

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on
Thursday, 3 November 2011 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor James Hockney – Chairman
Councillor Jose Hales – Acting Vice-Chairman

Councillors:	Richard Barrett	Val Barrett
	Alison Elcox	Jose Hales
	Roger Hall	Lynda Harford
	Tumi Hawkins	Liz Heazell
	Mike Mason	Bunty Waters
	Nick Wright	

Councillors John Batchelor (for the whole of the meeting), Sue Ellington (for item 7) and Nick Wright (for item 6) were in attendance, by invitation.

Also in attendance were County Councillor Steve Criswell, Portfolio Holder for Community Infrastructure and Dan Clarke, Future Transport Programme Manager, Cambridgeshire County Council for item 5.

Officers:	Holly Adams	Democratic Services Team Leader (for item 7)
	Rachael Fox	Customer Experience Co-ordinator (for item 8)
	Maggie Jennings	Democratic Services Officer
	Paul Knight	Customer Business Services Manager (for item 8)
	Jo Mills	Corporate Manager, Planning & New Communities (for item 6)
	Jackie Sayers	Scrutiny Development Officer

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clayton Hudson, Bridget Smith and David Whiteman-Downes.

Councillor Val Barrett was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Whiteman-Downes, Councillor Richard Barrett was in attendance as substitute for Clayton Hudson and Councillor Lynda Harford was in attendance as substitute for Councillor Bridget Smith.

Councillor Alison Elcox left the meeting at 2.40pm and Councillor Roger Hall left the meeting at 3.45pm.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

23. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2011 were agreed as a correct record.

24. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Two questions had been submitted by County Councillor Susan van de Ven relating to Local Public Service Agreement grant, and, partnership working and information sharing relating to community transport schemes. As the questions had been submitted beyond the deadline for questions as stated in the Council's constitution, the Chairman declined to respond to them. He did however, comment that it was not this Council's role to

provide justification for the decision of another authority.

25. COMMUNITY TRANSPORT IN SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Nick Wright, County Councillor Steve Criswell and County Council Officer, Dan Clarke to the meeting. He thanked members of the Steering Group, together with support from the County Council for the implementation of the South Cambridgeshire Community Transport Strategy 2010-12.

The Chairman invited Cllr Criswell to brief the meeting on the County Council led Cambridgeshire Future Transport initiative. In addressing the committee, the following points and issues were raised:

- The County Council were investigating franchising a number of services, including the establishment of three pilot projects to deliver alternative transport arrangements. Projects would be centred within the Duxford/Linton area, Over and East Cambs.
- An estimated budget of £150k had been earmarked for the implementation of the schemes, including provision in Over to feed into the Guided Busway and a scheme centred around Duxford which will include a Special Educational Needs contract and possibly a commuter service into Whittlesford station
- Franchising services had not, to date been pioneered anywhere else in the country. The model to be used had been obtained from the Local Government Franchising Service
- A 5-year project plan had been undertaken and as a result of the franchise, it was anticipated that a saving of £2m pa would be made on bus services in rural areas.
- Alternative forms of transport might be used, for example, cars or mini-buses
- Disappointment in the consultation process was expressed, particularly that the form did not include the question as to what purpose the public were travelling
- Orchard Park had not been included in the consultation process despite a substantial amount previously been spent by the County Council on subsidising a service which had subsequently ceased operating. It was also noted that two large businesses at Orchard Park might benefit from future provision of community transport. Cllr Criswell undertook to follow up that possibility. **Action: County Councillor Criswell**
- Referring to para 8(c) in the covering report, clarification was sought on the targets required by the County Council to providers of the proposed service. In response, the SCDC Partnerships Officer informed the committee that grants were given to individuals and providers of the Dial-a-Ride service and one of the targets was to provide a service to a higher number of groups/individuals
- Schemes would be adapted to provide funding in the event of a reduction in existing services to the youth community
- Fees to operate a franchise had not yet been finalised
- There had been 17 expressions of interest from commercial enterprises to provide community transport, including bus and taxi operators; these would be used in the pilot schemes
- Since Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) funding had been cut, no further SCDC funding had been allocated for Community Transport, however, £31k had been allocated by the County for future schemes within South Cambs district.
- Officers had identified a number of issues yet to be determined, as indicated on page 2, para 14 of the covering report. These concerns were also shared by the Steering Group who had also requested consideration that one of the services terminates at the Trumpington Park and Ride site after peak time in the morning and use the bus for servicing the villages of Shepreth/Medreth or the A603 corridor. Dan Clarke undertook to respond to the concerns and consider re-routing one of the bus

