

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held on
Thursday, 19 July 2007 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor JH Stewart – Chairman
Councillor RE Barrett – Vice-Chairman

Councillors: Dr DR Bard, JD Batchelor, Mrs PM Bear, AN Berent, D Bird, NCF Bolitho, EW Bullman, FWM Burkitt, BR Burling, TD Bygott, NN Cathcart, JP Chatfield, Mrs PS Corney, NS Davies, Miss JA Dipple, Mrs SJO Doggett, SM Edwards, Mrs SM Ellington, Mrs A Elsby, Mrs JM Guest, R Hall, Mrs SA Hatton, Mrs EM Heazell, JA Hockney, MP Howell, Mrs CA Hunt, PT Johnson, SGM Kindersley, RMA Manning, RB Martlew, MJ Mason, RM Matthews, DC McCraith, Mrs CAED Murfitt, CR Nightingale, AG Orgee, A Riley, Mrs DP Roberts, NJ Scarr, Mrs HM Smith, Mrs DSK Spink MBE, RT Summerfield, Mrs VM Trueman, RJ Turner, Dr SEK van de Ven, Mrs BE Waters, TJ Wotherspoon and NIC Wright

Officers:	Greg Harlock	Chief Executive
	Steve Hampson	Executive Director
	Catriona Dunnett	Principal Solicitor
	Richard May	Democratic Services Manager

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs VG Ford, Dr SA Harangozo, Mrs JE Lockwood, DH Morgan, Mrs LA Morgan and JA Quinlan.

PRESENTATIONS

Prior to the formal commencement of the meeting, Council received the following presentations:

Peter Brindle, Chairman of the Standards Committee, and Fiona McMillan, Assistant Solicitor, made a short presentation setting out principal changes contained in the revised Members' Code of Conduct agreed by Council at its meeting in April 2007. Copies of the presentation slides had been distributed to all Members prior to the meeting.

Keith Spencer, Director of Business Development, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust, made a presentation on the trust's future plans and governance arrangements when it became a Foundation Trust. Mr. Spencer advised that he would distribute copies of the consultation document to all Members.

The Chairman thanked guests for their interesting and informative presentations.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors RE Barrett, Mrs HM Smith and RT Summerfield declared personal non-prejudicial interests in Agenda item 9 (Future of Milton Country Park) as members of the Save Milton Country Park campaign. Given that these interests were not prejudicial, they remained in the meeting and took part in the discussions and voting.

Councillor FWM Burkitt declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda item 9 (Future of Milton Country Park) as a member of the Committee of the Cambridge Preservation Society. He advised that he would leave the meeting during consideration of this item and take no part in the discussions or voting.

23. MINUTES

Council **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2007 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the following amendments:

Minute 10(a) – Joint Planning Services Arrangement

The Member referred to in parts (c) and (d) should be the Growth and Sustainable Communities Portfolio Holder, not the Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder as stated.

Minute 11 (Appointments to Committees and Joint Committees of the Council)

The inclusion of a note to the effect that, since the meeting, Mrs HM Smith had been nominated as a Liberal Democrat representative on the Fringe Sites Joint Development Control Committee in place of Dr SA Harangozo.

24. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reminded Council that there was much business to be transacted. He requested Members' adherence to Standing Orders and co-operation to allow this business to be carried out as efficiently as possible.

25. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND THE PUBLIC**25 (a) From Mr G Harrop to the Housing and Environmental Services Portfolio Holder**

Councillor D Bird asked the following question, on behalf of Mr. G Harrop, to the Housing and Environmental Services Portfolio Holder:

"Unfortunately, a bedroom window in my bungalow in the sheltered housing estate at Lordship Close, Orwell, was broken. The Council repair staff removed the window and boarded up the space. This left my house insecure and vulnerable and the bedroom without fresh air for well over a month.

Can the Council assure me that repairs of such a serious, sensitive nature will in future be dealt with promptly and can you publicly confirm that the windows on the Lordship estate will all be replaced with new windows within this financial year as has been promised?"

Councillor Mrs DSK Spink MBE, Housing and Environmental Services Portfolio Holder, apologised unreservedly to Mr. Harrop for the inconvenience he had experienced. Councillor Mrs Spink advised that, in this case, a visit by the Council's operative on 17 May had revealed that a new window casement was required which would delay the replacement process. Unfortunately this information was not relayed to Mr. Harrop. The window was repaired on 12 June. Councillor Mrs Spink assured Council that she would do her best to minimise the likelihood of such a situation recurring in the future.

