

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on  
Monday, 9 July 2007

PRESENT: Councillor RMA Manning (Leader of the Council)  
Councillor SM Edwards (Deputy Leader of the Council and Housing Options  
Portfolio Holder)

Councillors: Dr DR Bard Growth and Sustainable Communities Portfolio Holder  
Mrs SM Ellington Staffing and Communications Portfolio Holder  
Mrs VG Ford Resources Portfolio Holder  
Mrs DSK Spink MBE Housing and Environmental Services Portfolio Holder  
NIC Wright Planning Services Portfolio Holder

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Holly Adams	Democratic Services Officer
Susan Carter	Housing Advice and Options Manager
Steve Hampson	Executive Director
Greg Harlock	Chief Executive
Simon McIntosh	Corporate Manager (Policy, Performance and Partnerships)
Kelly Quigley	Communications Officer
Dale Robinson	Corporate Manager (Health & Environmental Services)

Councillors JD Batchelor, R Hall, Mrs SA Hatton, Mrs EM Heazell, SGM Kindersley, RB Martlew, MJ Mason, Mrs CAED Murfitt, A Riley, Mrs DP Roberts, JH Stewart, RT Summerfield and Dr SEK van de Ven were in attendance, by invitation.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor MP Howell.

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### **Procedural Items**

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#### **18. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Leader was authorised to sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2007, subject to inclusion of Councillor Dr van de Ven's query about flood risk. The Resources Portfolio Holder informed Cabinet that strategic risk issues were discussed at the Corporate Governance Committee meeting on 29 June 2007 and members should refer to the discussion of flood risk from that meeting for the most up to date discussion.

#### **19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor MJ Mason declared a personal interest in the Traveller Issues: Priorities and Resources item as a member of Histon Parish Council.

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### **Recommendations to Council**

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#### **20. ANNUAL FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2007/08**

The Housing and Environmental Services Portfolio Holder presented the annual Food Safety Service Plan and drew attention to the profile of food premises within the district as an illustration of the wide-ranging work of Environmental Health officers. In response to a query, the Corporate Manager (Health and Environmental Services) explained that officers could offer hygiene advice to establishments where employees both handled food and money, but, due to the level of risk, could not require that such advice be followed.

Cabinet **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** that the Food Safety Service Plan 2007/08 be approved.

#### **21. ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY PLAN 2007/08**

The Housing and Environmental Services Portfolio Holder presented the annual Health and Safety Service Plan and congratulated officers for receiving a Health and Safety Executive and Local Authority Liaison Committee (HELA) Highly Commended award for their Warehouse Project.

Cabinet **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** that the Health and Safety Service Plan 2007/08 be approved.

#### **22. HOUSING STRATEGY 2007-2010**

The Housing and Environmental Services Portfolio Holder highlighted the Council's record of achievement despite the capping situation and high levels of growth, and the action plan establishing progress for the future, including the new tenant compact, with which she would invite member involvement through Portfolio Holder meetings.

Cabinet **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** 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.

#### **23. TRAVELLER ISSUES: PRIORITIES AND RESOURCES**

Councillor Mrs DSK Spink, as Portfolio Holder with cross-cutting responsibility for Traveller Issues, highlighted the need to prioritise work due to limited staffing resources, but that, although hard decisions had to be made now, priorities would be reviewed throughout the year. Members were keen that enough budget remained available should enforcement action be necessary at any time. The Executive Director confirmed the continuing commitment to the areas identified, but warned of the danger of diluting the work if clear priorities were not established. The Corporate Manager (Policy, Performance and Partnerships) reported that the new Equalities and Diversity Officer would treat cultural awareness training for members and officers as a priority.

Cabinet **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** 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.

Cabinet **NOTED** the Service Plan for Traveller Issues and **CONFIRMED** that actions to discuss with all developers and partners the issue of providing Traveller sites in the growth areas, possibly through the use of s106 documents following preparation of a specification for new sites, would not be proposed at this time.

