

CABINET

MONDAY, 27 JANUARY 2025 - 4.00 PM

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

APOLOGIES: Councillor S Wallwork

Councillor Boden advised that Councillor Wallwork was not present as he had requested she attend a public meeting in Manea in her capacity as Portfolio Holder for Community Safety. The meeting was being held in response to the serious public order offence that occurred in the district on 25th January and was also being attended by the Chief Constable, MP, and Police and Crime Commissioner.

CAB42/24 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The public minutes of the meeting held 16 December 2024 were approved and signed.

CAB43/24 FEES AND CHARGES 2025/26

Members considered the Fees and Charges 2025/26 report presented by Councillor Boden.

Councillor Boden advised that it has not been possible to confirm the fees for the ports of Wisbech and Sutton Bridge. He requested that these items be exempted from the decision at this meeting to allow officers more time to work on those and that they be brought to the next Cabinet meeting on 24th February for a decision. Members agreed.

Proposed by Councillor Boden, seconded by Councillor Benney and Cabinet considered the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and AGREED to approve the Fees and Charges for 2025/26, with the exception of the statutory harbour dues.

CAB44/24 WISBECH HIGH STREET UPDATE

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

- Councillor Tierney said he is pleased to see this project still moving on; eight years is a long time, but the Council had encountered many complications during that time. He expressed concern that whilst these buildings are gradually being brought back into decent repair, other buildings in Wisbech are now falling into disrepair and said it is time to act on these to prevent the same situation occurring. Whilst it is not the direct responsibility of this authority, the residents of Wisbech are asking the Council to do something so he has asked officers to look at this and consider what can be done.
- Councillor Seaton said he appreciated Councillor Tierney's view and is waiting for officer reports as to how the Council can proceed on these.
- Councillor Miscandlon agreed with Councillor Tierney that older buildings are deteriorating over time, saying owners need to be encouraged to bring them up to a better standard. He added it is deplorable that they do not until it is too late but then expect the Council to bail them out.
- Councillor Boden said it is important and appropriate to do something now given that this

authority will cease to exist after March 2028. Because of this, he is keen to see a tight timeline for improvement and the requisite finance in place virtually immediately to be able to provide a far better outlook for Wisbech High Street and this will form part of a project to be announced called Fenland Inspire.

Proposed by Councillor Seaton, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and AGREED to note:

- **the current anticipated overspend on 24 High Street and that Cabinet is to anticipate a further report in February.**
- **that until the building is completed there may be other additional costs, albeit these are anticipated to be more minor in nature, as the complex part of the building works are completed. It is anticipated that further costs will be addressed by way of a Portfolio or Officer Decision Notice**
- **that officers are seeking further information with regards the funding mechanism for the building and a further report regarding this will be submitted to Cabinet in February.**

CAB45/24 LEISURE CENTRE CONDITIONS SURVEY UPDATE

Members considered the Leisure Centre Conditions Survey Update report presented by Councillor Miscandlon.

- Councillor Mrs French said that she has received repeated complaints about the state and cold temperature of the showers at the George Campbell and asked Councillor Miscandlon if he could provide an update next month when he brings a further report back to Cabinet. Councillor Miscandlon agreed but added that he is aware of various deficiencies at this and other centres and is in talks with Freedom Leisure to get these fixed.
- Councillor Hoy highlighted some deficiencies both dry and wet side at the Hudson but said her fundamental concern is a lack of care by staff there. It is a busy centre but people are not being signed in so there is no log of who is in the building or how many are using it, and it is missing even basic levels of hygiene and cleanliness. There is no point spending money renovating the centre if staff are not going to clean it. Councillor Miscandlon responded that Councillor Hoy is not the first to highlight issues at this and other centres. He said the directors have been spoken to about the lack of internal maintenance at the centres and the negligence of not booking people in and out.
- Councillor Boden said it is important that the broader leisure facility strategy works are moved forward as quickly as possible. He would like to hear in February more specifics about the timescales involved and prospective costs so the Council will be able to put these into the capital programme within the timescale left available so when the centres are handed over to the new unitary authority, they are in a good and updated condition. However, in respect of financing Councillor Nawaz has pointed out that the plan to partially finance the works at the Manor, by looking to sell the Station Road recreation ground, may not be appropriate. Legal restrictions exist and the Charity Commissioners need to agree to utilise funds from the sale of the ground to provide capital for the rebuilding of the centre where necessary, so it looks like that is not a feasible way of moving forward with the financing, hence the importance of more detailed financial information in February.
- Councillor Mrs Laws said she noted within the report the refurbishment of the tennis court at Whittlesey and asked for a complete breakdown of what has been done for the next meeting as she does not think the floodlighting has been completed and is getting reports that the surface may not be entirely up to standard. The investment money is excellent, but she understands the tennis court is not being fully used due to some disagreement with the management of the tennis club who do not seem to have welcomed the netball club who wish to use it and for whose benefit the floodlighting was installed.
- Councillor Miscandlon thanked Councillor Mrs Laws for highlighting this conflict, which he had been unaware of, and he will look into this. He is aware of some cracks in the resurfaced court, but they are being addressed. The floodlights are in place, so he is unaware of why it is not

