

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on
Tuesday, 17 January 2017 at 6.00 p.m.

Portfolio Holder: Simon Edwards

Councillors in attendance:

Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitors and Opposition spokesmen: Philippa Hart

Opposition spokesmen: Hazel Smith and John Williams

Also in attendance:

Officers:

Gemma Barron	Sustainable Communities & Partnerships Manager
Katie Brown	Revenues Manager
Susan Gardner Craig	Head of People and Organisational Development
Dawn Graham	Benefits Manager
Ian Senior	Democratic Services Officer
Sally Smart	Principal Accountant Financial & Systems

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder signed, as a correct record, the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2016.

3. GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY SECTOR: 6-MONTHLY UPDATE REPORT

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder considered a report examining the delivery of grant programmes funded by the Council during the first six months of 2016-17.

Referring to paragraph 9, he asked that future reports identify the Portfolio Holders responsible for each category of grant.

In relation to Citizens Advice Bureaux, the Portfolio Holder asked officers, in future reports, to identify activity in South Cambridgeshire by CAB office. Value for Money considerations set out in the report should be seen in the context of the advice being sought by South Cambridgeshire residents, which might relate to areas that were the responsibility of Cambridgeshire County Council.

In relation to Community Chest Grant funding, the Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder said he was inclined to reduce the maximum amount allowed per application from £1,500 to £1,000. This should allow more organisations to benefit from the scheme. Those present discussed the implications, and the Portfolio Holder said that he would ask officers to monitor the Community Chest throughout 2017-18 in order to assess the impact of the new maximum grant level.

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder

1. **approved** the continued provision of grant assistance to the current grant recipients supported through the Service Support Grant fund (subject to three year funding agreements) as agreed (Leader's Portfolio Holders Meetings, 16 December 2015 and 28 January 2016);
2. **noted** the delivery of all other grant programmes within the scope of the report from the Director for Health and Environmental Services, as currently delivered;
and
3. **decided** to reduce the maximum award from the Community Chest from £1,500 to £1,000.

4. **NON-DOMESTIC RATES DISCRETIONARY RELIEF POLICY**

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder considered a revised policy for the granting of Discretionary Rate Relief to Business properties.

One of the new elements in the proposed amended Policy related to local newspapers relief, to be introduced in April 2017. In response to a question from the Portfolio Holder, the Revenues Manager said that it was unlikely that Parish Council newsletters would qualify for such relief.

After further discussion based around paragraph 12 of the report, the Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder **adopted** the "Discretionary Business Rate Relief Policy" as attached to the report from the Interim Chief Executive at Appendix A.

5. **REVENUES AND BENEFITS PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder **received and noted** a report on the current performance of the Revenues & Benefits Section. He congratulated the Revenues Manager and Benefits Manager for another excellent performance report, and asked that his comments be conveyed to the respective teams.

6. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW**

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder **received and noted** a report on the performance of the treasury management function.

Those present discussed the diversity and extent of the Council's investments, including with Ermine Street Housing. The potential movement in interest rates posed a serious risk for the Council, and that risk should be noted on the Strategic Risks Register.

7. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder **noted** the Work Programme attached to the agenda, subject to the following amendments and additions:

- Add Apprenticeships to the meeting in May 2017
- Move the Localised Council Tax Scheme from August 2017 to July 2017 to allow time for public consultation, if necessary. Although the July meeting was envisaged to be for Grants only, the Portfolio Holder had previously indicated that he would accept non-grant items onto the agenda if they were considered to be urgent, and consideration was needed before the next Full Business meeting.
- The meetings listed as June, July and August 2016 should be June, July and August 2017

Sally Smart informed the meeting that she was leaving the Council in February, and that Dan Hasler would attend future meetings instead. The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder paid tribute to the Principal Accountant for her dedicated contribution to the Finance and Staffing Portfolio, and wished her well in the future. The other Members present endorsed the Portfolio Holder's remarks.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder noted that the provisional meetings on 21 February 2017 and 21 March 2017 had been cancelled. The next Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder meeting would therefore be the Grants meeting on Tuesday 18 April 2017, starting at 6pm.

The Meeting ended at 7.10 p.m.