25 (b) From Councillor A Riley to the Leader of the Council

Councillor A Riley asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

"On 1 June an email titled 'Inspire Media Protocol' was sent to all members. This email and its attachment require clarification. I replied on 4 June asking a number of

questions. A senior officer sent me two brief replies, one saying I would get a response shortly, the second saying that the matter had been handed to the Leader. On 8 June Cllr Manning made it clear in a reply to Cllr Roberts that he had no intention of answering any questions on this matter. I wish to request that the following questions are now answered properly:

- (a) Why was it felt necessary to invent a name to describe the Council's Improvement Plan?
- (b) The document begins: 'This protocol proposes that:'. So what precisely is its status?
- (c) Why was this announcement made just eight days after our bimonthly Full Council meeting? Had it been on that agenda, these issues could have been properly debated and agreed.
- (d) At the end of the attachment it says that this protocol; 'Sits alongside the overarching SCDC media protocol'. What exactly does that mean? Where is this media protocol defined?
- (e) Is it the intention that any member who has signed up to the 'Member Toolkit' is now deemed to have signed up to the Inspire Protocol?
- (f) What sanction awaits any who breach the 'Inspire' protocol?
- (g) The 'Inspire' protocol is described as similar to the Traveller issues protocol. The Traveller issues protocol was issued when Traveller matters were generating major court hearings and it was seen by all councillors that any public utterances had to be very carefully vetted. Why is it considered that that should apply to our Improvement Plan?
- (h) Since the Improvement Plan appears to encompass every aspect of council policy, is this not an attempt to stifle any comment by any member on any aspect of the council's work?
- (i) Housing Stock Options are included within the remit of 'Inspire'. The Leader has always made it clear that he could only proceed with his objective of selling off our housing stock a) if that policy gained a two-thirds majority within the council and b) if the tenants also vote in favour. Please could he (or the Deputy Leader) now confirm that both these conditions still apply?
- (j) The third bullet point states that opposition groups may identify an official Inspire spokesperson. Does this mean that both opposition groups are each entitled to do this, or that they have to agree one between them?
- (k) What is the purpose of opposition groups having spokespersons if they are in any event prevented from making any public comment on any matter?
- (l) The penultimate bullet point appears to permit ordinary members to comment to the press on any aspect of council policy which affects the residents of their own ward. Please could you confirm that this is indeed the case and that it applies to all aspects of Council policy.
- (m) In the reply the Leader sent Cllr Roberts on 8 June he stated that any decisions reached by the Conservative Group are the policy of Council. Does he intend to amend the Constitution to implement this far-reaching change? Please could full minutes of Conservative Group meetings be issued in future to all members so that we can become aware of such constitutional changes as they take place?"

Councillor RMA Manning, Leader of the Council, provided Council with a brief summary of responses to the points raised in the question. He advised that the full reply would be included as an Appendix to the Minutes. (*see below*)

Councillor A Riley thanked the Leader for his answer and expressed a hope that, in due course, a properly-reasoned version of the protocol would be issued.

25 (c) From Councillor Dr SEK van de Ven to the Community Services Portfolio Holder

Councillor Dr SEK van de Ven asked the Community Services Portfolio Holder the following question:

“At the Local Strategic Partnership meeting earlier this month, the Community Development Portfolio Holder indicated that bridge-building and awareness work with the Traveller and settled communities, as carried out under the heading of ‘Community Cohesion,’ had been successful, and that resources would now be directed elsewhere within the umbrella of the Community Safety Strategy.

Please can the PFH explain his justification for not continuing with this important bridge building work, especially in view of the fact that this authority has yet to undertake the task of site identification in conjunction with the Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document?”

Councillor MP Howell, Community Development Portfolio Holder, advised that resources would be directed towards other priorities within the Community Strategy, particularly addressing domestic violence. A key priority within the developing Sustainable Community Strategy and Community Safety Strategy involved the promotion of community cohesion through support for the most vulnerable sections of society. As such, the Traveller and settled communities would not be sidelined.

Councillor Dr SEK van de Ven asked Councillor Howell whether the bridge-building work would be maintained and expanded. Councillor Howell advised that £1,800 had been made available to support group work with the travelling community, however he would redirect these funds to domestic violence if presented with the opportunity.

25 (d) From Councillor JD Batchelor to the Staffing and Communications Portfolio Holder and Deputy Leader of the Council

Councillor JD Batchelor asked the Staffing and Communication Portfolio Holder and Deputy Leader of the Council the following question:

“When is it anticipated that full systems integration between the Contact Centre and the ‘Back Office’ will be achieved?”

Councillor SM Edwards, Deputy Leader of the Council, advised that this was a matter of considerable concern. He had received regular updates at his Portfolio Holder meetings on problems being experienced which were entirely technical in nature and could not have been foreseen. The Council had met its e-government target and the target date for full integration was March 2008. The Council was pressurising its, and the County Council's, contractor, and had issued an Improvement Notice in December 2006. This had led to meetings to discuss this Council's concerns, most recently with the contractor on 16 June 2007. The contractor had advised that it would dedicate resources to addressing the problems, which was its top priority. The Deputy Leader advised that he was increasingly confident that progress was being made to address the issue, with a revised target for full integration by April 2008.

