

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on  
Thursday, 8 September 2011 at 6.00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Ray Manning (Leader of the Council)  
Councillor Simon Edwards (Deputy Leader of the Council and Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder)

**Councillors:** Tom Bygott Policy and Performance Portfolio Holder  
Sue Ellington Environmental Services Portfolio Holder  
Peter Topping Sustainability, Planning and Climate Change Portfolio Holder  
Tim Wotherspoon Northstowe and New Communities Portfolio Holder  
Nick Wright Economic Development Portfolio Holder

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Holly Adams	Democratic Services Team Leader
Alex Colyer	Executive Director, Corporate Services
Steve Hampson	Executive Director, Operational Services
Jean Hunter	Chief Executive
Nicole Kritzinger	Development Officer
Tracy Mann	Development Officer
Fiona McMillan	Legal & Democratic Services Manager
Jo Mills	Corporate Manager, Planning and New Communities

Councillors David Bard, John Batchelor, Alison Elcox, Lynda Harford, Liz Heazell, James Hockney, Sebastian Kindersley, Janet Lockwood, Cicely Murfitt, Charles Nightingale, Ben Shelton, Hazel Smith and David Whiteman-Downes were in attendance, by invitation.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mark Howell, Housing Portfolio Holder.

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### **Procedural Items**

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#### **14. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Leader signed the minutes of the 7 July 2011 meeting as a correct record.

#### **15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None declared.

#### **16. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None.

#### **17. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

None.

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**Decisions made by Cabinet**

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**18. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) SELF-FINANCING: CONSEQUENTIAL ACTIONS**

The Government had requested that all stock-retaining local authorities identify before the end of September 2011 those properties that the authority intended to transfer from its ownership before the end of March 2012 or to demolish within the next five years. These properties would not then be included within the debt settlement figure for the establishment of the self-financing regime in April 2012 to replace the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) subsidy system. Councillor Simon Edwards, Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder, presented the two parts of the report: the first identified the properties which had been identified as meeting the Government's criteria, and the second considered the options for raising the finance required to make the payment of the £200+ million HRA settlement demanded by the Government.

**Transfer or demolition and reprovisioning of properties**

Councillors James Hockney and Sebastian Kindersley, local members for Waterbeach and Gamlingay respectively, supported the recommendations to transfer the hostel site and nearby properties at Robson Court, Waterbeach and to demolish and reprovision properties at Robinson Court, Gamlingay. Councillor Kindersley reported that Councillor Bridget Smith, fellow ward member for Gamlingay, also gave her support, and the Leader reported that Councillor Alex Riley, local member for Longstanton, supported the recommendation for the demolition and reprovision of properties at Fairview, Longstanton.

The Executive Director (Operational Services) confirmed that the Council intended to provide at least as many dwellings at the sites scheduled for demolition as originally available, and undertook to circulate full details to members. Due to the 30 September deadline for identifying properties which met the Government's criteria, a Cabinet decision was required at this meeting and no further properties could be added to the schedule, although members were assured that the Council had a regular programme of reviewing and reprovisioning its housing stock. The demolition and reprovisioning programme had to be completed by 31 March 2017, so there would be ample time to work with affected households to find suitable accommodation while the sites were being reprovisioned.

**Debt finance**

All councillors had been invited to attend a pre-Cabinet briefing on the HRA reforms and the debt finance options available to the Council. A specialist financial advisor would need to be appointed to assist the authority in its decision making, and this appointment would be undertaken through the standard tender process. Members discussed whether or not to pursue the Council's credit rating, which would be necessary should the authority choose to issue a bond or bonds, and the time, costs and risks associated with receiving the credit rating.

Cabinet acknowledged that the Council would be receiving such a high debt settlement as a result of its prudent financial management, which the Government had considered as evidence that the authority would be able to afford the repayment. At the end of the thirty-year repayment period, subject to the Government not re-opening and increasing the settlement amount, the Council should be slightly better off overall than if the

previous HRA subsidy system had continued. Cabinet recognised that the HRA self-financing system would allow the authority to deliver housing according to local need rather than according to central government guidelines.

The Leader explained that re-balloting tenants regarding transfer of the housing stock was not an option as the Council was required to assume the HRA debt. He said that the conclusive outcome of the previous ballot had demonstrated that tenants preferred to remain with the Council.

