

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Tuesday, 7 November 2023 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT:

Cabinet Members in attendance:

Bridget Smith	Leader of Council
Brian Milnes	Deputy Leader of the Council and Leader Cabinet Member for Environment
Henry Batchelor	Lead Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Licensing
Bill Handley	Lead Cabinet Member for Communities
John Williams	Lead Cabinet Member for Resources
John Batchelor	Lead Cabinet Member for Housing
Tumi Hawkins	Lead Cabinet Member for Planning

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Liz Watts	Chief Executive
Peter Maddock	Head of Finance
Jeff Membery	Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services
Stephen Kelly	Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development
John Murphy	Monitoring Officer
Peter Campbell	Head of Housing
Pippa Turvey	Democratic Services Team Leader
Andrew Francis	Elections and Democratic Services Manager
Aaron Clarke	Democratic Services Technical Officer
Gareth Bell	Communications and Communities Service Manager
Chris Riches	Project Officer – Communities
Kirstin Donaldson	Service Manager – Acquisition and Development
Dan Sillett	Conservative Group Political Assistant

Officers in attendance remotely for all or part of the meeting:

Chenge Tarvinga	Principal Planner
Claire Shannon	Senior Planner
Caroline Hunt	Strategy and Economy Manager
Julie Fletcher	Service Manager – Housing Strategy
Eddie Spicer	Service Manager – Housing Assets

Councillor Anna Bradnam was in attendance, by invitation.

Councillors Heather Williams and Lisa Redrup were also in attendance.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Peter McDonald.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Cabinet authorised the Leader to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 28 September 2023.

4. **Announcements**

The Leader of the Council announced that the Council had received a Best Value Notice from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities regarding the four-day week trial. The Council was awaiting further detail around information requests and, until this detail was received, would not be able to make a decision on how to proceed.

5. **Public Questions**

A question had been received from a member of the public after the deadline and therefore had not been accepted.

6. **Update from Scrutiny and Overview Committee**

Cabinet noted the Scrutiny and Overview report summarising the meeting held on Thursday, 19 October 2023. Councillor Anna Bradnam was in attendance on behalf of the Committee and advised that the Committee had welcomed a report around Northstowe. It had been felt that the lessons learnt from developing new communities should be noted. The Committee had also considered a report on the Cost of Living and considered the work undertaken by the Council to be over and above what was expected.

7. **Local Impact Report for the Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant Relocation Development Consent Order**

Councillor Brian Milnes, Lead Cabinet Member for Environment, introduced the report and moved the recommendations.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Bridget Smith.

The Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development advised Members that the report was to provide the Council's position to the examining body in respect of the impact and benefits of the development plant relocation. It was further advised that Cambridge City Council would also be considering the report, however, this would include a different set of considerations, as the impact on the area would not be the same.

In response to questions from non-Cabinet Members, the following points were raised:

- Officers were working closely with Cambridge City Council counterparts in relation to the impact of the proposals on rights of way and transport.
- It was advised that, while the two council's would be responding separately, they would be jointly instructing the same barrister, and officers would ensure that rights of way and transport issues were raised.

Resolution

Cabinet:

1. agreed the content of the Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant Relocation Project Local Impact Report in Appendix 1 to the report in respect of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application submitted by Anglian Water and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Economic Development to submit the report to the Examining Authority for the relocation of the CWWTP on behalf of South Cambridgeshire District Council subject to any minor amendments to the Local Impact Report required in the interests of accuracy or clarity, and
2. delegated to the Director of Planning and Economic Development, the authority to take all associated action necessary in the interests of the efficient and timely conduct of the Council's compliance with the DCO procedures including but not limited to:
 - prepare the Council's responses to any written questions from Examining Authority during the DCO Examination and to submit those to the Examining Authority,
 - settle the content of and submit any Written Representations to the Examining Authority,
 - to negotiate, settle and complete any legal agreements relevant to secure the granting of a DCO pursuant to the application,
 - settling and the submission of the Statement of Common Ground to the Examining Authority,
 - the instruction of witnesses and legal advisors throughout the Examination process,
 - the discharge of DCO requirements made under any development consent order granted by Secretary of State.

