

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Thursday, 20 April 2017 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Peter Topping (Leader of the Council)
Councillor Nick Wright (Corporate & Customer Services Portfolio Holder and Deputy Leader)

Councillors:	Simon Edwards	Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder
	Lynda Harford	Housing Portfolio Holder
	Mark Howell	Environmental Services Portfolio Holder
	Robert Turner	Planning Portfolio Holder
	Tim Wotherspoon	Strategic Planning Portfolio Holder

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Alex Colyer	Interim Chief Executive
Julie Fletcher	Head of Housing Strategy
Stephen Kelly	Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development
Rory McKenna	Deputy Monitoring Officer
David Roberts	Principal Planning Policy Officer
Ian Senior	Democratic Services Officer

Councillors Cicely Murfitt and Bridget Smith were in attendance, by invitation.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Francis Burkitt sent Apologies for Absence.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Cabinet authorised the Leader to sign, as a correct record, the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2017.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Nick Wright declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 6 (A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Route Options Consultation). The orange route impacted upon the house and farm of Councillor Wright's Godson.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

6. CONSULTATION RESPONSE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S HOUSING WHITE PAPER - 'FIXING OUR BROKEN HOUSING MARKET'

Cabinet considered a report to which was appended a draft response to the Government's consultation on its Housing White Paper 'Fixing our broken housing market'.

This agenda item cut across two separate Portfolios and, in introducing the report, the Housing Portfolio Holder thanked Housing and Planning officers at both South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) and Cambridge City Council for meeting the tight timescale placed upon them. She said that SCDC's response was broadly positive and that there was significant common ground between the District and City Councils. However, SCDC would submit its response separately. There had been an all-Member briefing on this subject.

Councillor Harford welcomed the proposed changes to the criteria for Starter Homes, and highlighted the benefits of including the proposed new Affordable Private Rent model within the affordable housing definition, so long as this was part of a Build to Rent scheme. There were several initiatives currently being looked at, such as modular construction, that could help speed up the delivery of housing. Councillor Harford highlighted the opportunity to set the Council's housing land supply on an annual basis. She welcomed the encouragement being given to small- and medium-sized building Firms, and mentioned the idea of increasing planning fees and charging for appeals.

Councillor Simon Edwards welcomed proposals to review procedures relating to Compulsory Purchase Orders.

Councillor Mark Howell referred to pooling proposals in the context of the Fen Drayton Land Settlement Association. He also enquired about ransom strips. The Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development said that the Government's view was that ransom strips should not be allowed to cause delay where the public interest was at stake.

The Leader commended South Cambridgeshire District Council's proposed response, saying that all parties had responsibilities when it came to building more homes.

With reference to Question 10 (f) of the proposed response (relating to the review of Green Belt land), officers agreed to reflect on their use of the word 'simplistic'.

Councillor Bridget Smith suggested that reference be made to the impact development could have on existing infrastructure. The Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development replied that the Community Infrastructure Levy should help mitigate this pressure. Councillor Smith said that the importance of Small and Medium sized Enterprises should not be overlooked in considering the report and response to the consultation.

Councillor Tim Wotherspoon highlighted the opportunities that Northstowe Phase 2 would offer for encouraging alternative approaches to the delivery of housing.

Cabinet agreed

- (i) To endorse the consultation response set out in Appendix A to the report from the Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development and Housing Director, subject to officers being given delegated powers to make minor amendments, as agreed; and
- (ii) that where an identical response has been agreed by both this Council and Cambridge City Council in response to individual questions that these are included in a joint consultation response.

7. CONSULTATION RESPONSE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S PAPER - PLANNING AND

AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR BUILD TO RENT

The Cabinet considered a report seeking its endorsement of a proposed response to the Government's consultation paper relating to Planning and Affordable Housing for Build to Rent.

In response to a question from Councillor Mark Howell, the Head of Housing Strategy said that determination of rent levels would form part of the negotiations leading to Legal Agreements under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. She added that flexibility was important in the context of ensuring viability throughout what would be a long-term investment. This point would be added to the Council's response.

Councillor Mark Howell queried the tenancy length referred to in Question 13 of the consultation paper. There was some discussion about increasing the term to one of 15-years and, while funding and regulation were issues, officers agreed to consider how the response to Question 13 could be strengthened.

Cabinet appreciated officers' work in putting together a response to the consultation paper.

Cabinet **endorsed** the consultation response set out in Appendix A to the report from the Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development and Housing Director, subject to officers being given delegated powers to make minor amendments, to include consideration for longer term tenancies than the three years proposed within the consultation paper.

8. A428 BLACK CAT TO CAXTON GIBBET ROUTE OPTIONS CONSULTATION

Cabinet considered a report seeking its endorsement of the proposed response to Highways England's consultation on route options for the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvement scheme.

The Deputy Leader said that it was crucial that the options be considered alongside proposals for the Caxton Gibbet roundabout, which would impact on Papworth Everard and future developments, such as Cambourne West. Such proposals should be requested as a matter of urgency.

Clarification was needed as to the nature of the roundabout / junction shown on the 'orange route', and the intention or otherwise to stop up any existing routes. Councillor Tim Wotherspoon said that the proposed response was to a set of broad principles at this stage, the intention being to provide residents with a level of certainty.

