

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

At a meeting of the Cabinet held on  
Thursday, 14 September 2006

PRESENT: Councillor Dr DR Bard (Leader of Council)  
Councillor Mrs DSK Spink MBE (Planning and Economic Development Portfolio  
Holder and Deputy Leader of Council)

Councillors:	SM Edwards	Resources, Staffing, Information & Customer Services Portfolio Holder
	Mrs VG Ford	Community Development Portfolio Holder
	JA Hockney	Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder
	RMA Manning	Environmental Health Portfolio Holder
	Mrs DP Roberts	Housing Portfolio Holder

Councillors JD Batchelor, RF Bryant, Mrs A Elsby, R Hall, Mrs EM Heazell, SGM Kindersley, Mrs CAED Murfitt, Mrs HM Smith, RT Summerfield and Dr SEK van de Ven were in attendance, by invitation.

---

### **Procedural Items**

---

#### **1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Leader was authorised to sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2006.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The following declarations were made:

Councillor JD Batchelor	As an elected Cambridgeshire County Councillor
Councillor SGM Kindersley	As an elected Cambridgeshire County Councillor
Councillor Mrs HM Smith	As an elected Milton Parish Councillor
Councillor RT Summerfield	As an elected Milton Parish Councillor

---

### **Recommendations to Council**

---

#### **3. ADOPTION OF SCHEDULE 3 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) ACT 1982 - SEX ESTABLISHMENTS**

The Licensing Committee had considered the matter at great length and the Environmental Health Portfolio Holder commended the recommendations to Cabinet. The Leader noted that there were no such establishments presently within South Cambridgeshire.

Cabinet **RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL**

- (a) that Part 2, Schedule 3 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 in respect of the licensing of Sex Establishments be adopted;
- (b) that, subject to the following amendments, the standard conditions of licensing as stated in Appendix A of the covering report to the Licensing Committee be approved:
  - (i) the opening hours for premises should be Monday to Saturday 9am to 7pm (paragraph 11 of the licence conditions relate); and
  - (ii) paragraph 12 of the licence conditions be amended to read: The premises shall not, without the written consent of the Council, be opened and used for the purposes for which the licence is granted on Sundays, Good Friday or Christmas Day;
- (c) that the agreement of the policy for the setting of the fee for the application, renewal or transfer of a licence for a sex establishment be set at £3,500;
- (d) that the applications for sex establishment licences be put before a 5-Member Sub-Committee to be named 'Licensing Sub-Committee (Sex Establishments)'; and
- (e) that there be no restrictions on the numbers considered relevant for the district at this time.

#### **4. TREATMENT OF RECEIPTS FROM REPAID CAPITAL GRANTS**

The Resources, Staffing, Information & Customer Services Portfolio Holder supported the recommendation to continue the established treatment of recycling repaid historic building grants to enable further grants to be awarded.

Cabinet **RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL** that:

- (a) the existing treatment of repaid historic building grants, whereby income from this source is returned to the historic building grant reserve for reuse, be ratified;
- (b) income from the repayment of disabled facilities loans and from renovation grants and loans be made available to fund these grants and loans if, and only if, additional funds, over and above those in the budget, were needed in the year the repayment was received; and
- (c) income from repaid discretionary disabled facilities loans and from renovation grants and loans not required in the year, rather than being earmarked for any particular purpose, be returned to balances and thereby made available to support service expenditure in general in future years.

#### **5. CRIMINAL RECORDS BUREAU (CRB) CHECKS FOR COUNCILLORS**

The Chief Executive reported that the Council had been subject to a routine visit by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Inspector at the end of August, the report of which was awaited. The Inspector had been examining the Council's existing documents and procedures, and had raised concerns that the authority might not be complying with the definition of 'contact': the CRB definition required regular and sustained contact with vulnerable adults and children rather than the occasional contact most members of staff had through the fulfilment of their professional duties. The Chief Executive questioned whether Members through their community leadership and constituency work would satisfy this higher threshold and recommended the report should be withdrawn until such time as the Inspector's report was received and associated conclusions could be considered.

The Chief Executive undertook to ensure that literature sent to prospective Councillors made clear the grounds for automatic disqualification, e.g., three months' imprisonment or more, without the option of a fine, either five years before his / her election or since election, restrictions on unspent convictions, etc.

