

REPORT OF THE
Cabinet / Leader
PART II

242. HAMPSHIRE WORKSTYLE PROGRAMME – PROCUREMENT OF HUB OFFICES AND CAPITAL AND ASSETS PATHFINDER

1. On 28 November, the Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services providing an update on progress with the Hampshire Workstyle Programme and seeking approval in principle to acquiring property interests in three specific locations across the County.

2. The principle components of the Workstyle Strategy include; development of major hubs supported where appropriate by satellite or drop in points and shared services arrangement with district councils and other partners. The 'Workstyle' programme aims to create £2 million in annual revenue savings through reducing floor space and running costs. In addition it will generate £14 million from the sale of surplus buildings.

3. The report also provided an update on the County Council's capital and asset pathfinder. In particular the report explained the vision of a 'one public estate' where through collaboration between the public sector partners in a place, all publicly owned assets are considered as a single portfolio to meet the requirements of the local community to make better use of existing public buildings, and land. In order to explore opportunities further Cabinet endorsed the use of £150,000 of one off additional resources being made available in 2011/12, to be funded from the Corporate Efficiency Reserve. Furthermore, the Cabinet requested that the proposals be taken to the Hampshire Senate to seek formal commitment to the approach and exploration of potential governance arrangements.

4. The approach being explored for assets, complements moves in Hampshire and across the public sector nationally, to share more services. The County Council is already sharing audit services with Southampton and IT with Dorset. The County Council will also be working with Police and Fire and Rescue to move towards sharing support services. Other successes and examples of public sector partnering include the Ringwood Gateway and Havant Public Services Plaza projects.

243. IMPLEMENTING THE LOCALISM ACT

1. On 28 November, the Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Executive setting out the work conducted jointly across all departments to prepare the County Council to implement the Localism Bill which received Royal Assent on 15 November 2011.

2. The new Localism Act aims to devolve responsibilities from national to local government and to improve transparency and community involvement. The report highlighted the provisions which the County Council is required to respond to directly, namely;

- Changes to Members Standards regime and Code of conduct
- Pay statements
- Repeal of Petitions Duty and introduction of referenda on local issues
- Council Tax Referendum
- Community Right to Challenge
- Assets of Community Value
- Planning reform

3. The Act impacts upon the County Council in many ways, from planning to codes of conduct and pay policies. For example, the Act contains measures designed to strengthen the rights and powers for communities to get involved in their local areas and encourage local authorities to act transparently. In support of this agenda, the County Council has installed a new sound and recording system in some meeting rooms, to enable Council meetings to be recorded and streamed on the internet. People will also be able to go online and watch archived footage to catch up on previous decisions.

4. Transparency is a key theme in the Localism Act, including a requirement that the County Council publishes its annual pay policy statement. The County Council is one step ahead in this respect, as it already publishes details of senior officers' salaries on the web and within the annual statement of accounts.

5. The Localism Act will also allow Councillors to express their view on upcoming decisions and planning matters without this being considered to be pre-determination, as long as they remain open minded on their final verdict.

6. Specific reports will be brought back to the Cabinet during the year and there are proposals for a Senate workshop to discuss the implications of the planning reforms and potential arrangements for co-ordinating sustainable development, in particular joint work to meet the county's future infrastructure needs.

244. ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER

1. On 28 November, the Cabinet considered the Annual Audit Letter received from the Audit Commission in respect of its audit of the County Council for 2010/11. The Independent auditors had found that during a time of unprecedented financial challenge, that the County Council was providing top quality services, at a lower cost than other county councils in England. In the Annual Audit Letter, the District Auditor endorsed the County Council's approach to the challenges set by the Government's reduction in public spending and outlined how priority service areas continued to show improvement, despite financial constraints. The Auditor was therefore able to give an unqualified opinion on the financial statements. Stating that the

County Council was well positioned to prepare compliant financial statements and had made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

2. In particular, the audit letter referred to the County Council's approach to using its reserves to ease the pressure on services and the council taxpayer. The District Auditor stated that the level of reserves in 2010/11, at £235 million, along with the medium financial strategy provided a stable financial position for the Council. Further adding that the County Council was using its one-off reserves to fund initiatives that will help secure significant long term and continuing cost reductions. positive content, which was a real endorsement for the County Council.

3. The Cabinet welcomed the report and thanked the District Auditor and all members of staff involved in the Audit process.

Further details can be found at www.hants.gov.uk/councilmeetings.htm by typing in the relevant reference number:

- Hampshire Workstyle Programme – Procurement of Hub Offices and Capital and Assets Pathfinder (Search Item Reference 3388)
- Implementing the Localism Act (Search Item Reference 3448)
- Annual Audit Letter (Search Item Reference 3478)

COUNCILLOR T. K. THORNER, CBE
Chairman of the Cabinet