Cabinet **agreed** the recommended response in principle but that delegated authority be given to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development to make further technical comments in consultation with the Strategic Planning Portfolio Holder. The outcome of such delegation was that the following was submitted as South Cambridgeshire District Council's formal response:

1. **Support** the principle of upgrading the A428 between the Black Cat and Caxton Gibbet which will support the delivery of the national, regional and local growth agenda;
2. Based on the evidence provided up to this point in the process, the Council **support** the Orange Route Option, provided it includes grade separated junctions at Cambridge Road / B1428 and Caxton Gibbet / A1198. The Purple and Pink options

would have significantly greater environmental disbenefits, and are therefore not supported. This is subject to any final alignment and confirmation that the existing A428 will be retained as a local road and that the new road will not sever existing minor roads connecting villages either side of the proposed alignment;

3. **Support** proposals for the Black Cat roundabout which enable free flowing traffic on all the strategic routes as well as providing all movements on the local road network (Options A and C);
4. **Advise** Highways England that the Council is seeking to ensure that future design for the Caxton Gibbet junction minimises impacts on nearby existing and planned developments, including Cambourne West. As the junction layout was not included in the route options consultation, the Council would like to engage in early discussions about the design and how it will enable free-flowing traffic and safe cycle / pedestrian crossing;
5. **Advise** Highways England that the scheme should not prejudice the delivery of any future strategic proposals, including the A1 improvement scheme and wider Oxford to Cambridge Expressway proposals;
6. **Advise** Highways England that the scheme should not prejudice Greater Cambridge City Deal proposals for the A428 corridor, including bus and cycle improvement measures, and where possible synergies should be sought;
7. The Council **supports** the intention to provide opportunities for improving access for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians and would urge Highways England to secure opportunities for the enhancement of existing and/or provision of new infrastructure to the highest standard. The scheme should also seek to redress severance caused by the existing road through the provision of crossings at appropriate points; and
8. The Council would like to **explore** Legacy opportunities with Highways England.

9. **PROGRESS UPDATE ON SHARED PLANNING SERVICE**

Cabinet considered a report on progress being made in developing a Shared Planning Service between South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) and Cambridge City Council (CCC).

The Leader Informed Members that the report set out only the broad principles of the project, with the intention being that greater detail would be presented to Cabinet at its meeting in July 2017. Councillor Lynda Harford said that an effective ICT structure across the two Authorities would be fundamental to a successful shared planning service. It was important to secure the appropriate budget at an early stage. The Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development confirmed that a project initiation document for ICT was already in hand, and that on key service areas, effective ICT implementation would drive the implementation timeline. There would be further dialogue with ICT providers and the 3C ICT team. Councillor Harford emphasised the importance of key Members and officers showing their commitment to the project.

The Deputy Leader fully supported the proposed transition to a shared planning service, and cited West Suffolk as an example.

Councillor Simon Edwards welcomed the proposed management structure set out at Appendix 2 to the report. Turning to paragraph 7 of the same report, he sought clarification of the kind of opportunities that might arise from the commissioning

approach to specialist services being developed in collaboration with stakeholders and partners. The Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development highlighted the opportunities to attract staff, and to share the Council's capabilities with a range of different customers. This could include charging for allowing access to the skills and knowledge of the planning service's specialists. Councillor Edwards supported the proposals set out in the report.

Referring to Recommendation number 8 in the report, Councillor Bridget Smith asked for clarification about the type of measures that might strengthen the recruitment and retention of planning staff. The Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development said that raising the profile of the service, and enabling new and existing staff to develop as a result of the significant professional opportunities in the area, would go some way towards improving the recruitment and, crucially, the retention of staff.

Councillor Edwards observed that South Cambridgeshire District Council's Organisational Development Strategy already recognised the importance of shared services. Councillor Smith expressed the hope that the planning shared service would be a success from Day 1.

The Leader asked about the resources necessary to pursue the project effectively. The Joint Director for Planning and Economic Development said that steps were being taken to recruit another Project Officer. He added that, together with support from existing planning officers, the resources available should be sufficient.

Cabinet

1. **Noted** progress to date on the implementation of the shared planning service;
2. **Agreed** the development of the multi-phase Programme for delivery of the project (see **Appendix 1** of the report);
3. **Approved** the broad principles of the proposed management structure (**Appendix 2**) as the basis for the continued development of the organisational structure;
4. **Agreed** the allocation of additional resources to support the programme as set out in paragraph 21 – 24;
5. **Agreed** the early introduction of a "Greater Cambridge Planning Service" designation on signatures of emails from planning staff of both Councils;
6. **Noted** the need for seamless ICT systems across Greater Cambridge and to note the commitment to early work (and costs) on the procurement of a common ICT system for planning;
7. **Noted** the high-level objectives identified by the project team and invite them to consider the need to retain and support an understanding of Place in the way shared service was structured, delivered and managed; and
8. **Noted** the competitive market for planning staff, and agreed that officers should explore measures that will strengthen the recruitment and retention

of planning staff.

10. **DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT - MARCH 2017**

Cabinet **received and noted** a report providing an overview of South Cambridgeshire District Council's current performance in determining planning applications, as measured against the guidance set out in the Department for Communities and Local Government's document called *Improving planning performance: Criteria for designation (revised 2016)* – DCLG November 2016.

The Planning Portfolio Holder paid tribute to Julie Baird, the former Head of Development Management who had recently left the Council. He said that Julie Baird and her teams had worked tirelessly to make sure that the Council was not placed under special measures. The Planning Portfolio Holder would receive regular updates, and would monitor what he hoped would be continued improvement. The Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development said that the indications were very positive.

The Deputy Leader welcomed what he described as a remarkable improvement when compared with the situation 12 months earlier.

11. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Cabinet **noted** that its next scheduled meeting would be on Thursday 13 July 2017, starting at 6.00pm.

**The Meeting ended at 3.30
p.m.**