## 24. BUSINESS PROCESS RE-ENGINEERING

Cabinet **AGREED TO WITHDRAW** its decision of 14 June 2007 and **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** 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.

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### Decisions made by Cabinet

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## 25. COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL STRATEGY 2007-2012

On behalf of the Community Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor Mrs VG Ford requested that the Community and Cultural Strategy be deferred to the next meeting at which the Portfolio Holder would be in attendance, and noted that the grants guidelines had been discussed at length.

Cabinet **DEFERRED** to 13 September 2007 a decision on the Community and Cultural Strategy 2007-12 and **AGREED** to delegate authority to the Community Services Portfolio Holder to make any minor amendments to, and approval of, the new Capital Grants Programme Guidelines.

## 26. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL STRATEGY

The Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy formed a key part of the Housing Strategy 2007-2010 and the two strategies were considered together. Proposed actions had been curtailed due to a lack of funding, which resulted in the implementation being in two phases. The Resources Portfolio Holder asked that all strategies identify whether services were mandatory or discretionary so the Council could direct available resources to those areas which would make a difference locally.

Cabinet **AGREED** to approve the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy, acknowledging that implementation might be in two phases, with Phase Two being implemented if and when suitable funding were secured.

## 27. CHOICE-BASED LETTINGS (CBL) POLICY

The Housing and Environmental Services Portfolio Holder thanked the members of the Choice-Based Lettings Advisory Group for their input and for the shortlisted scheme names which would be put forward to the sub-regional group for consideration. This scheme would operate across the Cambridgeshire Sub-Region; a local village connection would not give applicants priority for vacancies within a particular village, except where legal agreements were in place which required a local connection in relation to exception sites. The Executive Director confirmed that there were specific references in the Housing Strategy and the existing local and sustainable lettings policies to address lettings in new developments. Arrangements for vulnerable people, specifically those unable to read or write and those without access to the internet, had



	on fee for non-track application	on fee in respect of provisional statement premises	n fee in respect of other premises				nt of a licence	statement
Regional casino premises licence		£8,000	£15,000	£15,000	£7,500	£6,500	£6,500	£15,000
Large casino premises licence		£5,000	£10,000	£10,000	£5,000	£2,150	£2,150	£10,000
Small casino premises licence		£3,000	£8,000	£5,000	£4,000	£1,800	£1,800	£8,000
Converted casino premises licence	£2,000			£3,000	£2,000	£1,350	£1,350	
Bingo premises licence	£1,750	£1,200	£3,500	£1,000	£1,750	£1,200	£1,200	£3,500
Adult gaming centre premises licence	£1,000	£1,200	£2,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,200	£1,200	£2,000
Betting premises (track) licence	£1,250	£950	£2,500	£1,000	£1,250	£950	£950	£2,500
Family entertainment centre premises licence	£1,000	£950	£2,000	£750	£1,000	£950	£950	£2,000
Betting premises (other) licence	£1,500	£1,200	£3,000	£600	£1,500	£1,200	£1,200	£3,000

### 31. MODEL CHARTER WITH PARISH COUNCILS

Cabinet **REFERRED** the draft Parish Charter to the Community Services Portfolio Holder for further discussion and clarification of its relationship with the Local Strategic Partnership and the Council's Corporate Objectives, prior to further Cabinet consideration.

### 32. INTRODUCTION OF LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCES (LHA): RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

The introduction of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) would bring a significant change to the current Housing Benefit system, and would affect primarily private housing tenants. The Council had received a one-off implementation grant from the government which would meet all the expected expenditure of the LHA introduction. The Housing and Environmental Services Portfolio Holder, having not received any reply to her initial letter, undertook to write again to the Rent Service, copied to local Members of Parliament, regarding a special exemption for South Cambridgeshire from the establishment of the broad rental market area (BRMA), as this district did not fit within any of the Rent Service's defined categories.

