

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Council held on
Thursday, 27 April 2006 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs CAED Murfitt – Chairman

Councillors: SJ Agnew, Dr DR Bard, RE Barrett, JD Batchelor, RF Bryant, EW Bullman, NN Cathcart, Mrs PS Corney, Mrs SJO Doggett, SM Edwards, Mrs A Elsby, R Hall, Mrs SA Hatton, Mrs JM Healey, Mrs EM Heazell, JA Hockney, Mrs CA Hunt, Mrs HF Kember, SGM Kindersley, RMA Manning, RB Martlew, DC McCraith, DH Morgan, Mrs JA Muncey, CR Nightingale, Dr JPR Orme, EJ Pateman, A Riley, Mrs DP Roberts, NJ Scarr, J Shepperson, Mrs GJ Smith, Mrs HM Smith, Mrs DSK Spink MBE, RT Summerfield, Mrs VM Trueman, RJ Turner, Dr SEK van de Ven, Mrs BE Waters, DALG Wherrell, Dr JR Williamson, TJ Wotherspoon and NIC Wright

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor BR Burling, JP Chatfield, Dr SA Harangozo, MP Howell, HC Hurrell, MJ Mason, JA Quinlan, JH Stewart and JF Williams.

PRESENTATION

The Chairman and Laura Lock as the staff representative presented Claire Billing, Fundraising Coordinator at Addenbrooke's Hospital, with a cheque for £3,314 on behalf of the Chairman's charity for the year, the da Vinci robotic system project for research and the care of patients with prostate cancer.

It was confirmed that Councillor Summerfield remained currently an Independent Member of the Council. His identification as a Liberal Democrat on the web site should relate only to his candidature in the forthcoming elections: anything other resulted from a problem with the software, which was being resolved.

1. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Council **AGREED** that Councillor RF Bryant be appointed Vice-Chairman for the meeting.

2. MINUTES

The Chairman was authorised to sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2006 as a correct record, subject to the deletion of the last sentence of the second paragraph of Minute 6(c) (Protection of Vulnerable Adults Policy), Councillor Riley having advised that the suggestion that individuals could carry out their own checks through the Licensing Act was incorrect.

Matters arising were:

Minutes – Concessionary Fares (Minute 2)

The Leader took the opportunity to ask Members, in public, to take on board his comments to the Cambridge Evening News supporting the newspaper's campaign to press the Government to sort out the funding for concessionary fares. Support was given, and it was reported that both main parties had lobbied the Government and the Conservatives were to present a petition to Downing Street on 2 May.

Minutes – Standards Committee (Minute 2)

Councillor Mrs Roberts reported that the Standards Board for England was not to pursue Councillor Kindersley's complaint against her for declining to report breaches of the Code of Conduct.

Questions from Councillor JA Hockney (Minute 4(a))

Councillor Hockney thanked Councillor Mrs Heazell for her answer but further asked for her comment on allegations from three scheme managers that they had not been listened to. The Chairman advised that, at this point, the accuracy of the minutes was under consideration.

Protection of Vulnerable Adults Policy (Minute 6(c))

Councillor Riley raised concerns about the usefulness of all councillors being CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checked if there was no sanction and the Chairman commented that, although a councillor with a relevant criminal record could not be "dismissed", they could be prevented from taking a role involving vulnerable adults. The Vice-Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee reminded members that the Committee was to look at a protocol for CRB checks in June.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made:

JA Hockney	One of his clients is Mouchel Parkman Highways
JD Batchelor, SGM Kindersley, DC McCraith	As County Councillors
RT Summerfield	As the subject of agenda item 10

4. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reported that:

- £1,100 had been raised for her charity from the concert on 8 April, including a large donation from the male voice choir
- that she had nominated Councillor Mrs Heazell and Mrs Susan May to attend the Royal Garden Party

She paid thanks and tribute to the retiring councillors, outlining some of their achievements: HC Hurrell, Mrs J Dixon, SS Ziaian-Gillan, Mrs JM Healey, Mrs GJ Smith and J Shepperson. The Leader added his tributes, in particular to the longer serving members, Councillor Shepperson, Mrs Smith and Mrs Healey.

5. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND THE PUBLIC**5 (a) From Councillor CR Nightingale**

Councillor Nightingale asked:

"Could the Housing Portfolio Holder give an explanation on the authorized privileged dispensations that have been given to two tenants, One in Shelford the Other in Stapleford to that of other SCD Housing tenants. Complaints have been made about the two properties over a number of years.

“When can neighbours expect their quality of life to be resorted to that of other SCD tenants?”

The Portfolio Holder replied that emails of 3, 10, 11, 15, 17, 18 and 20 April referred and stated:

“Cllr Nightingale brought his concerns to the attention of the Director of Housing & Environmental Services on 3 April. DHES visited both sites on 5 April and over the last two weeks officers have been in negotiation with both tenants with a view to their fulfilling their tenancy conditions. It has been made clear to both that failure to comply within a reasonable time frame will result in legal action being taken for breach of tenancy conditions.

“On 15 April Cllr Nightingale received a full account of what action had been taken and that further visits were planned for w/c 24 April to check progress.

“The costs involved (other than officer time) in assisting with the clearance of the properties are £327 over 10 years and £125 over 6 years respectively. Specific budgetary provision exists to assist in those cases where housing management staff regard such assistance as appropriate. Such assistance can be cheaper and more effective than expensive and protracted legal action, though the latter is occasionally necessary.

Councillor Mrs Heazell added that the above had been communicated to Councillor Nightingale.

Councillor Nightingale thanked the portfolio holder for her reply, but suggested that it implied that the problems had arisen only since 3 April, when in fact they had continued for years. He also referred to a hole in a roof which had apparently not been repaired after 2 weeks. Councillor Mrs Heazell advised that the problems raised in the question had fluctuated over time and undertook to investigate the hole in the roof.

6. PETITIONS

Council **NOTED** the receipt of a petition from the residents of Lordship Close, Orwell seeking reconsideration of the replacement of their sheltered scheme warden.

7. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS:

7 (a) Computerisation of Local Land Charges System (Cabinet Minute 3)

Council **RESOLVED**, with no opposition and 1 abstention, that

- (a) the local land charges / local search process be fully computerised at the earliest opportunity, starting 1 May 2006;
- (b) the following variance to cash limits and the budget for 2006/07 be approved to implement and support an electronic Local Land Charges system:

Supplier		
Northgate / MVM M3		
Software and Implementation	£77,000	<i>Capital one-off</i>
Data Conversion / Additional Costs	£50,000	<i>Revenue</i>
Annual maintenance	£2,500	<i>Revenue on-going</i>
Total	£129,500	

- (c) and that a contract to be placed with Northgate / MVM for the M3 system under the provisions of Contract Standing Order 4.5 (the Council considers it desirable in the best interests of the Council that a tender be negotiated with a contractor already engaged by the Council).

7 (b) Resources for Housing Choice Based Lettings (Cabinet Minute 4)

Council, with 1 abstention,

AGREED that an 18-month fixed-term post of Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Project Officer be established to support the implementation of CBL, to be funded from a mix of Housing General Fund and Housing Revenue Account sources.

7 (c) Appointment of Chief Executive (Transformation Committee)

Council was asked to consider revised recommendations, following legal advice, on the appointment of a chief executive. Members welcomed the first two recommendations, approving the appointment of Mr Harlock, although some would have preferred to see the post advertised. They were, however, uncomfortable with the suggestion in the third that responsibility for agreement on terms and conditions should be borne by one Member. Councillor Edwards suggested that the responsible body should be the Transformation Committee or the Employment Committee. The Chairman of the Transformation Committee responded that, rather than calling an urgent meeting of a whole committee, he would welcome the involvement of the Chairman of the Employment Committee. At Councillor Edwards' request, the Vice-Chairman of the Employment Committee was also included.