Options Considered

The options available to Cabinet were: (a) to agree the findings of the LIR in Appendix 1 to the report, or (b) to not agree the findings of the review or seek changes.

Reasons for Decision

It was a requirement for local councils to submit a Local Impact Report within the specified time as part of the DCO Examination process. The report appendix had fully considered potential impacts of the development to the South Cambridgeshire District.

8. **Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy**

Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor John Batchelor advised that the new policy would bring the Council in line with government and ombudsman guidance. Extensive work and consultation had been carried out with tenant representatives around the new policy, as well as an ongoing stock condition survey taking place to establish if any Council-owned properties had issues with damp.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Henry Batchelor.

In response to questions from non-Cabinet Members, the following points were raised:

- A similar policy in relation to damp and mould in the private rented sector had been updated at a recent Cabinet meeting. This policy would be sent through to Councillor Anna Bradnam for information.

Resolution

Cabinet:

1. approved the draft Damp, Mould, and Condensation Policy at Appendix A to the report, and
2. delegated authority to the Lead Member for Housing to approve minor amendments, such as correcting drafting errors, to improve clarity, and to reflect changes in legislation, guidance of good practice.

Options Considered

The Council must have a policy in place as to how it approached issues of damp, mould, and condensation to its council tenants. Without such a policy, the Council would be open to challenge and would be non-compliant with the guidance provided by the Housing Regulators. Therefore, no other option was provided, other than amendments to the draft policy presented.

Reasons for Decision

To provide direction on the prevention of damp, mould and condensation for council tenants. The policy demonstrated that the Council had a robust and transparent process in place that met legislative requirements and had taken into account tenants' views.

9. **Council Tenants Disabled Adaptations Policy**

Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor John Batchelor advised that this update would bring the Council in line with the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and ombudsman determinations.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Brian Milnes.

In response to questions from non-Cabinet Members, the following points were raised:

- It was noted that the Council Tenants Disabled Adaptations Policy was published on the Council's website which would be reviewed should the policy be approved by Cabinet, with changes being communicated to tenants.
- Officers worked closely with the Social Care Team to ensure that tenants could be supported through changes where appropriate.

Resolution

Cabinet:

1. approved the draft Council Tenant Disabled Adaptations Policy at Appendix A to the report, and
2. delegated authority to the Lead Member for Housing to approve minor amendments, including the financial thresholds that differentiate types of adaptation.

Options Considered

The Council must have a policy in place as to how it would deliver disabled adaptations to its council tenants. Without such a policy, the Council would be open to challenge and would be non-compliant with the recommendations of the Housing Ombudsman. Therefore, no other option was provided, other than amendments to the draft policy presented.

Reasons for Decision

To provide direction on the delivery of aids and adaptations to council tenants. The policy would demonstrate that the Council had a robust and transparent process in place that met legislative requirements and had taken into account tenants' views.

10. Cost of Living Support Update

Councillor Bill Handley, Lead Cabinet Member for Communities, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor Bill Handley advised that the first phase of the Cost of Living support had been a great success and that the second stage would focus on self-sustaining projects. Members were also advised of the evolution of warm hubs to community hubs, with the Council having funding for up to 20. The Council were also providing residents who were in receipt of certain benefits, with long-term health issues or disabilities with energy saving devices. Officers were also working with foodbanks across the district in order to create a network, which would help avoid any food going to waste.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor John Williams, who

emphasised the importance of ensuring people knew if they were entitled to support, as well as the importance of the community chest grant scheme.