Councillor JD Batchelor stated that the Contact Centre had been a great success but that it was frustrating that the Council had yet to take the next step. He asked whether the Council was approaching a situation in which it was appropriate to review its contractual agreements in this area.

The Deputy Leader confirmed that this point would soon be reached.

25 (e) From Councillor Mrs SA Hatton to the Resources Portfolio Holder

Councillor Mrs SA Hatton asked the Resources Portfolio Holder the following question:

“What measures is the Resources Portfolio Holder taking to address the ‘long tradition of underspending’ identified in paragraph 94 of the Corporate Governance Inspection report, and on what dates will/did those measures come into effect?”

In the absence of the Resources Portfolio Holder, Councillor RMA Manning, Leader of the Council provided a summary of a full answer which would be attached as an Appendix to the Minutes (*see below*). The Leader advised that outturn figures for 2006-2007 showed a substantial underspend in the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account which he considered unacceptable. Responsibility for this laid with all cost centre managers in all services of the Council. In terms of forward planning, however, such underspends were beneficial insofar as they increased balances, giving the Council more resources to meet future spending pressures. In addition, they demonstrated that spending was not incurred just to use up the budget before the year end. A significant element in the underspendings was on salaries and had been caused by delays in filling posts. A reduction of 2%, £242,000, had already been made in the 2007-2008 salaries budget to allow for vacancies. A further underspend had occurred on the Council's interest on balances which was generally recognised as being difficult to predict. The Leader advised that he would work to ensure that all future estimates for expenditure were realistic and achievable.

26. PETITIONS

No petitions had been submitted since the last meeting.

27. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS:

27 (a) Response to Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Consultation (Cabinet, 14 June 2007)

Council **ENDORSED** the responses agreed by Cabinet, as amended, to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Single Issue Review Issues and Options Report as the Council's final response to consultation on the RSS review.

27 (b) Annual Food Safety Service Plan 2007/08 (Cabinet, 9 July 2007)

Council **RESOLVED** that the Food Safety Service Plan 2007/08 be approved.

27 (c) Annual Health and Safety Plan 2007/08 (Cabinet, 9 July 2007)

Council **RESOLVED** that the Health and Safety Plan 2007/08 be approved.

27 (d) Housing Strategy 2007-2010 (Cabinet, 9 July 2007)

Council **RESOLVED** that the draft Housing Strategy document for the period 2007/08-2010/11 be approved and that authority be delegated to the Housing and Environmental Services Portfolio Holder to make any minor amendments.

27 (e) Business Process Re-engineering (Cabinet, 9 July 2007)

Councillor SM Edwards proposed and Councillor Mrs DSK Spink MBE seconded the recommendation of the Cabinet set out in the Agenda.

Council **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) the Business Process Re-engineering programme of reviews be ended and the remaining resources re-directed to undertake a series of discrete service reviews using a best value approach;
- (b) the Resources Portfolio Holder be requested to include the shortfall in efficiency savings resulting from the end of the Business Process Re-engineering in the next review of the Medium Term Financial Strategy in the autumn; and
- (c) the post of Business Analyst be deleted from the Council's authorised establishment list from 1 July 2007.

The voting was recorded as follows:

FOR: (30)

Dr DR Bard	RE Barrett	D Bird
NCF Bolitho	EW Bullman	FWM Burkitt
BR Burling	TD Bygott	NN Cathcart
Mrs PS Corney	Ms JA Dipple	SM Edwards
Mrs SM Ellington	Mrs JM Guest	R Hall
JA Hockney	MP Howell	Mrs CA Hunt
PT Johnson	RMA Manning	MJ Mason
RM Matthews	DC McCraith	CR Nightingale
AG Orgee	Mrs DSK Spink MBE	RJ Turner
Mrs BE Waters	TJ Wotherspoon	NIC Wright

AGAINST (16)

JD Batchelor	Mrs PM Bear	AN Berent
JP Chatfield	NS Davies	Mrs SJO Doggett
Mrs SA Hatton	Mrs EM Heazell	SGM Kindersley
RB Martlew	A Riley	Mrs DP Roberts
NJ Scarr	Mrs HM Smith	RT Summerfield
Dr SEK van de Ven		

ABSTAINED (3)

Mrs A Elsby	Mrs CAED Murfitt	JF Williams
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DID NOT VOTE (1)

JH Stewart

27 (f) Terms of Reference for the Policy Development Committee and consequent amendments to those of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee (Constitution Review Working Party, 10 July 2007)

In response to a question, the Leader of the Council confirmed that, in respect of recommendation (8), virement could be made between the committees' respective budgets if necessary.