Cabinet **DEFERRED** further consideration of developing a policy on Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks for councillors until the CRB Inspector's report had been received.

## 6. **BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY**

The Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder commended the Ecology Officer for the strategy, which had been the subject of detailed public consultation and considerable discussion by the Conservation and Design Advisory Group. The strategy would be reviewed and cross-referenced to the relevant policies contained within the Local Development Framework (LDF) once the latter had been adopted. The Ecology Officer explained that the Biodiversity Strategy would provide the detail to several "hooks" provided within the Natural Environment (NE) policies of the LDF, when the Strategy became a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). In order to achieve the status of SPD it was likely that aspects such as Wildlife Corridors would have to be reviewed in a transparent manner to justify why certain landscape features had been identified as being of particular importance.

Members congratulated the Ecology Officer for including in the report the financial implications of publication and it was suggested that all Parish Councils be e-mailed a link to the strategy on the website or be offered the choice of a CD-ROM rather than a paper copy.

Cabinet **RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL** that the SCDC Biodiversity Strategy be adopted as Council Policy.

Cabinet commended the Ecology Officer on the Strategy.

---

### **Decisions made by Cabinet**

---

## 7. **'STATE OF THE NATION' - NEW MANAGEMENT TEAM PROGRESS REPORT**

The Resources, Staffing, Information & Customer Services Portfolio Holder commended Senior Management Team on their report on the current position and future direction of the Council, and made the following points:

- members would find it useful to have an organisation chart to help them direct enquiries to the appropriate officer;
- the Project Manager (Transformation Project) was now in post;
- new ways of working had to be formulated, with less top-down influence from members and senior staff, to empower officers to take greater responsibility for and control over their services;
- the full effects of capping were yet to be felt in the district, and when taking decisions, members would need to remain focussed on the agreed corporate priorities;
- there were still very difficult decisions to be made to find the additional spending for the proposals in the Appendix;
- the potential for funding of posts through developer contributions, although worth exploring, must be managed very carefully to avoid any appearance of prejudice and any such posts should be funded indirectly; and
- members and officers must work together as a team.

In response to questions from Councillor Mrs EM Heazell, the Environmental Health

Portfolio Holder explained that, at his October meeting he would have to consider cuts to services, which could impact upon street cleaning, but operational changes were being introduced through which it was expected that the service would become more efficient. The Head of Community Services reminded members of opportunities through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), where performance against stretch targets could earn significant resources for the authorities involved. Although the reward grants would not be paid directly to the Council, the South Cambridgeshire membership of the LSP could help influence the distribution and reinvestment of the grant into local services such as street cleaning.

Councillor Mrs VG Ford welcomed the forthcoming Audit Commission inspection as a means through which the Council could benefit from good advice based on experiences of other authorities, and encouraged consultation on best practice with neighbouring authorities. She urged members to consider whether their demands on officer time allowed officers to provide services for all residents of South Cambridgeshire. The Leader confirmed that he had had discussions with various members and that members' use of vexatious complaints to the Standards Board for England as a political tool would cease.

The Resources, Staffing, Information & Customer Services Portfolio Holder undertook to provide some feedback to members with an indication of the financial and officer time costs to the Council of member issues as opposed to constituency issues. He had reminded members recently about demands on officer time and, while asserting that he was not telling members what they could or could not do, explained that staff welfare was his responsibility and if member demands were impacting on the ability of staff doing their jobs, then he had a duty to address this.

Councillor JA Hockney voiced his disagreement with the proposal for a Member Contract, explaining that the Council staff and offices were paid for with taxpayers' money and that he would fight any attempt to change his responsibilities to his electors. Councillor Mrs CAED Murfitt felt that the proposed Member Contract would support, rather than detract from these responsibilities, as services to residents could not be provided efficiently if officers were unable to deliver services because of demands arising from member issues. Councillor SM Edwards agreed that members had a contract with residents, but that it was not working at present because senior officers were not being given the time they needed to perform in a sustainable way. Councillor R Hall queried whether a Member Contract could be incorporated into the Declaration of Acceptance of Office members signed upon election.

