

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on  
Thursday, 5 September 2013 at 6.00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Roger Hickford – Chairman  
Councillor Sue Ellington – Vice-Chairman

**Councillors:** Alison Elcox Lynda Harford  
Bridget Smith Bunty Waters  
Val Barrett

Councillors Simon Edwards, Ben Shelton, Nick Wright, Mark Howell and Ray Manning were in attendance, by invitation.

Youth Councillors Dale Hargrove, Callum Hatch, Isabella Marshall and Tom Mayer were also in attendance, by invitation.

**Officers:** Graham Aisthorpe-Watts Democratic Services Team Leader  
James Fisher S106 Officer  
Jean Hunter Chief Executive  
Tracy Mann Development Officer  
Richard May Policy and Performance Manager  
Steve Rayment Head of ICT

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Bard, Jose Hales and Douglas de Lacey.

### **12. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Lynda Harford declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute number 19 as she was an employee of an agent involved in the sale of properties being purchased by the Council.

### **13. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2013 were **AGREED** and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **14. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No public questions had been received.

### **15. YOUTH COUNCIL UPDATE**

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee considered a briefing note on South Cambridgeshire Youth Council's progress to date, including updates on its involvement with the following: -

- the Park Life event;
- the Summer Business Forum;
- next year's Youth Council elections;
- a schools survey report.

It was also noted that two Youth Councillors had spent two weeks at the Council during July as part of their work experience, which provided them with a valuable insight into the work and responsibilities of the Council within the Northstowe team and Housing team.

The Chairman congratulated the South Cambridgeshire Youth Councillors on the hard work they had undertaken during the Youth Council's first year and stated that the District Council valued their involvement and input.

Youth Councillors Dale Hargrove, Callum Hatch, Isabella Marshall and Tom Mayer were in attendance at the meeting and Members of the Committee took this opportunity to ask a range of questions, further to which the following points were noted: -

- the Youth Council considered everything that was passed to it and would be able to contribute further if more things were sent through to the Youth Council for consideration;
- Youth Councillors were provided with regular updates on the work of the District Council by Tracy Mann, Development Officer, who was a valuable link between the Youth Council and the District Council;
- the Youth Council had not had much involvement with the production of the District Council's Local Plan;
- the Youth Council had a reasonable presence on social media and was currently engaging with young people on the upcoming Youth Council elections. It was also promoting the elections through schools, with interest from young people ever expanding;
- the biggest impact the Youth Council had made over the past year was access to grant funding, which made a huge difference to communities in the District. In addition, Youth Councillors were pleased that the Youth Council had given young people a voice.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **NOTED** the update from the South Cambridgeshire Youth Council.

## **16. POSITION STATEMENT: FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND RISK**

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee considered a report which provided a statement on the Council's position with regard to its General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and capital budgets, corporate objectives, performance indicators and strategic risks. This report, together with any specific comments or recommendations from the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, was scheduled to be considered at the meeting of Cabinet on 12 September 2013.

Councillor Simon Edwards, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing, presented the budgetary elements of the report, commencing with the General Fund which he said at this time of the year was a very early view of the Council's outturn. Councillor Edwards reported one area of concern which related to Non-Domestic Rates and the number of appeals that were with the Valuation Officer awaiting resolution. He reported that the Council's Executive Director, Corporate Services, had conveyed the Council's concerns to the Valuation Officer about the length of time it took to resolve these appeals.

In terms of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, the Council was already planning for a substantial reduction in the amount of government grant received. The Chancellor's spending review set out proposals for local government to bear a 10% cut in funding

from 2015-16, whilst at the same time preventing Council Tax increases above 2% without prior approval in a referendum. Councillor Edwards also reported that the government had since announced that a proportion of New Homes Bonus would be top-sliced to fund Local Enterprise Partnerships. The Council had previously agreed not to rely on the New Homes Bonus when setting future budgets due to its vulnerability and Councillor Edwards stated that this announcement vindicated the Council's policy in this respect.