Cabinet Members raised the following points during consideration of the report:

- The Cost of Living support had evolved from working carried out during the pandemic and it was considered to have had a positive lasting impact.
- Members were impressed with the creative approach shown around support and the demonstration of value for money.

Councillor Anna Bradnam, made the following comments on behalf of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee:

- It was advised that the Scrutiny and Overview Committee had recommended the report to Cabinet and had been impressed with the work undertaken.
- Comment was made that a Community Hub was in place in Milton that had not been mentioned within the report.

In response to questions from non-Cabinet Members, the following points were raised:

- Members were advised that previous work had focused on improving insulation in properties. Once this was up to an acceptable standard, introducing alternative heat sources would be sought, particularly for those who were reliant on oil or wood.
- It was confirmed that over £2000 worth of donations had been received for the scheme, which could be identified through specific references and ring-fenced for the Cost of Living support scheme.
- Comment was made that work was underway with officers in the Waste Team to provide and distribute reusable menstrual products to help tackle period poverty.

Resolution

Cabinet noted the report and appendices A to C to the report.

Options Considered

Cabinet was asked to note the report but had the option to provide additional feedback to officers to further shape the future of the project.

Reasons for Decision

To ensure the Council's management and Members understood the progress being made throughout the cost-of-living response programme and had an opportunity to provide feedback/suggestions for future work.

11. 2022/23 Provisional General Fund Revenue and Capital Outturn

Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Finance, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor John Williams advised that the Council's outturn position was better than that which had been

forecasted, and the Council had ended up in a surplus position. This meant that £3 million could be transferred to the general fund and would place the Council in a sound financial position going forward.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Bridget Smith.

In response to questions from non-Cabinet Members, the following points were raised:

- It was advised that ICT support had been reviewed, as this was previously not up to standard. Performance had improved, though it was acknowledged that this was still a work in progress.
- A note was made that issues were still being experienced by some Members around receiving emails.
- Comment was made that the Council had received a clean bill of health from the Peer Review in relation to finance.

Resolution

Cabinet:

1. acknowledged the 2022/23 general fund revenue outturn position and the net underspend (after income from Taxation and Government Grants) in the year of £1.149 million as summarised in Appendix A to the report, and the explanations provided for the variances compared to the revised 2022/23 revenue budget,
2. acknowledged the consequent increase in the General Fund as at 31 March 2023 of £3.308m to around £18.4m,
3. approved the carry forwards of £0.316 million in relation to General Fund revenue projects which were not undertaken during the year as planned, and
4. in relation to the Capital Programme:
 - i. noted the 2022/23 capital outturn of £15.520 million,
 - ii. acknowledged the performance achieved in relation to the Capital Programme schemes substantially completed in 2022/2023, summarised in Appendix B to the report,
 - iii. approved the carry forwards of £3.720 million in relation to General Fund capital projects due mainly to slippage, and
 - iv. noted that a full review of the Capital Programme would be submitted to Cabinet at its December 2023 meeting to include re-phasing of the existing programme and new Capital bids for the next budget cycle.

Options Considered

Options involved not agreeing some or all the carry forward amounts or the additional funding for the lighting scheme. This was not recommended as delays would be introduced and unfinished works would occur.

Reasons for Decision

To advise the Cabinet of the 2022/23 revenue and capital outturn position, the impact that this would have on the General Fund and to consider the carry forward of slippage within the 2022/23 capital programme. Also, to note that a full review of the Capital Programme including new bids would be carried out and presented to Cabinet on 5 December 2023.

12. 2022/2023 Provisional Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Outturn

Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Finance, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor John Williams advised that the Council was in an underspent revenue position.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor John Batchelor. In so doing, Councillor John Batchelor noted that work around housing provision had slowed down, though it was emphasised that this had not vanished, but would be delivered later than planned.

In response to questions from non-Cabinet Members, the following points were raised:

- Members noted the work undertaken and thanked officers for their efforts.
- Comment was made that work had either been delayed or paused on some developments. Further information on a delivery schedule could be provided outside of the meeting.
- It was further noted that market pressures had impacted progress.

