

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Northstowe Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on
Thursday, 11 March 2010 at 2.00 p.m.

Portfolio Holder: Tim Wotherspoon

Councillors in attendance:

Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitor: Mike Mason
Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitor and Bridget Smith
Opposition spokesman:
Opposition spokesman: Steve Harangozo
Also in attendance: David Bard, Trisha Bear, Alex Riley and
John F Williams

Officers:

Holly Adams Democratic Services Team Leader
Edward Durrant Planning Assistant
Sheryl French Delivery Manager, Cambridgeshire Horizons
John Garnham Finance Project Officer
Jane Green Head of New Communities
Steve Hampson Executive Director, Operational Services
Paul Howes Corporate Manager, Community and Customer Services
Keith Miles Planning Policy Manager
Peter Studdert Joint Planning Director - Growth Areas
Joseph Whelan Head of New Communities, Cambridgeshire County Council
Mr D Harradine, Longstanton Parish Council, was also in attendance.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Bridget Smith declared a personal interest in item 4 (Northstowe EcoTown) as a member of a Cambridgeshire County Council scrutiny committee looking at New Communities.

2. STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

The Finance Project Officer explained that the Corporate Governance Committee, at its 9 February 2010 meeting, had agreed to an executive / governance split of risk management functions. Pending Council approval and amendments to the Constitution, the review of the strategic risk register remained a function of the Corporate Governance Committee and the Portfolio Holder was asked to make his recommendations to that body.

The Portfolio Holder and those present considered whether the correct scenarios were identified as strategic risks and whether the risk scores and control measures were appropriate. Specific comments included:

- Str4: Climate Change Adaptation: the developing Climate Change Action Plan could reduce the seriousness of the threat but the Portfolio Holder did not believe that the current risk score should be altered;
- Str5: Lack of Development Progress: the decision by the government to drop the Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) had not been known when Executive Management Team (EMT) received the strategic risk register on 24 February 2010, but the Area Action Plans for Cambridge East and other city fringe sites had been developed prior to the TIF proposals and so the loss of TIF should not affect the specific sites although there could be an impact on growth areas generally. The Finance Project Officer explained that Str5 previously had included a reference to Northstowe and a risk score of 9. EMT had known that Northstowe

was likely to be included in the next wave of eco-towns and had therefore removed the reference to Northstowe from the strategic risk register, but kept the same risk score and the Portfolio Holder felt that the current score was appropriate;

- The column for 'Adjusted risk score' would be used as updates were made to the risk register but, as many of the control measures listed were still in preparation, it would be premature to alter the scores at this time.

The Portfolio Holder **RECOMMENDED TO THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE** approval of the updated strategic risk register and matrix.

3. **COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT (CAA) - FRAMEWORK**

The Corporate Manager (Community and Customer Services) presented an overview of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) Framework and the value to the organisation of completing a self-assessment and improved use of Value for Money (VfM) reviews. This new approach would better demonstrate the Council's successes. The Corporate Manager was confident that the project could be completed within existing resources and noted that much of the information already being prepared for the Equality Framework and Customer Service Excellence assessments would form part of the CAA self-assessment.

Members' expertise could also be used and the Corporate Manager undertook to invite all members to participate.

The Portfolio Holder **ENDORSED** the proposed CAA Framework for implementation across the authority.

4. **NORTHSTOWE ECO-TOWN**

The Executive Director (Operational Services) explained that Cambridgeshire authorities had presented a bid to the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) for Northstowe to be granted eco-town status. The timescale for submission had been tight, but key representatives from the District and County Councils, Cambridgeshire Horizons and Government Office Eastern Region (GO-East) had bid for £1.8 million to fund both studies / preparatory work and demonstrator projects. On 9 March 2010 authorities were notified that they would receive £1.5 million, although the revenue / capital split was not yet known, nor was the division between funding for studies and demonstrator projects.

On the basis that more detailed information about the division of funding would be circulated as soon as it was received from the CLG, and that the estimated costs in the bids included views from existing project groups where available and best guesses otherwise, the following general comments were made:

- It was necessary to review the proposals to deliver the zero carbon standard as the definition of zero carbon had changed and because it was essential to prepare a viable business case which would be accepted by the developers. The new definition stated that 70% of regulated carbon (e.g., heating and lighting) must come from within the development and 30% from "allowable solutions", the latter of which was yet to be clarified. It was possible that additional funds could be available to invest in retrofitting homes locally;
- It was proposed that the Biomass Combined Heat and Cooling (CHP) plant would reduce 85% of carbon emissions on-site;
- Climate change adaptation work was included throughout the planning application and the proposed study would bring all the strands together to highlight the full extent to which the adaptations had been incorporated;
- Other low carbon options should be investigated, including Passiv Haus construction methods for private housing schemes;
- Building regulations would determine the zero carbon rating for homes, but

- encompassed a wider range of factors than just the Code level and a study was needed to provide clarification;
- Gardens had been included as green infrastructure in the Eco-Towns Planning Policy Statement (PPS) but, in response to strong local views that more could be done, it was proposed to map the existing green infrastructure in and around Northstowe to present a more accurate and detailed picture;
 - Significant work was required to further develop the water efficiency measures on the existing planning application, for example, rainwater management;
 - The study on Water and Flood Risk Management would fit within the proposed review of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, currently out to tender for an assessor. The Water Cycle Strategy would include Northwest Cambridge / NIAB site, Orchard Park and Northstowe, and it was recommended that the developers fund a further study to look at Cottenham Lode capacity;
 - It was anticipated that community governance issues, including the Community Trust, would be in place earlier in the development process than at Cambourne and Orchard Park because there were existing residents at Rampton Drift who could form the nucleus of a community council which would expand as the development progressed;
 - The authorities would endeavour to undertake the majority of studies in-house within current resources, and, when external expertise was required, to make best use of consultants with whom there were existing relationships. Re-organisations presented a challenge, as there was a danger of losing internal knowledge and expertise;
 - The current status of the promoter was still unclear and until that had been established, it was impossible to understand the status of the planning authority and which body would be the principal service provider until the Town Council was established; and
 - Officers' view was that the Masterplan should include all land, including the reserve land, and they would advocate pursuing this approach now that the Northstowe development was being considered for eco-town status.

There was general agreement that the 'eco-town' label was beneficial and raised awareness of the climate change agenda; it also could form part of a marketing strategy for potential employers.

The Portfolio Holder felt that, to the extent that it was feasible and once timescales were known, the Climate Change Working Group could take an overarching view of all climate change matters arising, particularly in reports from consultants.

In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder explained that his role would be to work in partnership with the New Communities Portfolio Holder, but would also separate Northstowe from the other major developments and the general growth agenda, allowing greater focus on the District's first town.

The Portfolio Holder **NOTED** the report.

5. **FORWARD PLAN**

The Forward Plan was **APPROVED**.

6. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members would be advised by e-mail of the date of the next meeting.

The Meeting ended at 4.10 p.m.