The Committee requested further information on the Council's Business and Improvement Efficiency Programme, which was referred to in the report and consisted of a range of projects designed to improve efficiency and customer service as well as contribute to the savings targets set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Officers were in the process of organising the annual finance workshop for Members and it was noted that the Business Improvement and Efficiency Programme would be included as part of it.

Councillor Roger Hickford, Chairman, referred to an informal meeting that he had recently held with Councillor Sue Ellington, Vice-Chairman, Councillor Lynda Harford and Richard May, Policy and Performance Manager. The meeting was used to discuss the current Corvu performance management system and the number of indicators that were monitored following problems that some Members of the Committee had experienced in using the system. Richard May reminded the Committee that the Corvu system was introduced approximately five years ago when over 200 statutory national performance indicators had to be monitored and reported, together with some additional local indicators, and had been purposely set up to manage that. Over the last three years the national performance indicators had been abolished and the authority now had far fewer performance indicators in place, following the deletion of many which did not add value to the Council's activities. 33 of these indicators had been allocated as key performance indicators and were set out in the report at Appendix C. Officers had been working on a new format for the report, as presented at this meeting, which brought together performance information against the Council's Corporate Plan actions, the Risk Register and financial headlines. Once this new reporting framework was established, they could subsequently identify a performance management system to support it.

Councillor Hickford requested a list of those indicators that had recently been removed from the performance management system and were no longer being monitored, which Richard May agreed to provide in due course.

In answer to a question regarding the cross-authority in-principle agreement to contribute funding to the A14 improvement scheme, Councillor Ray Manning, Leader of the Council, reported that nothing at this stage had been agreed in terms of the amount required by South Cambridgeshire District Council. He reiterated that it was a commitment in principle and nothing could be built into the Council's budget until any further details had been received.

Jean Hunter, Chief Executive, reported that a proposed Greater Cambridge City Deal bid had been submitted to central government. A promising response had been received but there were a number of additions that government requested be explored further. City Deal partners were in the process of negotiating on those things that could and could not be included and a final response from government on the negotiations was expected in November 2013.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **SUPPORTED** the recommendations to Cabinet contained within the report, scheduled to be considered at the meeting of Cabinet on 12 September 2013.

## 17. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL): UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report on the Council's latest position with regard to the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Councillor Nick Wright, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development, presented the report which highlighted work undertaken and next steps towards the adoption of the Community Infrastructure Levy. Included as part of the report was a Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule which had been approved by Cabinet on 27 June 2013 for consultation under the emerging Local Plan. Responses to the Schedule had been very limited to date, but it was noted that officers expected views from the development industry to be submitted ahead of the consultation closing.

Councillor Wright explained that the Council had to demonstrate it had taken into account any representations put forward on the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule and would therefore publish all responses online when the consultation ended, together with the Council's comments. He also reminded Members that revised Community Infrastructure Levy guidance would be issued this Autumn which was likely to require the Council to consult on the draft infrastructure list, with a final draft list to be submitted as part of the examination documents.

A report outlining responses to the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule consultation would be reported to Cabinet at its meeting on 14 November 2013, which would also be asked to recommend the following for approval: -

- the terms of the Draft Charging Schedule for consultation;
- a draft 'high level' infrastructure list for public consultation;
- a draft Community Infrastructure Levy payment instalment policy for public consultation.

James Fisher, Section 106 Officer, took Members through the rest of the report which confirmed the processes that would be followed for examination, adoption and implementation. He informed the Committee that Councillor Wright and officers would work with local Members to understand what they wanted to see delivered in their respective areas by Community Infrastructure Levy receipts over the short, medium and longer term. In discussing this part of the process, Members felt as though they should have been consulted at an earlier stage.

A question was raised as to whether any joint working had taken place with neighbouring authorities, so that there was a cross-border approach to implementing the Community Infrastructure Levy. Councillor Wright reported that South Cambridgeshire District Council had been reluctant during the recession to push ahead with the Levy in fear of halting smaller developments. As a consequence, the Council was moving at a slower pace than its neighbours. Some joint working had taken place, however, as the Council had used the same viability consultants as East Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambridge City Council and North Hertfordshire District Council. Work on the infrastructure delivery study, as required by the emerging Local Plan, also highlighted cross boundary infrastructure items necessary to deliver the Plan.