Council **RESOLVED** that:

- (1) The Terms of Reference for the Policy Development Committee and Scrutiny and Overview Committee be approved as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
- (2) The Operating Guidelines for the Task and Finish Panels be approved as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.
- (3) The process for the approval of the Work Programmes be approved as set out in paragraph 8 of the report.
- (4) The Chairmen of the Scrutiny and Overview and Policy Development Committees be given discretion to vary the structure and format of committee

- meetings based on the principles set out in paragraph 12 of the report.
- (5) Members of the public be entitled to ask questions at meetings of the Policy Development Committee in accordance with the existing procedure for the Scrutiny and Overview Committee.
 - (6) Members shall not be entitled to sit on both the Scrutiny and Overview and Policy Development Committee.
 - (7) Amendments to Article 6 and the Scrutiny and Overview Procedure rules of the Constitution, listed in appendix 3 of the report and incorporating (1) to (6) above, be agreed.
 - (8) That the scrutiny contingency budget be divided equally between the Scrutiny and Overview Committee (£20k) and Policy Development Committee (£20k).
 - (9) That these arrangements be reviewed by the Working Party in April 2008.

Councillor RB Martlew requested to be recorded as voting against the motion.

27 (g) Traveller Issues: Priorities and Resources (Cabinet, 9 July 2007)

Council **RESOLVED** that the fixed-term Enforcement Officer post D.2.32 be extended from October 2007 to March 2008 (to be funded from the Travellers Issues account) with a view to making this post a permanent post from April 2008 as part of the 2007/08 service planning process.

27 (h) Call-in: Disbanding of Advisory Groups (Scrutiny and Overview Committee, 12 July 2007)

The Chairman advised that the Scrutiny and Overview Committee had made no recommendation to Council.

28. CORPORATE OBJECTIVES 2008/2009

Councillor RMA Manning moved and Councillor MP Howell seconded a proposal that the Corporate Objectives set out as an Appendix to the report, be adopted.

Several Members expressed grave concerns that the recently-announced freeze on all grants, announced without consultation with Local Ward Members, was contrary to the Council's objective to engage with the local community.

Councillor MP Howell, Community Development Portfolio Holder, apologised for the lack of consultation with Local Ward Members, advising that the priority had been to notify the organisations affected. Local Members would be consulted as part of the review. He stressed that grant awards had been temporarily frozen pending a review, and that no decisions would be made until Cabinet had considered the matter at a future meeting.

Council **RESOLVED** to adopt the following Corporate Objectives and Service Priorities:

- (1) Work in partnership to manage growth to benefit everyone in South Cambridgeshire now and in the future – by
 - (a) Developing effective working arrangements with major partners to deliver the growth agenda
 - (b) Effective project planning and management; maximising S106 gains; and developing and implementing LDF policies to achieve successful new communities and protect existing communities and villages
 - (c) Working with partners to deliver affordable housing for local people
 - (d) Promoting low carbon living and delivering low carbon growth
 - (e) Extending and encouraging the use of recycling opportunities

- (2) Deliver high quality services that represent best value and are accessible to all our community – by
 - (a) Ensuring the best value for money options for service delivery
 - (b) Strong management and prioritisation of resources, resulting in improved audit assessments
 - (c) Achieving improved customer satisfaction with our services
 - (d) A commitment to improvement and good quality services, demonstrated by performance against national, local and Direction of Travel indicators.
 - (e) Improving access to services through our Contact Centre
 - (f) Working towards level 2 of the equalities standard
 - (g) Taking account of climate change in all the services we deliver

- (3) Enhance quality of life and build a sustainable South Cambridgeshire where everyone is proud to live and work – by
 - (a) Listening to and engaging with the local community
 - (b) Working effectively with voluntary organisations and parish councils to improve services through partnership
 - (c) Taking an active role in the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership and working with the police and other partners to reduce crime and fear of crime and tackle anti social behaviour.
 - (d) Protecting and enhancing the environment and maintaining the cleanliness of our villages
 - (e) Promoting sustainability for the benefit of the local and global environment
 - (f) Supporting schemes to improve rural transport and access to services.
 - (g) Promoting participation in sport and active recreation to improve the health of all
 - (h) Working with local people to promote community cohesion and addressing the needs of the most vulnerable in the community
 - (i) Promoting economic development consistent with our sustainability and environmental aims.

29. FUTURE OF MILTON COUNTRY PARK

Councillor FWM Burkitt declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item as a member of the Committee of the Cambridge Preservation Society. He left the meeting during its consideration and took no part in the discussions or voting.