Cabinet **AGREED** the creation of a new post of Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Project Officer for a fixed period of twelve months from 1 October 2007.

Cabinet **NOTED** the introduction of Local Housing Allowances and the associated implications for the Council, and the proposed expenditure for implementation of LHA, subject to the final Government grant being in line with the indicative amount.

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### Information Items

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#### 33. HOUSING FUTURES UPDATE (URGENT ITEM)

The Housing Options Portfolio Holder explained that there had been a great response from tenants after his invitation to get involved, with fifteen tenants willing to serve on the Housing Futures Working Group. The Working Group would play a consultative role, disseminating and collating views of residents, and assisting with the appointment of the Independent Tenants' Adviser; it would not have any decision-making powers. These fifteen people provided a good geographic representation across the district and the Portfolio Holder saw no good reason to exclude people willing to get involved; however, there had been a small group who opposed an increase in the size of the Working Group on the grounds that this would be unrepresentative, and therefore the Portfolio Holder sought Cabinet's views.

A full discussion was held during which Cabinet heard opposing views that:

- the Council had already promised an election if more than five tenants were willing to serve;
- changing the process could skew the vote if people had taken against the process;
- although the proposal to increase the representation had been done with the best intentions, the public perception would be negative; and
- the Council needed to demonstrate that it had learnt from errors in the past and to ensure that tenants were satisfied that they were represented by democratically-elected peers.

The Leader explained that Cabinet had approached the situation with an open mind and believed that the best course would be to increase the size of the group as the best opportunity for tenants to be represented, but appreciated the opposing views voiced during the debate. In light of the strength of opposition to increasing membership of the working group to include all interested parties and the potential risks which could arise if an agreed democratic process were counselled, Cabinet withdrew the proposal. The Leader emphasised that the Council wanted to do what was best for the tenants and Councillor Mrs VG Ford urged tenants to consider open-minded representatives ready to listen to all points of view.

Cabinet **RE-AFFIRMED** its decision of 12 April 2007 to establish a member / tenant working group be established to oversee the project, supported by a corporate officer project team, to be comprised of five members, appointed in accordance with the political proportionality rules, and five elected tenant representatives.

**34. CORPORATE OBJECTIVES 2007/2008**

Cabinet **NOTED** the on-going work of considering responses made by staff and the Scrutiny and Overview Committee to the proposed Corporate Objectives 2007/08. The draft Corporate Objectives had been reported to the Local Strategic Partnership and a full report would be made to Council on 19 July 2007.

**35. EXPENDITURE OUTTURN 2006/07**

The Resources Portfolio Holder presented the report, which demonstrated that the Council had spent less than budgeted during 2006/07, but that the tradition of underspending continued. She was working with Chief Officers to develop greater budgeting accuracy.

Cabinet **NOTED** the actual expenditure figures for 2006/07 and how they compared to the original and revised estimates.

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**Standing Items**

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**36. INSPIRE PROJECT**

The Staffing and Communications Portfolio Holder had additional copies of the questionnaire on the Council's values for those members and officers unable to attend the workshops. As part of the £425,000 previously delegated by Council to the Cabinet to support the aims of the Inspire Project, the Leader and Chief Executive had agreed creation of a Policy and Performance Co-ordinating Officer post, a two-year post for a Human Resources Officer and a Planning Business Manager post.

The Leader thanked officers for their continuing efforts on the Inspire Project, which had been undertaken over and above their existing duties.

Cabinet **NOTED** the on-going progress of the Inspire Project.

**37. MATTERS REFERRED BY SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**

None.

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

None.

**39. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Stephen Hills, Corporate Manager (Affordable Homes), was welcomed to the Council.

Councillor Mrs VG Ford announced that she would be travelling soon to Rwanda to help

build an orphanage as part of the Rwanda Project, and had sponsorship forms available.

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**The Meeting ended at 4.56  
p.m.**

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