being used. Friends of the Manor are due to meet soon, both he and the Head of Leisure will attend and hopefully help to get any conflict resolved.

- Councillor Mrs Laws added that there had been a lot of lobbying by both town and district councils to get the money for the refurbishment to create an all-weather court that can be used both day and evenings. The investment is of great benefit to the netball club in their aim to rise through their league and it is a very poor show if the court is not being used.
- Councillor Miscandlon agreed that it is a waste of money if the court is not being used but with the potential of a PlayZone coming, this will be of great benefit to the netballers because it will be the size of a pitch that can be used for competition. He invited them to visit the PlayZone pitch at the Rugby Club in Peterborough to see how amazing it is. Councillor Mrs Laws requested that Councillor Miscandlon highlight the PlayZone at the Friends meeting and give them that opportunity to go.

Proposed by Councillor Miscandlon, seconded by Councillor Mrs Laws and AGREED to:

- **note the report, recognising the progress that the Council has made on unavoidable condition survey work in the past year and note the works still in the pipeline for delivery in the coming months, and**
- **note that progress is being made with the Leisure Facility Strategy – Initial Assessment Phase project with a report expected at Cabinet in February with detailed information regarding a significant project at one site, smaller projects at two other sites and an expected timeframe for a package of works for the final site.**

CAB46/24 DRAFT 6 MONTH CABINET FORWARD PLAN

Noted for information.

CAB47/24 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT - PROCUREMENT OPTION DECISION AND REVISED SPECIFICATION (WITH CONFIDENTIAL APPENDICES)

Members considered the Grounds Maintenance Contract Procurement report presented by Councillor Murphy.

- Councillor Mrs French advised she is happy to support this, the feedback she gets is that the contractors are doing an exceptional job so well done to them.
- Councillor Mrs Laws concurred, saying that she will be sending a personal message to Tivoli regarding the positive comments she has received, particularly about how well kept the cemetery in Whittlesey is. Where there have been problems, FDC officers have been quick to respond and in turn contact the contractors quickly to get things rectified, often within 24 hours so praise should be given, and she would support going with them again for 12 months.

Councillor Boden asked how members should proceed with the Grounds Maintenance contract. Councillor Murphy proposed an extension of the current Tivoli contract by one year, Councillor Mrs Laws seconded the proposal and Members agreed to accept the proposal on the understanding, as stated by Councillor Boden, that that is the final extension which will be possible and members will need to look for a long-term contract in a year's time, coming into force in November 2026.

Proposed by Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and AGREED to:

- 1. Note the report and the likely significant financial impact that a new GM contract or contract extension, at the current specification, will have on the FDC revenue budget.**
- 2. Note and approve the recommendations for a reduction in contract specification to keep the Council's future costs as low as possible.**
- 3. Approve the procurement of up to three arboriculture contractors, to put in place call-off contracts to ensure best value for ongoing tree works.**

4. Note the two best value options for delivery of the Grounds Maintenance service from November 2025 of either:
 - Extending the Tivoli contract by 1 year, or
 - Procuring a contractor on a 5 + 5-year basis
5. Select the option to extend the Tivoli contract by 1 year, on the understanding that is the final extension that is possible with a need to look for a long-term, maybe 5 + 5-year basis contract in a year's time coming into force in November 2026.
6. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment, to mobilise and implement such proposals as selected, with the authority to undertake all reasonable ancillary actions to ensure implementation.
7. Authorise the Monitoring Office to execute and complete all requisite legal documentation in relation to the matters outlined above in 6.

CAB48/24 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

The confidential minutes of the meeting held 16 December 2024 were approved and signed.

4.37 pm

Chairman