Councillors RE Barrett, Mrs HM Smith and RT Summerfield declared personal non-prejudicial interests in this item as members of the Save Milton Country Park campaign. Given that these interests were not prejudicial, they remained in the meeting and took part in the discussions and voting.

Council considered a report on the future of Milton Country Park. The report recommended that Council agree a preferred bidder to take on the running of the park and approval of the process and financial arrangements for the disposal of the country park service, including the transfer of the ranger staff.

Councillor RMA Manning moved and Councillor Dr DR Bard seconded the recommendations set out in paragraph 37 of the report.

Concerns were expressed regarding the recommended bidder's financial position and experience. Councillor NS Davies moved and Councillor Mrs DP Roberts seconded an amendment requesting a presentation by the preferred bidder to Council prior to any final decision. The amendment, on being put, was declared lost.

Council took the view that the one-off payment of £250,000, referred to in recommendation (d), should be ring-fenced to ensure its use for activities relating to the park. The proposer and seconder of the Motion agreed to amend their proposal to take this into account.

Council **RESOLVED**:

- (a) the selection of Cambridge Sports Lakes Trust as the preferred bidder for running Milton Country Park;
- (b) that subject to due diligence by CSLT, the Council's land should be leased to CSLT for a peppercorn, on a 99-year lease, and the land leased from the Stokes should be sub-leased on a 99-year lease, all subject to the land being used as a country park;
- (c) that at the appropriate time the Council gives notice to the County Council to end the current license and, subject to agreement by the County to lease their land to this Council, that we sub-lease it to CSLT on a 99-year lease for use as a country park, along with the SCDC land;
- (d) as part of the terms of the agreement and lease above, to approve a one-off payment of £250,000 to CSLT to enable them to take on the responsibility of running the park;
- (e) that officers be instructed to pursue the necessary legal and other work to enable the transfer to take place in late 2007 or early 2008; and
- (f) that an appropriate agreement be entered into to ensure that the one-off payment of £250,000 to CSLT be ring-fenced for expenditure on the park.

30. SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: ADOPTION OF DEVELOPMENT CONTROL POLICIES DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT AND NORTHSTOWE AREA ACTION PLAN

Council **RESOLVED**:

- (a) To adopt the Northstowe Area Action Plan, as contained in Appendix 2 to the report. The voting was recorded as follows:

FOR (21):

Dr DR Bard	RE Barrett	JD Batchelor
FWM Burkitt	EW Bullman	NN Cathcart
Ms JA Dipple	Mrs SM Ellington	Mrs A Elsby
Mrs JM Guest	Mrs EM Heazell	JA Hockney
MP Howell	PT Johnson	RMA Manning
RB Martlew	RM Matthews	DC McCraith
CR Nightingale	Mrs DSK Spink MBE	NIC Wright

AGAINST (4)

TD Bygott	NS Davies	MJ Mason
JH Stewart		

ABSTAINED (25)

Mrs PM Bear	AN Berent	D Bird
NCF Bolitho	BR Burling	JP Chatfield
Mrs PS Corney	Mrs SJO Doggett	SM Edwards
R Hall	Mrs SA Hatton	Mrs CA Hunt
SGM Kindersley	Mrs CAED Murfitt	AG Orgee
A Riley	Mrs DP Roberts	NJ Scarr
Mrs HM Smith	RT Summerfield	RJ Turner

Dr SEK van de Ven
TJ Wotherspoon

Mrs BE Waters

JF Williams

- (b) To adopt the Development Control Policies DPD, as contained in Appendix 1 to the report, and proceed in accordance with Regulations 35 and 36; and
- (c) to adopt the revisions to the adopted Proposals Map, as contained in Appendix 4 to the report.

Councillor JH Stewart advised that he had intended to abstain from the vote and had voted against the Motion in error.

Council **NOTED** the Sustainability Statements as contained in Appendices 5 and 6; and the Habitats Directive Assessments as contained in Appendices 7 and 8.

31. **CHANGES TO THE MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME**

Council **RESOLVED** that the following revised Special Responsibility Allowances be approved, payable with immediate effect to 31 March 2008:

	£
Leader of the Council	10,049
Deputy Leader of the Council	7,538
Cabinet Members	6,700
Leader of the Major Opposition Group	3, 410 (Unchanged, equivalent to 33.9% of the Leader of the Council's SRA)

32. **QUESTIONS ON JOINT MEETINGS**

There were no questions on joint meetings.

33. **UPDATES FROM MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

Councillor MJ Mason advised that he attended regular meetings, on behalf of the Council, of the Cambridgeshire Guided Bus Local liaison forum. He had attended meetings at which the Longstanton B1050 to Park Lane, Histon, and the Park Lane, Histon to Milton Road sections of the Guideway had been discussed, covering all ancilliary work including junctions with existing roads, drainage, landscaping and construction of noise mitigation measures to trackside properties.

