

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on
Tuesday, 14 August 2018 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Grenville Chamberlain – Chairman

Councillors:	Ruth Betson	Anna Bradnam
	Nigel Cathcart	Sarah Cheung Johnson
	Graham Cone	Dr. Claire Daunton
	Dr. Douglas de Lacey	Bill Handley
	Steve Hunt	Peter McDonald
	Dawn Percival	Eileen Wilson

Councillors Sue Ellington, Neil Gough, Jose Hales, Bridget Smith, Hazel Smith and Bunty Waters were in attendance, by invitation.

Officers:	Patrick Adams	Senior Democratic Services Officer
	Alex Colyer	Executive Director
	Susan Gardner Craig	Head of People and Organisational Development
	Dawn Graham	Benefits Manager
	Bukky Gray	Senior HR Advisor
	Mike Hill	Director of Health and Environmental Services
	Kathrin John	Democratic Services Team Leader
	Stephen Kelly	Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development
	David Roberts	Principal Planning Policy Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brian Milnes (Vice-Chairman), Dr. Martin Cahn and Gavin Clayton. It was noted that Councillor Steve Hunt was present as a substitute for Councillor Cahn and Councillor Nigel Cathcart was present as a substitute for Councillor Clayton.

An apology for late arrival was received from Councillor Ruth Betson.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2018 were agreed as a correct record of the meeting, subject to the amendment of the words Super Intendent to "Superintendent" in the third bullet point of minute no.7.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

5. IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT

The Benefits Manager introduced Dave Winterton and Ana Sivelli from the Department

of Work and Pensions (DWP). The Benefits Manager explained that:

- Universal Credit replaced six different benefits.
- Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire would go live on 17 October 2018.
- Universal Credit had already been implemented in other areas, including Peterborough in November 2017, and the Council would learn from their experience.
- Payments were made in arrears, but advance payments could be made to cover the first five weeks. These would have to be paid back over 12 months.
- It was estimated that by 31/03/2019 766 residents would no longer be receiving Housing Benefit. That figure was estimated to rise to about 2,000 by March 2020.
- Recipients would be split approximately 50/50 between those who had retired and those of working age.
- Information was being communicated to residents through South Cambs Magazine, the Tenants Magazine, leaflets and social media.
- There would be a briefing for Councillors on 3 September.

During discussion, Members of the Committee raised a number of questions and comments. The Benefits Manager and DWP representatives provided responses and further background information including the following:-

(a) Improving the service

Dave Winterton explained that when Universal Credit had first been introduced, 42% of clients had not received their payments in the first 5 weeks. This was now down to 13% and was usually because the DWP was still waiting for a completed application.

(b) IT

Dave Winterton explained that computers would be free to use in the five job centres that served the District and free Wi-Fi would also be available. Staff would be at the centres to provide assistance, to those who required it. Dedicated e-mails could be set up for clients who required them. Ongoing support would also be provided.

(c) Work coaches

Dave Winterton reported that work coaches, who were front line DWP staff based in Job Centres, would be allocated to clients, if required, and would provide the support necessary with regard to their claim. It was noted that the Cambridge Job Centre had the Citizens Advice Bureau(CAB) located at their centre, which meant that CAB assistance was available to clients five days a week.

(d) Vulnerable People

Dave Winterton explained that officers would carry out home visits if necessary to support clients with claims. Whilst it was usual for the entire payment to go to one member of the household, split payments could be provided if this was considered to be more appropriate. The DWP was well aware of the implications associated with issues such as domestic violence, alcoholism, drug use and gambling.

The Chairman thanked the Benefits Manager, Dave Winterton and Ana Sivelli from the DWP for their presence and informative answers.

After the Benefits Manager had left the meeting, Councillor Jose Hales asked whether support on Universal Credit would be available in Community Hubs. It was agreed that this question should be sent to the Benefits Manager for response.

6. COMMUNITY CHEST REVIEW 2018

Councillor Jose Hales, Chairman of Grants Advisory Committee, presented this report which recommended changes to the criteria for the Community Chest grants scheme.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

(a) Limits of total amounts to wards and parishes

Councillor Hales explained that paragraph 12(l) should be removed as it had been concluded that it was unnecessarily restrictive to set a limit on the annual amount of grants received by the size of ward. He also explained that in the Grants Advisory Committee's view community chest grants should be paid to small parishes, which could not raise sufficient funds via their precept. Further work was needed around eligibility for small parishes. Larger parish councils should not be eligible to receive community chest grants, as these should be paid from either their parish precepts or other available funds. It was suggested clarification was needed as to whether paragraph 13 (a) should refer to smaller parish meetings and "parish councils". The Director of Health and Environmental Services agreed to find out what percentage of grants had been awarded to parish councils in the past. It was noted that for these purposes, the location of the organisation determined which parish it was in, not where the activities took place.