Councillor Mrs Roberts commended the report, stating that the Council was working to attain new working practices in light of significant reductions in budgets and staff. She felt that most members approached Senior Management Team with a range of issues, and asked the Chairman of Council to consider an informal meeting of Council to address constructively recent concerns. Councillor Edwards hoped that the empowerment of all staff with responsibility for their services would allow members a greater range of officer contacts.

Councillor JA Hockney proposed, seconded by Councillor Mrs DP Roberts, that Cabinet note the principles in paragraph 8 of the report, and that recommendation (b), agreeing in principle to a Member Contract, be deleted. Councillor Mrs DSK Spink proposed, seconded by Councillor Mrs VG Ford, that the words 'to agree in principle' be deleted from recommendation (b), that group leaders be involved in drafting the contract, and that its adoption be subject to full Council approval. Councillors Hockney and Mrs Roberts supported this and their proposal was **WITHDRAWN**.

Cabinet **AGREED**:

- (a) to support the principles of:
  - (i) "One Council";
  - (ii) A Clear Vision;
  - (iii) An Inclusive Council;
  - (iv) New "Member Contract";
  - (v) Empowerment of Staff;
  - (vi) Service First; and
  - (vii) Balanced Medium Term Financial Strategy;
- (b) that a "Member Contract" be prepared by the Leader and Chairman of the Council with input from the group leaders for circulation to all Members and consideration by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, prior to reference back to Cabinet for a recommendation to Council;
- (c) to approve in principle the staffing proposals in the Appendix to the report, with final approval being given in October in light of the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy;
- (d) to request the Growth Areas Project Team to investigate the possibility of developer contributions to posts required for the planning of the growth areas, reporting back to the Planning and Economic Development and Resources, Staffing, Information & Customer Services Portfolio Holders;
- (e) after consideration of the Medium Term Financial Strategy in October 2006, to recommend to Council that the current Council priorities (improving customer service, achieving sustainable communities at Northstowe and other growth areas, and increasing the supply of affordable housing) be retained for 2007/08 with clear targets being set for each priority in 2007/08; and
- (f) the programme for financial and policy planning for 2007/08 onwards as follows:
  - **October Cabinet:** Consideration of a draft Medium Term Financial Strategy, taking into account projections of spending pressures in the period 2007/08 to 2011/12 and with indication of the level and phasing of savings required;
  - **November Cabinet:** Final agreement to revised Medium Term Financial Strategy, including detailed savings required. Consideration of Workforce Plan and targets for our priorities for 2007/08;
  - **December Cabinet:** Consideration of detailed departmental budgets for 2007/08.

Cabinet **NOTED** the report and the major issues facing the Council.

Cabinet commended the Chief Executive and Executive Director for their report.

## 8. **WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

The Resources, Staffing, Information & Customer Services Portfolio Holder presented the revised Whistleblowing Policy to Cabinet, noting that it had been approved by the Standards Committee and would be useful in light of the focus on new working arrangements. No further comments had been received from Standards Committee members before the Cabinet meeting.

Cabinet **AGREED** to adopt the revised Whistleblowing Policy, subject to:

- (a) the Internal Audit Manager's views being sought about becoming the first point of contact, rather than the Monitoring Officer;
- (b) the Resources, Staffing, Information & Customer Services Portfolio Holder and Chief Executive to determine the final wording of paragraph 3.1, with any substantial changes to be referred back to the Standards Committee.

Cabinet **AGREED** to subscribe to the Public Concern at Work “starter package”.

The Finance Project Officer and members of the working group were thanked for their review of the policy.

**9. SUB-REGIONAL CHOICE-BASED LETTINGS SCHEME: PRE-CONSULTATION DRAFT LETTINGS POLICY**

The Housing Portfolio Holder explained that the draft lettings policy had arisen from recent government rulings to give social housing tenants more choice over their accommodation. She supported the consultation proposals and the establishment of a member Advisory Group.

Cabinet **AGREED** to establish a Choice-Based Lettings Advisory Group of nine members to assess how the proposed sub-regional choice-based lettings scheme and associated lettings policy would:

- make best use of both the existing and new affordable housing in terms of meeting the housing needs of the district / sub-region;
  - offer appropriate housing choices to those in housing need including vulnerable groups;
  - ensure equality of access to housing; and
  - contribute to maintaining sustainable communities within existing villages and the creation of balanced communities in the major new developments;
- and to make recommendations in respect of the local implementation of the scheme.