services to facilitate Shepreth/Meldreth/A603. There would be areas where franchising of transport would not be feasible and alternative arrangements would be sought

- The pilot schemes were due to be launched on 5 December 2011
- It was noted that no consultation had occurred between the County and Linton Parish Council, despite a pilot scheme scheduled there for December
- Cllr Criswell stated that there would be no withdrawal of subsidies in the near future and that as a result of the consultation process and community impact assessments, the whole transport structure would be re-visited during the coming months and a conclusion reached by April 2012

The Scrutiny & Overview Committee,

- (i) **RECOMMENDED** that the County Council,
- (a) expands its consultation to gauge residents' needs in areas currently poorly served, or not served by public transport,
 - (b) consults those parish councils involved in the franchising trials and consider delaying the trials until responses have been received,
 - (c) be requested to supply a written response to page 2, paragraph 14 of the covering report
 - (d) be requested to consider re-routing one of the bus services to facilitate Shepreth/Meldreth or the A603 corridor
 - (e) consider, in light of the loss of LPSA funding, the dissemination of the £258k central government grant for provision of community transport to SCDC
- (ii) **AGREED** that the County Council be invited to attend the meeting on 29 March 2012 to update the Committee on the pilot schemes, lessons learnt and the resulting plan of action.

Nick Wright, the Economic Development Portfolio Holder thanked Kathryn Hawkes, Partnerships Officer for the work she had undertaken in respect of Community Transport within South Cambridgeshire.

26. **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

Cllr Nick Wright, Economic Development Portfolio Holder and Jo Mills, Corporate Manager, Planning and New Communities were in attendance for this item.

Cllr Wright addressed the meeting and informed the Committee of his role within the Council; these included:

- Economic Development (ED) was a newly created Portfolio in May 2011 and his main task was to make ED a priority for 2012/13 with support from Nicole Kritzinger, the Economic Development Officer.
- The Portfolio Holder had decided, that with the exception of considering the 2012/13 Service Plan, he would not be holding meetings as, unlike his Executive colleagues, he was not required to make decisions. He would, however, be making

- quarterly updates to Cabinet
- His priority has been to visit local businesses to ascertain how they would like the Council to help them succeed and had been pleased to hear that most businesses were complimentary on the support that had been given to them
 - Despite the loss of 4-5 thousand jobs in the area due to the recession, this was the only district in the county showing positive growth
 - Support has been given to local businesses through the recession via advice, start-up groups and the Step-up competition to encourage new businesses. The initial winner of the Step-up competition had now developed into an international company.
 - Future plans for 2012/13 include the support of digital infrastructure, including faster broadband delivery. The Portfolio Holder requested that members identify areas where broadband speed was low in order that the resources required to remedy the situation could be included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. It was noted that BT were investing approximately £6.5m to aid delivery of a faster service
 - Future new larger housing developments would include s.106 Agreements to aid speedier broadband delivery
 - Consensus of opinion was the whole of the district would benefit from faster broadband delivery. It was noted that Caxton, Madingley, Histon and Impington were earmarked for faster broadband in the near future to both business and private premises with priority given to hi-demand areas
 - With the help of Business Link, a website had been set up to improve business communications
 - In response to a question concerning help for small businesses, it was noted that hardship relief was available, the government were being pursued to return National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) to this Council and meetings were held if required to help guide new businesses
 - It was noted that rents for some premises were high, however, a list of premises for renting was available on the Council's website. It was planned that a list of starter premises would also be available
 - Although it was disappointing to hear of the demise of Business Link, help was available to businesses via the Council as Local Enterprise Partnership, together with Business Angels and Business Network

27. MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Cllr Sue Ellington, Environmental Services Portfolio Holder and Holly Adams, Democratic Services Team Leader were in attendance for this item.