(b) Tackling isolation and loneliness

Concern was expressed at the proposal in paragraph 12 (f) for priority to be given to community projects/activities that had a youth development focus and the importance of making available grants to other groups, such as those which tackled isolation and loneliness was emphasised. It was suggested that this criterion should be reviewed.

(c) Historic buildings

It was noted that community grants would only be awarded to historic buildings in public ownership, but concern was expressed that there was no longer any funding for historic and listed buildings in private ownership and this was having a detrimental long-term effect on those buildings.

(d) Additional funding

Councillor Hales understood the support from the Committee to tackle isolation and renovate historic building, but he explained that extra funding would be required to satisfy all these demands. He asked that the Executive consider this.

(e) Officer support

Councillor Hales explained that officers assessed each application and asked for an estimate of the total costs of the project, before it was presented to councillors.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Hales and the Director of Health and Environmental Services for their attendance and participation in the debate.

7. WATERBEACH NEW TOWN SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (SPD)

In introducing the item, the Chairman explained that the Committee was concerned that given the size and complexity of the Waterbeach New Town SPD document and as it had not been made available to Members until 5 working days before the meeting, it had been given insufficient time to review and make a considered and informed response to Cabinet. The Committee was therefore minded to recommend Cabinet to defer consideration at its meeting on 5 September 2018. This would enable Scrutiny and Overview Committee to consider the item at its meeting on 18 September 2018. The Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development explained that if the Committee decided to defer this item, it would mean sending the report a month later to Cabinet and delaying the public consultation on the SPD. He outlined the consequences of delaying

the consultation, including the impact on determining two planning applications noting that the Council's ongoing 5 year housing land supply partly depends upon completions at Waterbeach new town from 2021/2022 onwards.

The Chairman accordingly invited the Committee to consider the Draft SPD. Comments raised by Members of on the document included the following:-

- The draft document lacked focus and did not drill down into the questions that the Council wished the consultees to respond to. There was no indication of the ultimate objective of the consultation process.
- The Foreword to the SPD indicated that there was more than one land owner and site promoter involved in the new town and that it was important that it should be delivered as a single unified development. However there was a concern to understand how the District Council could ensure that the objective of a single unified development was achieved. It was important that Members were clear about how this process would work and how the risk of disagreement between landowners/site promoters would be mitigated.
- Pages 60 – 61 of the document set out the Strategic Development Objectives, however, there was a concern that these were vague aspirational statements and were not specific targets that could be measured. For example, it was argued that the reference to “prioritisation of walking and cycling for local journeys” in objective 2 was not specific enough and should perhaps indicate that pedestrians and cyclists would have priority at every junction. The reference to “high quality, innovative and distinctive design” in objective 4 was considered to be similarly vague and did not indicate the standards expected. There was therefore a need to review the narrative in respect of the Strategic Development Objectives and make it more “hard edged”.
- The Council needed to take account of the lessons learned from the developer-led approach of the Cambourne development. Referring to the roles of new town commissions/development corporations in shaping the development of new towns in the past, the need for a masterplan for the new town with appropriate levels of enforceability, was emphasised.
- It would have been useful for the Committee to have been provided with information on the relevant policy section within the Local Plan. The relevant extract of the emerging Local Plan should therefore be made available with the consultation documents to provide context and background for consultees.
- The draft SPD was “light” in terms of references to the Transport Strategy and to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority’s (CPCA) infrastructure proposals. The document should include reference to the emerging transport proposals of the CPCA.
- In view of the size and complexity of the document, the Committee concurred that an executive summary should be added. The need to add the relevant extract from the emerging Local Plan was again emphasised.
- The point about learning from the developer-led approach at Cambourne was reiterated and reference was made to the need to ensure that there were enforceable timescales for developer compliance.
- Some of the wording in the document was felt to be “woolly” (for example the section relating to Play Space on page 99).
- A covering document should be added to the SPD which provided information about the purpose of the consultation and greater direction on the areas upon which consultees were being invited to comment.

Officers responded to the points raised by Members as follows:-

(a) Emerging Local Plan

In response to concerns that the SPD alone would not guarantee that the developers delivered its aspirations, the Principal Planning Officer explained that the Council's planning policies were included in the Local Plan. The SPD would sit alongside the Local Plan Policy for the new town in guiding the Planning Committee when it was determining any planning applications relating to this development. The Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development further explained that the Section 106 agreement would put legally enforceable obligations on the developers.

(b) Further consultation

In response to comments that the consultation process needed to be clarified the Principal Planning Officer explained the proposal to hold public exhibitions and to engage with the County Council and other stakeholders. The SPD would be reviewed following consultation with residents and stakeholders and would then be resubmitted for Member consideration.

