

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Leader's Portfolio Meeting held on
Thursday, 13 May 2010 at 10.00 a.m.

Portfolio Holder: Ray Manning

Councillors in attendance:

Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitors
and Opposition spokesmen:

John Batchelor

Also in attendance:

Sue Ellington and Tim Wotherspoon

Officers:

Paul Howes

Corporate Manager, Community & Customers
Services

Richard May

Policy & Performance Manager

Gemma Barron

Partnerships Manager

Maggie Jennings

Democratic Services Officer

30. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

32. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2010 were agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Minute 24 – Connections Bus Project Funding. Gemma Barron reported that the figures regarding funding of the bus were available as requested and she would give them to the Leader after the meeting.

Minute 27 – Local Strategic Partnership grant towards A1307 improvements – Gemma Barron reported that the grant of £200,000 would be spent by June 2012 and confirmed that the costs of the improvements was match funded through other works on the A1307 by the County Council.

33. CONSIDERATION OF LGA MEMBERSHIP REVIEW

Claire Holloway, Corporate Programme Director from the Local Government Association (LGA) was in attendance to address the meeting following the decision made at the previous meeting to give one year's notice of the Council's intention to leave the LGA by April 2011.

Claire passed on an apology for absence from Daniel Mason also from the LGA who was unwell.

The Leader introduced the item by reiterating that in his view:

- the LGA had a reputation for acting as a `rubber stamp' for central government policies, which were unpopular with many local authorities
- the subscription did not represent good value for money
- the LGA did not assist when the Council was capped nor when the level of housing debt to be incurred by the Council was recently announced
- as one of the smaller authorities, it was felt there was very little in common with other larger authorities who had more influence at Whitehall
- conference fees, particularly for residential events were expensive

In response, Claire Holloway handed out literature on the benefits of LGA membership and gave the following additional information:

- the LGA needed to demonstrate how they could be more helpful in the future in order to build up a relationship that would benefit both parties
- a review of the LGA had recently been undertaken; the outcome had been that more contact with local authorities (LAs) was needed
- it had been recognised that the LGA had focussed more on Whitehall issues, however, it was felt that recently, there had been more contact with LAs
- the LGA was preparing to work with the newly elected government and the challenge would be that in order to lobby effectively, it was felt the association should be central to Whitehall, whilst maintaining close contact with LAs
- a District Councils Network had been launched last October
- in response to the level of housing debt, an undertaking was given that Martin Wheatley, who leads on housing and environment policy would make arrangements to meet Members and Officers to discuss their concerns
- as a representative body, the LGA listened to the concerns of LAs and maintained a high profile with central government
- there were 422 member councils subscribing to the LGA, with 10 councils, including SCDC, on notice to leave
- confirmation was given that LACORS was centrally funded and therefore all LAs had access to its advice
- the annual membership fee had been reduced from the previous year and it was intended that either a further reduction would be introduced in the future or that the existing fee would be capped
- members of the LGA received a reduction of 20-30% on conference fees. Additional free events were being planned for the future, together with video conferencing. Papers from conferences were available on the LGA website
- quarterly `staying in touch' meetings would be arranged with Daniel Mason and South Cambs Members
- meeting facilities at Local Government House, Smith Square, London were offered to Members when required

In conclusion, the Leader thanked Claire for attending the meeting and made an assurance that a decision would be made before February 2011 on whether or not the Council would retain membership of the LGA.

It was **AGREED** that

- (a) both the Council and the Local Government Association (LGA) should endeavour to liaise more closely in the future, particularly on significant issues affecting the Council, and
- (b) a decision on whether to remain a member of the LGA should be taken before 28 February 2011.

34. FEAR OF CRIME SURVEY

Paul Howes informed the Portfolio Holder that 152 responses had been received to the survey that had been placed on the SCDC website and in the SCDC magazine. The survey had also been publicised through Neighbourhood Panel meetings during the response period.

It was felt that, although quite high in comparison with other surveys, the level of response was not representative of the district as a whole and that any conclusions drawn could not be taken as statistically significant and should be used with caution.

Both the Portfolio Holder and Cllr Sue Ellington felt that communicating crime rates might raise the level of fear of crime within the district although, when compared with other areas in the country, this area had a relatively low incidence of crime.

Cllr John Batchelor suggested that a survey should be conducted in schools to assess the level of fear of crime.

The Leader **AGREED** to:

- (a) note the content of the report
- (b) consult the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership on its views on surveying children and young people on fear of crime, and
- (c) continue to work with partners, through the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, to further publicise accurate crime levels, eCops and crime reduction tips.

35. FORWARD PLAN

It was noted that

- (a) the items relating to Service Plan improvement milestones and Performance Indicators would now be considered at the meeting on 15 July 2010
- (b) the Cambridgeshire Rural Strategy would be discussed at either the 15 July or 16 September 2010 meeting

36. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was **NOTED** that the next meeting would be held on Thursday, 15 July 2010 commencing at 10am.

The Meeting ended at 11.05 a.m.