The Committee considered the information provided in the covering report and as a result, the following issues and suggestions were raised:

- Concern that the timing for member training was not appropriate for most members and take-up was poor. This was being addressed by offering early evening training, sharing training with other local authorities and where appropriate, inviting parish councils to attend. Other ideas to increase member attendance at training would be welcomed by the task and finish group
- Consideration would be given for future training to be arranged to coincide with other council business being held on the same day
- The Member Training Programme for 2012/13 was due to be considered by Cabinet on 9 February 2012
- The presentation for District and Parish Councils initiated by Cllr Mike Mason on drainage issues, held on 26 October at 5.30pm had been well attended and

warmly received

- In response to a question on measuring the effectiveness of training, the Committee were informed that although difficult to do so, it had been noted that Members who had received training, for example, in corporate governance and finance, were asking more pertinent questions in meetings
- As a result of the completion of Personal Development Plans for members, appropriate training was being arranged to facilitate those requirements
- Group Leaders had been tasked with encouraging their members to attend training sessions and operate a 'buddy scheme' for new members to the Council
- An event for prospective new councillors had been organised for 13 February 2012; this would inform prospective candidates on what to expect if elected.
- The 'Being a Councillor' guide had been reviewed and commended by the task and finish group.
- It was intended that a workshop would be held in the near future for councillors elected last May to gain feedback on their experiences over the year and review the new councillors induction process

The Chairman thanked the Portfolio Holder and Officer for attending the meeting.

28. **LEARNING FROM CUSTOMER FEEDBACK - REPORT OF THE TASK & FINISH GROUP**

Paul Knight, Customer and Business Services Manager and Rachael Fox, Customer Experience Co-ordinator were in attendance for this item.

The Committee considered the report and recommendations from the Customer Feedback task and finish group.

The Chairman of the Group, Cllr Lynda Harford, thanked all those who attended the meetings and emphasised the importance of customer feedback, both internally and externally.

During consideration of the report, the following points were raised:

- A hearing loop system would be installed in all the main meeting rooms
- Stagecoach should be contacted to place a bus timetable in the shelter outside the Cambourne office
- WiFi connection at the council should be simplified
- Additional emphasis should be given to improving Member/Officer relations. In response to this comment, the Committee were informed that future customer service training would cover this, with a follow-up session 3 months later. A learning sheet would be monitored by line-managers and the appraisals process
- An item relating to Member/Officer relations to be included in the new Member induction process

In conclusion, the Committee **AGREED** the recommendations set out in the report, together with additional wording at the end of Recommendation 2, stating '***This should be supported by a protocol***

The amended report would be presented to the Policy and Performance Portfolio Holder at his meeting on 26 January 2012.

The Officers were thanked for attending the meeting.

29. MONITORING THE EXECUTIVE

There were no reports from Scrutiny monitors.

Cllr Mike Mason informed the committee that he had been in discussion with the Interim Head of Planning on matters relating to enforcement procedures and queried whether the Committee could request their consideration during discussion of the Planning Services task and finish group update at the next meeting? The Chairman invited Cllr Mason to the briefing to be held prior to the 15 December meeting.

30. WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Committee **AGREED** the Work Programme 2011/12 as detailed in Appendix A of the covering report.

31. TO NOTE THE DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The dates of future meetings were noted as follows:

15 December 2011 at 2pm
06 February 2012 at 2pm
29 March 2012 at 2pm

The Meeting ended at 4.50 p.m.