Cabinet **NOTED** the proposals for consultation.

**10. THE ABINGTONS BY-ELECTION**

The Leader noted that Council would be considering the proposal to move to four-yearly district elections, which, if approved, would lead to a considerable underspend in the elections budget.

Cabinet **AGREED** that money be vired from the Cabinet Contingency to fund The Abingtons Ward by-election.

---

**Information Items**

---

**11. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT - FIRST QUARTER 2006/07**

The Resources, Staffing, Information & Customer Services Portfolio Holder presented the progress on corporate performance indicators and milestones for the first quarter of 2006/07, and updated members on those areas where the end of year targets were seen to be at risk. The forthcoming integration of these quarterly reports with the quarterly financial management performance reports would allow Cabinet to identify areas where underspends could be vired towards achievement of priorities or key performance indicators.

Cabinet **NOTED** the progress on performance indicators and milestones in the first quarter of 2006/07 and **SUPPORTED** the steps being taken to strengthen performance management.

**12. TREASURY MANAGEMENT**

The Resources, Staffing, Information & Customer Services Portfolio Holder commended the continued success of the in-house treasury management function, with results in the top 7% of the overall group of comparator organisations.

Cabinet **NOTED** the performance of the treasury management function.

---

**Standing Items**

---

**13. CALL-IN TO SCRUTINY & OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**

Cabinet, having considered the implications of the access to information procedure rules, scheduled a meeting directly after Council on 28 September should it be necessary to consider a referral from Council on the establishment of a Climate Change Advisory Group.

**14. UPDATES FROM CABINET MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

None.

**15. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) (exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act).

---

**Confidential Item**

---

**16. MILTON COUNTRY PARK - MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS**

The Community Development Portfolio Holder expressed her gratitude to everyone who had been involved in the many recent meetings to consider management proposals for Milton Country Park. She asked that the proposals be considered in the context of the overall Community Development budget, which had been reduced considerably in the previous year, affecting organisations district-wide, with only Milton Country Park avoiding significant budget reductions. Business synergies between Milton Country Park and other ventures in and around Milton were considered, and she recommended that a three-month period trial partnership be undertaken with the College of West Anglia as part of its countryside management course. It often was more efficient for an organisation to manage more than one country park, so it was important not to close off future management options for the proposed country parks at Northstowe and Cambridge edge developments.

Funds could be generated through the introduction of car parking charges, which was standard practice with most country parks, but Milton Parish Council was opposed to charging as it could result in increased parking on residential streets and in car parks at nearby village facilities. The Community Development Portfolio Holder proposed the introduction of a trial voluntary parking charge of £1 per day per vehicle. Councillors Mrs

HM Smith and RT Summerfield, local members, supported a voluntary contribution.

Members discussed the need for the park to generate income to continue and that it was supported by taxpayers district-wide, although used primarily by residents of Milton and nearby villages and by residents of Cambridge. It was confirmed that switching from a voluntary to compulsory scheme would incur charges of over £1,000 on new signage. The Head of Community services briefly outlined potential income collection and enforcement arrangements.

Councillor Mrs DSK Spink proposed, seconded by Councillor Mrs DP Roberts, that a compulsory charge of £1 per day per vehicle be introduced immediately and Cabinet unanimously **AGREED** to:

- (a) authorise officers to re-negotiate as soon as practicable this Council's agreement with Cambridgeshire County Council concerning their land in the centre of the park;
- (b) introduce a £1 per car compulsory parking charge as soon as possible, to be reviewed by Cabinet after six months;
- (c) establish a three-month trial partnership with the College of West Anglia for their students working in the park, reporting back to Cabinet in December 2006;
- (d) develop procurement options for the catering franchise in the visitor centre;
- (e) explore the development of a Trust to take on the responsibilities for the park in the medium- to long-term; and
- (f) review the appropriate future levels of staffing from April 2007.

---

**The Meeting ended at 12.54  
p.m.**

---