(c) Learning from previous developments

In respect of the comments regarding previous developments and the need for developers to build the new town in accordance with the agreed plan and to ensure that community facilities were provided by the developers in a timely way, the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development explained that the Council had gained experience from previous developments such as Cambourne and Northstowe. He also commented that the SPD would not operate in isolation and would sit alongside design codes and other planning guidance.

(d) Section 106 Agreements

The Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development explained that the purpose of the Section 106 Agreement would be to ensure that facilities were provided according to a set timescale. This was not the primary purpose of the SPD.

(e) Providing a summary

The Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development acknowledged that it would be helpful to add an executive summary that also explained the purpose of the consultation and how it related to the local plan. He further accepted that it would have been useful if the Committee had been provided with guidance on how the SPD related to the policies in the emerging Local Plan.

(f) Working with landowners and developers

With reference to the challenges of achieving the objective of "a single unified development" the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development explained that it was not unusual for there to be more than one landowner for major developments. The onus was on the two developers to demonstrate how they would deliver the project.

(g) Transport Strategy

The Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development observed that some elements of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority's (CPCA) Transport Strategy were still evolving but indicated that reference could be made in the consultation documentation to the CPCA's emerging transport proposals.

The Environmental Services and Licensing Portfolio Holder, who was in attendance at the meeting, reflected that the Committee's views appeared to fall into two categories – comments on the content of the SPD itself and comments on the consultation process. Based on the discussion, it was apparent that the Committee felt that the proposals for consultation were not clear and that in order to ensure that meaningful responses were received, it would be important to provide information on the background and context to the consultation and to consider possibly narrowing down the scope for comments or at

least highlighting the main areas upon which the Council was inviting responses from consultees.

Given the advice of the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development on the impact of deferring consideration of the SPD, the Committee reflected on options for submitting comments to the Cabinet on 5 September 2018. A proposal to authorise a small group of Committee members to work up a response was not supported on the basis that this would not necessarily reflect the views of the whole Committee. Instead it was suggested that Members should provide comments to the Principal Planning Officer individually.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chairman summarised the comments of the Committee as follows:-

- Given the size of the document and the limited time it was made available to Members before the meeting, the Committee had been given insufficient time to review and make a considered and informed collective response to Cabinet upon the Waterbeach New Town Draft SPD.
- In the circumstances the Committee would have welcomed the opportunity to have recommended that Cabinet defer consideration at its meeting on 5 September 2018 so that Scrutiny and Overview Committee could have given more in depth consideration to the document, provided a co-ordinated response and made recommendations to inform decision making at Cabinet.
- Given the advice of the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development on the impact of deferring consideration and delaying the public consultation exercise, the Committee had reluctantly concluded that, on this occasion, it had no option but to invite its Members to submit their comments on the Draft SPD individually with the intention that the responses (including those expressed at the meeting) be collated; that planning officers provide responses to Members' comments and that a schedule of comments and responses be submitted to Cabinet on 5 September 2018 for consideration alongside the item.
- The Committee had agreed that there was a need to add a covering document which provided background and context to the purpose and objectives of the consultation; referred to the relevant section of the emerging Local Plan and highlighted the areas upon which consultees were being invited to comment.
- Noting that the Scrutiny and Overview Committee would receive a further report following the conclusion of the consultation process, Members requested that the report be published in good time to allow proper review and consideration by the Committee.

The Chairman thanked the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development and the Principal Planning Policy Officer for their informative answers.

8. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman presented this item on the Committee's Work Programme for 2018/19.

Barriers to Council Procurement from SMEs (Small and Medium sized Enterprises) Task and Finish Group

Members noted that it was hoped to arrange the first meeting of this group between 20

and 28 September 2018.

Recruitment and Retention Task and Finish Group

Councillors Grenville Chamberlain, Sarah Cheung-Johnson, Douglas de Lacey, Dawn Percival and Eileen Wilson volunteered to serve on this Group.

Crime in Rural Areas Task and Finish Group

Councillors Anna Bradnam, Claire Daunton, Bill Handley and Peter McDonald volunteered to serve on this Group. The Director of Health and Environmental Services stated that he would ask Inspector Paul Rogerson to support this Group.

It was agreed that the proposed Task and Finish Group on Gypsy and Travellers should be formed at a later date, to ensure that the Committee gave this subject sufficient time and resources.

Concerns were expressed regarding the size of the 247 page agenda. It was noted that reports were published five clear working days before the date of the Committee meeting in accordance with statutory requirements. It was explained that it would be difficult to bring forward publication dates, However officers had taken on board the concerns expressed by the Committee at the need for adequate time to read papers and consideration would be given to whether information could be presented in alternative formats, for example by way of briefings, where appropriate.

9. MONITORING THE EXECUTIVE

It was agreed that the role of Scrutiny Monitors should be reviewed at the next meeting of the Committee.

10. TO NOTE THE DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that its next meeting would take place on Tuesday 18 September 2018 at 6pm.

The Meeting ended at 8.10 p.m.