He had also been involved, jointly with Parish Councils, in submission of responses in connection with the discharge of planning conditions reserved to the Council under the terms and conditions applied to the Transport and Works Order. Meetings occurred very regularly as the clearance and construction work proceeded. At all meetings, the contractor, Nuttalls, produces a schedule of work planned and in progress. This was a very large infrastructure development of vital importance to the delivery of Northstowe. Councillor Mason advised that he would not normally report to Council after each and every meeting but on this occasion felt compelled to do so because of two meetings held recently at Oakington and Histon. At these meetings, residents and Parish Councillors were given very short notice of a series of road closures in connection with work at the former railway level crossings. Residents and businesses were absolutely incensed at the lack of notice from the County Council and its contractors, at the lack of consideration, courtesy and the unnecessarily short notice of work which, if properly planned, could have been advised months ago.

Furthermore, the total closure of the C156 Oakington to Cottenham Road and the length

of the works planned at all locations had been vigorously challenged by all residents. Councillor Mason understood that the local press, radio, television and Members of Parliament had already been contacted by the businesses who stood to lose trade and possibly even close down as a result of the length of the works and road closures or traffic restrictions. During the meetings Councillor Mason and other local Members protested in the strongest possible terms to the Leader of the County Council who chaired the Oakington meeting, and to Mr. Menzies who was responsible for delivery of the Guided Bus project. Councillor Mason had found the response from the County Council to be unsympathetic and aggressively defensive to what Members perceived to be poor contract management.

Councillor Mason urged the Council to investigate further and support local residents in their attempts to improve the management of this work and to minimise inconvenience to local businesses and compensate for any financial loss.

Councillor Mrs CAED Murfitt reported that the Clerk to Guilden Morden Parish Council had praised the service recently received from the Contact Centre and requested that this feedback be passed to the Contact Centre by the Staffing and Communications Portfolio Holder.

Councillor SGM Kindersley advised that the Cambridge Fringes Joint Development Control Committee had recently held its first meeting and that the first meeting of the Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee was due to take place shortly. Councillor Kindersley requested clarification on reporting arrangements from these bodies, and from the Joint Strategic Growth Implementation Committee to Council, which the Growth and Sustainable Communities Portfolio Holder agreed to provide.

34. NOTICES OF MOTION

34 (a) Standing in the names of Councillors AN Berent and Dr SEK van de Ven

Councillor AN Berent moved and Councillor Dr SEK van de Ven seconded a Motion in the following terms:

“South Cambridgeshire District Council should have service priorities which will make a real and meaningful difference to South Cambridgeshire's impact on climate change, as well as the Council's ability to respond to the effects of climate change. As such the following new service priorities shall be added to the Council's Corporate Objectives:

- (1) “To Corporate Objective 1: ‘delivering low carbon growth which genuinely facilitates low carbon living.’
- (2) “To Corporate Objective 2: ‘fulfilling our commitment to the Nottingham Declaration by taking full account of the implications of climate change in all the services we deliver.’
- (3) “To Corporate Objective 3: ‘sustaining the South Cambridgeshire local environment to the benefit of the global environment.’”

The Motion, on being put, was declared lost.

34 (b) Standing in the names of Councillors SGM Kindersley and JD Batchelor

Councillor SGM Kindersley moved and Councillor JD Batchelor seconded a Motion in the following terms:

“This Council is now satisfied with the Scheme of Delegation already agreed for all

Planning Applications. The application determination performance indicator targets have been achieved so there is no further need to increase the role of Chairman's Delegation. There is now balance between increasing efficiency in the planning process and each Councillor's right to represent their communities and to this end Council urges the Planning Committee not to agree further delegation at this time."

Councillor NIC Wright, Planning Services Portfolio Holder, advised that, following discussions with Members concerned about the potential loss of rights to have applications considered by the Committee, the proposed extensions to the delegation scheme to be put before the Committee had been reduced. He was confident that the revised proposal addressed Members' previous concerns whilst retaining the aim of improving the Council's performance in determining planning applications.

With Council's consent, Councillor Kindersley withdrew the Motion in light of this information.

34 (c) Standing in the names of Councillors Mrs EM Heazell and Mrs HM Smith

Councillor Mrs EM Heazell moved and Councillor Mrs HM Smith seconded the a Motion in the following terms:

"At its meeting on 24 May Council voted to change the number of members on the Planning Committee from the recommended number of 15 down to 14. The consequence of this change is that Conservative (8) and Independent (2) representation is unaffected but that Liberal Democrat representation is reduced from 5 to 4.

