

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on
Tuesday, 6 September 2011 at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor James Hockney – Chairman
Councillor Bridget Smith – Vice-Chairman

Councillors: Alison Elcox
Tumi Hawkins
Mike Mason
Ben Shelton
David Whiteman-Downes

Jose Hales
Liz Hezell
Ted Ridgway Watt
Bunty Waters

Councillor Tom Bygott, Policy and Performance Portfolio Holder, was in attendance, by invitation.

Officers: Patrick Adams
Paul Howes
Jean Hunter
Paul Knight
Jackie Sayers

Accounts Assistant
Corporate Manager, Community and Customer Services
Chief Executive
Customer and Business Services Manager
Scrutiny Development Officer

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Roger Hall, Clayton Hudson (Councillor Ben Shelton as substitute) and Mervyn Loynes (Councillor Alison Elcox as substitute).

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ben Shelton declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 16, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership: Performance Review and Strategic Assessment, as the Council's Police Champion. Notwithstanding this interest he remained in the room and participated in the discussion.

14. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2011 were agreed as a correct record.

15. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None.

16. CRIME & DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP (CDRP): PERFORMANCE REVIEW AND STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT

Rick Hylton, Chairman of the South Cambridgeshire Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, introduced this report on the recent changes to the Partnership. He explained that the Partnership had to operate differently due to a reduction in funding.

Funding and Structure

It was noted that the Partnership had been funded directly from the Government and from the Partners. Unfortunately Government funding was being reduced by 50% this year and then would cease entirely. It was also likely that the contribution from individual partners would reduce and this meant that the Partnership would have to operate differently. Rick Hylton explained that the number of Board meetings had been reduced to two a year and a tasking and coordination group had been set up to address local

priorities.

Data from partners

Concerns were expressed regarding the lack of up-to-date data coming from the County Council and the effect this had on the target setting for the rest of the partners, including this authority.

Farm crime

Members of the Committee queried whether farm crime should be a priority as road safety was a major concern and there were more thefts from cars than from farms. Councillor Tom Bygott explained that farm crime accounted for 11% of crime in the District and should be priority for a rural area. He reminded the Committee that it had been agreed as a priority by full Council. Rick Hylton agreed to contact the police to ascertain whether crime figures relating to farm crime could be reported separately.

Crime reduction

It was hoped that the Council could work with its partners to ensure the continuation of successful projects, such as the Connections Bus.

The Committee **RECOMMENDED** that:

- (a) the future reports be simplified, and based on current data;
- (b) the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership play a significant role in ensuring partner participation in tackling its priorities;
- (c) if possible, crime figures relating to farm crime be separately reported; and
- (d) the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership investigate the benefits of the Connections Bus with regard to reduction in Anti-Social Behaviour.

The Committee **AGREED** that the Chairman of the South Cambridgeshire Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership would be invited to the meeting of 29 March 2012 to report on the first six months' operation of the tasking and coordination group.

The Chairman thanked Rick Hylton for his attendance and his informative answers.

17. REVIEW OF COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS POLICY

Councillor Tom Bygott, Policy and Performance Portfolio Holder, presented this report on the Council's Compliments, Comments and Complaints policy and invited the Committee to suggest amendments.

The Committee made the following suggestions:

- The inclusion of base figures to give context to the data in the report.
- The word "forward" in the first paragraph of section 11.1 be amended to "copy-in" to ensure that the Customer Service Co-ordinator be made aware of compliments, comments and complaints.
- The first sentence be removed from the second paragraph under the heading "Internal complaints" on page 58.
- In the final bullet point in the first set of bullet points on page 58 the words ", and compliments" be added.
- The first sentence in section 4.2 be removed.

The Scrutiny Development Officer agreed to collate the suggested amendments to the Policy and circulate them to the Committee for agreement before forwarding to the Portfolio Holder.

Defining a complaint

The Customer and Business Services Manager explained that officers were required to make a judgement on what constituted a complaint.

Learning from complaints

It was noted that one of the aims of the policy was to ensure that the Council was able to learn from the complaints it received and that a process was now in place and being used.

Processing of complaints

In response to questioning, the Customer and Business Services Manager explained that the possibility of reducing the number of days for each stage of the complaints process was being considered, with a view to introducing a new policy on 30 June 2012 to coincide with the launching of the new contact centre.

The Committee **AGREED** that

- (a) the Committee would finalise and then submit its suggested amendments to the Portfolio Holder; and
- (b) the Committee would hold a one-day task and finish group to examine how the Council could make better use of the learning available through customer feedback.

18. CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Councillor Tom Bygott, Policy and Performance Portfolio Holder, introduced this report which showed the progress made on the Customer Experience Work Programme. Councillor Bygott agreed to liaise with the Council's partners as pledged in action 3.11.

The Customer and Business Support Manager agreed to re-word action 2.3 (e) in the report for the sake of clarity. He stated that a new officer would start with the newly formed customer and business services team in November and he was confident that the Council could maintain its current high standards.

19. WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12

The Chairman presented this report on the Committee's work programme for the remainder of 2011/12.

Housing repairs contract

The Chairman agreed to invite a representative of Mears to a future meeting of the Committee to discuss the new housing repairs contract and the role of the Committee in monitoring its performance.

Sheltered Housing Task and Finish Group

Concern was expressed regarding the apparent lack of consultation by the County Council on a decision that would affect sheltered housing tenants throughout the County. It was noted that the future work of the Sheltered Housing Task and Finish Group would be affected by the decision to be taken by the County Council's Cabinet in October, which they would be seeking to influence. The Chairman accepted that the timing of a report from the Task and Finish Group would be dependent on that decision.

Planning Task and Finish Group

Councillor Mike Mason, Chairman of the Planning Task and Finish Group, stated that he would write a progress report for the next meeting of the Committee.

20. MONITORING THE EXECUTIVE

The Committee received a number of reports from its monitors.

21. TO NOTE THE DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee **NOTED** the remaining meeting dates for 2011/12:

- 2011: 3 November at 2pm, 15 December at 2pm.
- 2012: 6 February at 2pm and 29 March at 2pm.

The Meeting ended at 9.10 p.m.
