AND LEADER**

For the period 24 March to 20 April 2016

### **1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.**

#### **Budget 2015/2016**

The budget monitoring report as at 29 February 2016 was issued at the beginning of this month and it shows that the budget for 2015/2016 still remains on track with additional savings of £150,050 being reported. Our Financial Services team is now working on the closure of the 2015/2016 accounts.

#### **Budget 2016/2017**

As we end the first month of the 2016/2017 Financial Year there is nothing new to report on the budget which was approved at the February 2016 Council meeting. The Financial Plan 2015-2020 and the Fees and Charges 2016/2017 documents are available on the Council website, links below:

[Financial Plan 2015-2020](#)

[Fees and Charges 2016/2017](#)

#### **SPARSE**

SPARSE is a subsidiary of The Rural Services Network and has a particular interest in representing the interests of those Rural Councils with significant urban centres and responsibilities. This Council is an active member of SPARSE and I attend all meetings where at all possible.

We have benefited greatly from their work; most particularly they have marshalled our MPs to lobby for a fairer share of the Revenue Support from central Government.

The late announcements of extra assistance following this year's settlement are as a direct result of their work.

They are now in detailed and extensive discussions with Government

regarding the greater reliance on business rate retention and the effect on rural areas.

It is often forgotten that to deliver support services in rural areas especially in cases of challenge (such as deprivation) is extremely expensive when compared to urban conglomerations...BUT the revenue support is considerably less. SPARSE works hard to close the margin and that has been to our considerable benefit.

## **Devolution**

As you know there is considerable unhappiness regarding the imposition of a directly elected mayor were we to agree to join a Combined Authority. Certainly Henry Bellingham shares this view. The difficulty we as a Council have is that the message from the Secretary of State, Greg Clarke, and from the Treasury. **“no mayor no deal”**.

I recognise that there are those in our number who would say well fine, no deal.

As I have said many times, that will be a decision for full Council, but I see it as my responsibility to continue exploring all avenues so that the fullest information can be made available to Council.

On 13<sup>th</sup> April there was a further meeting of all Leaders of Cambridgeshire, Peterborough Unitary, Norfolk and Suffolk. Not all attended and indeed Peterborough Unitary was absent. The Leader of Cambridgeshire was present and contributed significantly to the discussions. The meeting was chaired by a District Councillor from Cambridgeshire, and was facilitated by Sir Merrick Cockell (the former chairman of the LGA and former leader of Kensington and Chelsea). I think that, out of that meeting, came the clear view that communication was (as it so often is) the biggest challenge and indeed a challenge not being undertaken successfully.

Trying to devise a narrative of a vision within a few short words is in fact quite challenging and this will be worked upon in the next week or so. Rather more confusing (to me at any rate) was a presentation by civil servants from Department for Communities and Local Government Local (DCLG). This party was led by Paul Rowsell. Mr Rowsell is Deputy Director from DCLG. I have had many dealings with Mr Rowsell before, in that he led the Labour charge for a unitary Norfolk. I have to tell you that I found his presentation most confusing. Actually, not so much his presentation as his message. To be frank, I think had he delivered the message some months ago, a lot of soul searching would have been saved.

My understanding, assuming I have read the terms of the legislation correctly, is that the Secretary of State can direct councils to join a combined authority should any particular district choose not to do so.

I think it's been made clear by the Secretary of State, since, that he has no

particular appetite to do so, hence, Cambridge City are not being directed to join. However, according to Paul Rowsell – should any **County Council** refuse to join a combined authority then that would automatically veto membership of any District Council within that county (although Paul Rowsell kept referring to areas) That is to say should the County Council of Cambridgeshire refuse to join, then no Cambridgeshire District could join. However, once the combined authority was formed then any Cambridgeshire district could apply for membership later. Should a later application be accepted by the existing members, then, that district would not only join but would take with it the powers that would normally be devolved to a county council. (that is to say those powers devolved to county councils; currently they would be transport and any subsequent and additional powers ,say social care).

There was considerable debate at the meeting since it would also mean that the residents or the electorate of that particular district that joined after the fact would **have had no vote in the election for the directly elected mayor.**

I have to say some of the Cambridgeshire districts (those that are keen to join straight away) are extremely concerned about this fact. Paul Rowsell went on to say that he would not expect a district to apply to join until the next round of the elections. However, It was also explained that a possible way around this, would be to form a combined authority in say May 2017, but delay the Mayoral election until the autumn so that all those affected could vote.

### **Last Report**

This will be my last report to council as Leader. I want to thank all Members of all Parties.

Of course, I thank my own group for giving me the privilege of holding the position for the last 9 years and every Member for the engagement, debate, criticism (usually constructive) and on those vital occasions when cross party support has been generated when the integrity of West Norfolk has been under threat.

## **2 Meetings Attended and Meetings Scheduled**

### **Held since last Council**

Launch of Enterprise Zone  
Meetings re Downham and surrounds  
Cabinet  
Chairman Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership  
Liaison Calls with Norfolk, Suffolk Cambs Leaders  
Roundtable discussion On Social Mobility and Attainment (Chaired and called

by Chloe Smith)  
SPARSE – LGA  
H Bellingham  
East Anglia Leaders Meeting Ref Devolution  
Meeting Re Doctors Surgery N Lynn  
Alive Management Board  
Meetings CAB Chairman and Chief Executive  
NWES Board

**Scheduled before next Council**

College Of West Anglia - Audit Committee  
CITB  
Citizens Advice Bureau  
Dutch Hanse Business Representatives