"In order to be consistent with the Council's commitment to fairness and good relationships between members we, the undersigned, request a formal statement from the Leader of the Council explaining the reasons why the size of the Planning Committee was changed at the start of the Annual Council Meeting."

Councillor RMA Manning, Leader of the Council, made a statement explaining the reasons for the reduction in committee sizes agreed at the Annual Council Meeting. He reminded Council that the matter had been the subject of a full debate at this meeting, and that it would not be possible to revisit the size of Committees until the next Annual Meeting.

With Council's consent, Councillor Mrs Heazell withdrew the Motion in light of the Leader's statement.

34 (d) Standing in the names of Councillors A Riley and NJ Scarr

Councillor A Riley moved and Councillor MJ Mason seconded a Motion in the following terms:

"At its meeting on 24 May, Council voted (Minute 11c2) that every non-executive Member should be afforded the opportunity to sit on one of a list of committees. However, Cllr Cathcart has not been allocated any such committee seat. Council resolves to take action at its next meeting to remedy this problem."

The Motion, on being put, was declared lost.

35. CHAIRMAN'S ENGAGEMENTS

The Chairman's engagements since the last meeting were noted.

The Meeting ended at 6.15 p.m.

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Council 19 July 2007 – agenda item 5b, Minute 25b**Question from Cllr A Riley to the Leader of the Council and response by Councillor RMA Manning:**

On 1 June an email titled “Inspire Media Protocol” was sent to all members. This email and its attachment require clarification. I replied on 4 June asking a number of questions. A senior officer sent me two brief replies, one saying I would get a response shortly, the second saying that the matter had been handed to the Leader. On 8 June Cllr Manning made it clear in a reply to Cllr Roberts that he had no intention of answering any questions on this matter. I wish to request that the following questions are now answered properly:

a) Why was it felt necessary to invent a name to describe the Council’s Improvement Plan?

It was felt that a name for all work under the [Improvement Plan](#) would help to bring together the different workstreams underneath a recognisable banner. It was also felt that we needed a positive, motivating description of the Improvement Plan’s work, especially to differentiate it from other generic departmental improvement plans. The name was informed by staff suggestions.

b) The document begins: “This protocol proposes that:”. So what precisely is its status?

The Inspire media protocol has been agreed and stands as an appendix to the [council’s publicity protocol and guidelines](#)

c) Why was this announcement made just eight days after our bimonthly Full Council meeting? Had it been on that agenda, these issues could have been properly debated and agreed.

The Inspire media protocol was agreed with the leader, communications portfolio holder (at the time Cllr Simon Edwards) and Senior Management Team. As it simply clarifies standard practice it was not considered to be necessary for the protocol to be debated and agreed at full Council.

d) At the end of the attachment it says that this protocol; “Sits alongside the overarching SCDC media protocol”. What exactly does that mean? Where is this media protocol defined?

The council’s [publicity protocol and guidelines](#) were published in 2004 and cover a range of publicity and media advice and guidelines for Members and officers. It is available on the intranet and via the communications team. The council’s media guidelines and plan are due to be revisited as part of the [council’s new Communications Strategy](#); Members will be one of the key stakeholder groups consulted. It is suggested that the new guidelines and plans be included in future editions of the Member Toolkit.

e) Is it the intention that any member who has signed up to the “Member Toolkit” is now deemed to have signed up to the Inspire Protocol?

No. The protocol is for information and simply outlines who the council’s official spokespeople on certain issues are.

f) What sanction awaits any who breach the “Inspire” protocol?

There are no sanctions. The Inspire media protocol simply outlines who the council's official spokespeople on certain issues are. Only these spokespeople will be put forward by the communications team for proactive and reactive media work.

g) The “Inspire” protocol is described as similar to the Traveller issues protocol. The Traveller issues protocol was issued when Traveller matters were generating major court hearings and it was seen by all councillors that any public utterances had to be very carefully vetted. Why is it considered that that should apply to our Improvement Plan?

As the Improvement Plan is the council's way forward for the next 18-24 months, it was felt that a media protocol was needed to outline which members and officers would be the council's official spokespeople when undertaking any proactive or reactive media work related to Inspire.

By identifying official spokespeople for Inspire, the communications team is following a tried and tested method of putting forward official spokespeople on behalf of the council. For the majority of issues these have - and will continue to be - portfolio holders. Under the new Cabinet structure consideration is also given to lead members for crosscutting themes and/or corporate priorities. The Inspire media protocol simply clarifies who will be put forward as Inspire spokespeople.

h) Since the Improvement Plan appears to encompass every aspect of council policy, is this not an attempt to stifle any comment by any member on any aspect of the council's work?