Discussion ensued on the final paragraph of the report, which stated that the Council would need to agree governance arrangements outlining how Community Infrastructure Levy monies would be allocated against identified projects. Whilst it was emphasised that these governance arrangements had yet to be agreed, Parish Councils would be

entitled to 15% of the Community Infrastructure Levy which would be increased to 25% if the Parish Council had produced a Neighbourhood Plan. Members sought clarification as to the level of support the District Council provided to Parish Councils in the production of their Neighbourhood Plans. Councillor Wright informed the Committee that Parish Councils were being encouraged to incorporate Neighbourhood Plans into the District Council's Local Plan.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee: -

- (a) **REQUESTED** more clarity on the support provided by the District Council to Parish Councils with regard to Neighbourhood Plans.
- (b) **RECOMMENDED** that engagement with District Councillors took place at a much earlier stage with regard to the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy proposals.

## 18. REDUNDANT ICT EQUIPMENT

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee considered the notes of an informal scrutiny working group meeting held on 15 August 2013 which looked into how the Council dealt with its redundant ICT equipment.

Councillor Bridget Smith chaired the informal working group and took Members through four recommendations that had been agreed, having taken account of evidence gathered at the meeting.

Endorsing these recommendations, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee **RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet: -

- (a) The production of a documented policy on the disposal of ICT equipment, removing any ambiguity around the Council's processes and setting out its responsibilities with regard to the appropriate disposal of ICT equipment and the protection of data and information.
- (b) The provision of dedicated on-site storage for obsolete ICT equipment, ensuring that the ICT workshop is cleared and can be used by ICT staff.
- (c) That it considers offering laptops previously used and no longer required by District Councillors to Parish Councils or to a community use endorsed by a Parish Council or a District Councillor, free of charge.
- (d) That it considers offering monitors surplus to requirements as a result of the rollout of Thin Client to Parish Councils or to a community use endorsed by a Parish Council or a District Councillor, free of charge.

## 19. SHARED EQUITY SCHEMES: UPDATE

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee considered a briefing note on the Equity Share Scheme, specifically with regard to the equity share properties that had leases dated after January 2006.

Councillor Mark Howell, Portfolio Holder for Housing, presented the briefing note and emphasised that any delays in a person selling their property or seeking to leave an Equity Share Scheme did not occur because of anything the Council was responsible for. Councillor Howell added that it would not be in the Council's business interests to

delay any part of this process.

A suggestion was put forward for the Council to buy back an Equity Share Scheme and then rent the property back to the same occupier. Councillor Howell was of the opinion that, from a business perspective, there was little or no benefit to the Council in doing this.

A suggestion was also put forward that shared equity houses that had been on the market for a long period of time should be considered for purchase by the Council in accordance with the Empty Home Strategy.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **NOTED** the briefing note.

## **20. WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14**

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee considered a report which set out its work programme for 2013/14.

It was agreed that an update on waste and recycling be added to the work programme for the Committee's meeting in January 2014.

Graham Aisthorpe-Watts, Democratic Services Team Leader, reported that he had identified a generic scrutiny and overview training session for Members of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and the Partnerships Review Committee, together with individual training sessions for both Committees focussing on their specific areas of work. These sessions would be delivered and facilitated by the Centre for Public Scrutiny later in the year.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **APPROVED** its work programme for 2013-14, subject to the addition of an item on waste and recycling at its meeting in January 2014.

## **21. MONITORING THE EXECUTIVE**

No updates were reported.

## **22. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Future meeting dates and times were **AGREED** as follows: -

- 7 November 2013 at 2.00 p.m.
- 16 January 2014 at 6.00 p.m.
- 11 February 2014 at 2.00 p.m.
- 3 April 2014 at 6.00 p.m.

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**The Meeting ended at 8.10 p.m.**

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