Cabinet **AGREED**:

- (a) to transfer of the hostel site and nearby properties at Robson Court, Waterbeach, as listed in Appendix 1 to the report to Cabinet, to Sanctuary Carr-Gomm at nil value;
- (b) the demolition of the properties at Robinson Court, Grays Road, Gamlingay and Fairview, Longstanton before 31 March 2017, as listed in Appendix 2 to this report;
- (c) the appointment of a specialist financial advisor to develop options for the raising of the funds required for the Council's self-financing settlement commitment; and
- (d) to delegate authority to the Executive Director (Corporate Services), in consultation with the Leader and Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder, to pursue the Council's credit rating.

## 19. ESTABLISHING A YOUTH COUNCIL

Councillor Sue Ellington, Champion for Member Development, presented proposals to establish a Youth Council, demonstrating the Council's commitment to giving young people in South Cambridgeshire the opportunity to help create communities. A Shadow Youth Council would operate from January 2012, considering how the full Youth Council would function, including the elections process, its budget requirements, administration and reporting lines. The Youth Council would be promoted through the Village Colleges, *South Cambs magazine* and the Youth Bus, and Councillor Ellington assured members that young people who were educated outside the District, such as at Bottisham Village College, Trumpington Meadows and sixth forms within Cambridge, would be able to be involved.

Members welcomed the proposals, but asked that the number of meetings be reviewed as there could be a risk that the enthusiasm of participants could diminish if the full Youth Council met only twice annually. Youth councillors would also be expected to set out their own budget proposals and present them to Cabinet as part of the annual budget cycle.

Councillor Ellington had been inviting young people, via village colleges and secondary schools, to a Local Democracy Week Open Day on 13 October 2011.

Cabinet **AGREED** to

- (a) establish South Cambridgeshire Youth Council from September 2012; and
- (b) to adopt the Action Plan at Appendix A of the report to Cabinet.

## 20. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES 2011/12

Councillor Nick Wright, Economic Development Portfolio Holder, set out the successful benefits being brought to the district's businesses and residents through the economic development initiatives undertaken since 2008, and summarised the activities underway. The top priority was District-wide high-speed broadband internet access, which was crucial for encouraging businesses to set up outside of Cambridge City and supporting

residents who worked from home. Councillor Wright felt that the Council's role as a supporter of business was increasing, and commented the Council had been recognised as business-friendly, open to business and supporting the District's economic needs. The Leader also congratulated Cllr Wright and the economic development officer on the measures and the achievements of the last three years noting a "sea change" in delivery.

Cabinet **AGREED** the priority actions contained in the appendix of the report, including the restructuring of the £150,000 Economic Downturn Measures budget allocation to be split £90,000 for 2011/12 and £60,000 for 2012/13.

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### Standing Items

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#### **21. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**

Councillor James Hockney, Scrutiny and Overview Committee Chairman, reported that the Customer Contact and the Planning Services Review Task and Finish Groups had completed their work and that the programme of Task and Finish Groups was progressing smoothly. He commended Portfolio Holders and officers who had begun to implement the Committee's recommendations even before the Groups had finalised their reports. A Strategic Housing Task and Finish Group, led by Councillor Nigel Cathcart, had been established, and there would be a one-day Task and Finish Group to look at corporate complaints and compliments.

#### **22. UPDATES FROM CABINET MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

Councillor Sue Ellington presented her report on the 30 August 2011 meeting of the Community Wellbeing Partnership, and confirmed that the County Council's Cabinet had agreed Model 2 for the establishment of the Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board and Network. Members discussed the possible implications for local health services and regretted the County Council decision not to involve at least one district councillor from each District Council within Cambridgeshire.

#### **23. REPORTS FROM CABINET MEMBERS ATTENDING PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS**

Nothing to report.

#### **24. REPORTS FROM MEMBER CHAMPIONS**

Cabinet received apologies from Councillor Bridget Smith, Member Champion for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults, and looked to receive her report at its next meeting.

Councillor Ben Shelton, Member Champion for Policing, reported on recent Neighbourhood Panel meetings in Sawston, Swavesey and Cambourne, the South Cambridgeshire Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, and the Cambridgeshire Police and Police Authority. In response to questions, members were advised that individual Neighbourhood Panels had the discretion to set their own remit and could choose not to focus as much on policing matters; however, when the Scrutiny and Overview Committee had reviewed the format of Neighbourhood Panels, it recommended that the original format, as a forum for raising policing matters, be retained.

Councillor John Batchelor, a member of the Cambridgeshire Policy Authority, explained that the Police Commissioner election had been deferred from May to November 2012 and that a ten-member Police and Crime Panel would be established, with representatives from all of Cambridgeshire's District Councils.

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**The Meeting ended at 7.47 p.m.**

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