Councillor Kindersley offered his thanks to his fellow members of the Transformation Committee and to the Management Team for their work and forbearance. He welcomed Mr Harlock and Mr Hampson to continued working with the Council and wished Mr Ballantyne and Mr Hussell well.

Council, with 1 abstention, **RESOLVED** that

- (a) the appointment of Mr GJ Harlock, current Finance and Resources Director, as Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service/Section 151 Officer for one year from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007 be approved;
- (b) the fixed term contract be extendable by mutual consent of the Council and Mr Harlock; and
- (c) the terms and conditions of such appointment, including as to remuneration, are to be agreed between Mr Harlock and the Chairman of the Transformation Committee and the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Employment Committee, taking professional advice as appropriate from the current Chief Executive/Head of Paid Service.

8. REPORTS OF MEETINGS

The Minutes of the following meetings were **RECEIVED**, subject to matters considered in Minute 7(a) below:

Transformation Committee	20 March 2006
Audit Panel	15 March 2006
Cabinet	13 April 2006

8 (a) Cabinet 13 April 2006

Minerals and Waste Development Plan - Consultation (Minute 6)

Councillor Mrs CA Hunt referred to the fact that there was no mention in the Minutes of Site 26, the proposals for which were not in tune with the Cambridge East Area Action Plan.

Cambridge Citizens' Advice Bureaux Grant (Minute 7)

Councillor Hockney thanked the Leader for attending the Community, Arts and Sports Advisory Group and having constructive input.

Melbourn: High Street – Sale of SCDC Car Park to Melbourn Parish Council (Minute 9)

Councillor Wherrell declared an interest as a parish councillor, but there was no discussion.

IEG Statement (Minute 15)

Councillor Hockney drew attention to further questions which had been asked but were not minuted.

Travellers' Issues – Update on Spending (Minute 16)

Councillor Hockney commented that there had been much discussion on this item, which had not been recorded.

It was noted that the accuracy of the minutes was a matter for Cabinet, not Council.

Quarterly Monitoring Report and Prudential Indicators (to 31 March 2006) (Minute 18)

Councillor Mrs Hatton thanked Cabinet for discussing the suggestion that the £327,000 underspend should be used to support the concessionary fares scheme and urged Cabinet to adopt a county-wide scheme from that source as it should be sufficient until the proposed national scheme came into being. The Chairman reported that an emergency motion had been requested but had been rejected as it was not yet possible to estimate the cost. The problem, which was particularly acute for South Cambridgeshire, had not been forgotten.

The Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder reported that more detailed figures from the County Council now indicated that an additional £533,000 would be required for a fully free scheme, but that he was anxious to support a county-wide scheme when this was possible.

Councillor Mrs GJ Smith expressed concern at the prospect of this Council, as a capped authority, putting more money into the scheme when this would help support other authorities. She understood the issue to be one of distribution of Government funds and

something which should be dealt with throughout the county. Councillor Mrs Hezell added her particular concern: the continued viability of park and ride as people were finding it cheaper to drive into Cambridge.

The Leader referred to uncertainties about the distribution of funding and advised his intention to submit Freedom of Information requests for evidence of Government rural proofing for South Cambridgeshire and for the distribution of funding for concessionary fares schemes

During extensive discussion Members outlined examples of the anomalies of the current scheme and all agreed that the scheme was highly unsatisfactory. However, many Members advised caution about committing an underspend from the previous year so early in the financial year and about trying to amend the scheme unilaterally without commitments from other authorities.

The Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder had given press interviews on the subject and a County Council leaflet setting out the details of the current scheme was available.

Members were offered opportunities to add their names to the petition to be presented to the Government on 2 May by Andrew Lansley MP.