No. As stated in the council's [current publicity protocol and guidelines](#) “Members are naturally free to speak to the media and discuss issues.” The Inspire media protocol is not intended to stop elected Members from commenting, it is simply stating who the council's official spokespeople will be for both proactive and reactive media work related to Inspire.

Whilst political groups and/or individual Members may make their own political statements to the media, it is not appropriate for the council's communications team to be involved in that process.

i) Housing Stock Options are included within the remit of “Inspire”. The Leader has always made it clear that he could only proceed with his objective of selling off our housing stock a) if that policy gained a two-thirds majority within the council and b) if the tenants also vote in favour. Please could he (or the Deputy Leader) now confirm that both these conditions still apply.

The Leader has not made any statement to Council that there will be a requirement that housing stock transfer be approved by two-thirds of Members. It is the tenants' vote that will actually determine whether it happens and that will be by a simple majority of those voting.

j) The third bullet point states that opposition groups may identify an official Inspire spokesperson. Does this mean that both opposition groups are each entitled to do this, or that they have to agree one between them?

There is only one Leader of the Opposition and as such part of the Inspire Team. The Protocol does not seek to prevent the Convenor of the Independents from commenting for them.

k) What is the purpose of opposition groups having spokespersons if they are in any event prevented from making any public comment on any matter?

As stated previously, elected Members and political groups may make their own statements to the media, but it is not appropriate for the council's communications team to be involved in that process.

Opposition spokespeople are copied into relevant news releases and responses to media enquiries as a matter of course. If they choose to make their own statements in response, they are asked to make it clear in which capacity they are making the comment.

l) The penultimate bullet point appears to permit ordinary members to comment to the press on any aspect of council policy which affects the residents of their own ward. Please could you confirm that this is indeed the case and that it applies to all aspects of Council policy.

As already stated, Members are free to speak to the media and discuss issues. However, all Members should be mindful of the need to protect and build the reputation of the council at all times.

m) In the reply the Leader sent Cllr Roberts on 8 June he stated that any decisions reached by the Conservative Group are the policy of Council. Does he intend to amend the Constitution to implement this far-reaching change? Please could full minutes of Conservative Group meetings be issued in future to all members so that we can become aware of such constitutional changes as they take place.

It was not intended that there will be any change to the Constitution and it will continue to be for Members of this Council to decide whether or not to agree to and implement the policies of the Conservative Group.

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COUNCIL, 19 JULY 2007

MINUTE 25(e)

ANSWER BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL TO A QUESTION ASKED BY COUNCILLOR MRS SA HATTON

Question

“What measures is the Resources Portfolio Holder taking to address the ‘long tradition of underspending’ identified in paragraph 94 of the Corporate Governance Inspection report, and on what dates will/did those measures come into effect?”

Answer

Thank you for this very pertinent question.

A fuller quote from the Corporate Governance Inspection (CGI) report states, “And in spite of capping, the Council is continuing a long tradition of underspending. But, in general terms, the Cabinet has the necessary reporting mechanisms in place to make sound decisions on resources.”

The CGI report was issued in February 2007 and Members will no doubt be aware that the Cabinet recently received a report on Expenditure Outturn for 2006/07 which, yet again, shows a substantial underspending on both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account.

In purely financial terms, these underspendings are unacceptable and compare poorly with other councils. The responsibility lies with all cost centre managers in all services of the Council. However, in terms of forward planning, these underspendings are beneficial in so far as they increase our balances and give the Council more resources to meet future spending pressures. The underspendings also demonstrate that spending is not being incurred simply to use up the budget before the year end.

In performance terms, the Council has consistently improved or stayed the same, on more than 50% of the national performance indicators.

A significant element in these underspendings is on salaries, due to delays in filling posts and a reduction of 2%. £242,000 has already been built into the 2007/08 salaries’ budget to allow for vacancies.

A further significant underspending occurs on interest on balances which is generally recognised as being difficult to predict. Now that interest rates have risen, there are more opportunities for making investments of up to five years, which will reduce the uncertainty caused by interest rate fluctuations. The estimate will also, in future, allow for higher cash balances on the assumption that some degree of underspending will continue.

Future measures will include:

- Considering removing the provision for unanticipated expenditure in the Housing Revenue Account estimates for 2008/09, as the consistent underspend on the account show that more use can be made of virements to cover unanticipated expenditure;

- Closer examination by Council of any requests to incur expenditure outside the budget framework as, again, the underspends clearly show more use can be made of virements;
- Emphasising to all cost centre managers in the forthcoming budget cycle from October 2007 to February 2008 that their estimates must be realistic and achievable;

I am sure that the Resources Portfolio Holder will have our long tradition of underspending in mind when she examines the estimates for 2008/09 as part of the informal scrutiny panel, prior to these estimates being considered by Cabinet in February 2008.