Grounds Maintenance Reorganisation (Minute 23)

Councillor Hockney again raised the question he had asked the Housing Portfolio Holder earlier at Minute 2. Councillor Mrs Hezell stated that she could not give a full answer today as three interviews were being conducted that afternoon. There had been delay through illness, but the staff knew this. She encouraged Councillor Hockney to encourage dissatisfied staff to talk to their manager or to her.

The Chairman, pointing out that the Minutes under discussion related to grounds maintenance, not sheltered housing schemes, asked Members to bring any complaints to the appropriate Director or the Portfolio Holder with specific information, otherwise no answers could be given.

Councillor Scarr suggested that Council was not the best forum in which to raise individual issues and asked the Chairman of Council, Chairman of the Constitution Working Party and the Chief Executive to look at suitable mechanisms. Councillor Mrs Hezell echoed these views and stated that input when the sheltered housing review had been taking place would have been very welcome; asking Members to comment at the appropriate time in future.

9. QUESTIONS ON JOINT MEETINGS

County/Cambridge City/South Cambridgeshire Environment and Transport Joint Strategic Forum 22 March 2006

The Leader reported that his disappointment at the City Council's dissent from this Council's wishes on the timing of development at Trumpington and the Addenbrookes access road had been recorded in the minutes of the Joint Strategic Forum.

The Leader also reported that, despite partners at the meeting having indicated that they would give support to this Council over capping, and expressing keenness on partnership working, no additional officer support was available.

Councillor Nightingale reported that that the County Council had changed the design of

the bridge on the Addenbrookes access road to a three strand bridge without any consultation. The Chairman asked county councillors present to raise this matter.

10. UPDATES FROM MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Manning reported that the Old West Internal Drainage Board was to reduce its financial demands, though not by large amounts.

Councillor Mrs Spink reported on the amalgamation of various Crossroads organisations, including Huntingdonshire and Peterborough, and that fund raising was to become more active, rather than relying so much on grants

11. NOTICES OF MOTION

Councillor Summerfield left the meeting

11 (a) Standing in the name of Councillors R Hall and CR Nightingale

Councillor R Hall outlined the motion, that

“In the event of Councillor Summerfield being re-elected to the Council as a Liberal Democrat, then the Transformation Committee should be reconstituted to make it more politically representative.”

stating that the issue was maintaining the balance of the Committee, given that there was no statement about it in the Constitution.

Councillor Scarr then proposed an amendment, seconded by Councillor Mrs Hatton, that the Independent group should specifically be invited to nominate a replacement.

Councillor Dr Bard highlighted a wider constitutional concern; that there was no provision for the circumstances of an individual changing allegiance during the year and the Chairman of the Constitution Review Working Party gave an assurance that this would be considered.

After further discussion and the belief expressed by the Leader, but disputed, that the work of the Committee had come to an end; the proposer of the motion accepted the amendment and Council, by 26 votes to 2 with 6 abstentions,

RESOLVED that, in the event of Councillor Summerfield being re-elected to the Council as a Liberal Democrat, the Independent group should be invited to propose a nomination to the Transformation Committee to make the committee representative.

12. CHAIRMAN'S ENGAGEMENTS

The Chairman's engagements since the last meeting were **NOTED**.

13. APPOINTMENT OF ADDITIONAL INDEPENDENT MEMBER TO STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Councillor A Riley left the meeting

Council considered an additional and urgent request to appoint an additional member to the Standards Committee for the purpose of a hearing panel in mid-May where many of the Council's own Standards Committee were unable to serve because of potential conflicts of interest. There was a vacancy for an Independent Member and the Constitution required appointments to the Committee to be approved by Council.
Council

RESOLVED that Mr John Jones, Chairman and independent member of Luton Borough Council Standards Committee be appointed to the Standards Committee solely for the purposes of a specific hearing panel to be held in mid-May

The Meeting ended at 4.25 p.m.