Resolution

Cabinet:

1. acknowledged the 2022/23 revenue outturn position and the net underspend in the year of £0.343 million, and the explanations provided for the variances compared to the revised 2022/23 revenue budget,
2. acknowledged the overall decrease in the Housing Revenue Account balance as at 31 March 2023 to £3.749 million, and
3. in relation to the Capital Programme:
 - i. noted the 2022/23 capital outturn of £21.405 million,
 - ii. acknowledged the performance achieved in relation to the Capital Programme schemes substantially completed in 2022/2023, summarised in Appendix A to the report, and

- iii. approved the carry forward amounts of £3.034 million to 2023/24 in relation to HRA housebuilding during 2022/23, due to slippage.

Options Considered

Other options involved not agreeing some or all of the carry forward amounts but this could lead to delays and unfinished works.

Reasons for Decision

To advise the Cabinet of the 2022/23 revenue and capital outturn, the impact that this would have on the Housing Revenue Account and to consider the necessary amendments to the Capital Programme. To note that a further review of the Capital Programme would be presented to Cabinet at its meeting on 5 December 2023.

13. General Fund Medium Term Financial Strategy

Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Finance, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor John Williams advised that the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was reviewed every six months. It was considered that the biggest problem in maintaining the strategy was the uncertainty around funding, including the Fair Funding Review, which had been prepared for since 2018 but delayed each year. It was noted that the funding gap between 2024/2025 and 2028/2029 had been reduced to £5.4 million.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Brian Milnes, who noted that the Peer Review had referenced the Council's minimum revenue position.

Cabinet Members raised the following points during consideration of the report:

- It was noted that it was difficult to predict the level of funding to be provided from the Government in future years and, therefore, the MTFS relied on estimates for forecast positions.

Resolution

Cabinet:

1. acknowledged the projected changes in service spending and the overall resources available to the Council over the medium term to 2028/2029, and
2. recommended to Full Council the refreshed Medium Term Financial Strategy at Appendix A to the report and updated financial forecast at Appendix B to the report.

Options Considered

The option existed of not approving the new MTFS.

Reasons for Decision

To ensure that the Cabinet was aware of the financial challenges over the medium term, the key service and financial drivers of the financial forecast and the strategic response required to meet the financial challenge to ensure that the Council would be in a position over the medium term to deliver sustainable and affordable public services.

To provide Cabinet with an update of the financial position and forecasts for the General Fund over the medium term following a review of financial assumptions.

To enable the Cabinet to recommend the MTF5 to Council for approval in order to assist in the Council's financial planning.

14. Motion Referred from Council

Cabinet considered the motion referred from Council at its meeting on 5 October 2023 as follows:

“This Council will receive a report on the 4-day working week trial at the November 2023 meeting and will debate and vote as to whether or not the trial should continue. This report will include the potential consequences of ignoring the national government's directive to stop the trial, with particular reference to any financial consequences that may occur from ignoring the national government for a second time.”

Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Council, introduced the item and moved a proposal to note the content of the motion. In so doing, Councillor Bridget Smith advised that decisions in relation to the 4-day working week trial were an executive function and it had been agreed that monitoring of the trial would be undertaken by the Employment and Staffing Committee. Any final decision would be taken by Council.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor John Williams.

In response to questions from non-Cabinet Members, the following points were raised:

- No guarantee could be given that Cabinet would not extend the trial, or if it would continue at all, as such a decision would depend on the ongoing results of the trial.
- It was confirmed that the Cabinet were continually reviewing the Council's performance and it had always been the case that, should there be a downturn in performance, the trial would cease.
- It was suggested that the question of whether the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) used to monitor the Council's performance were sufficient should be put to the Employment and Staffing Committee.

Resolution

Cabinet noted the motion referred from Council.

Options Considered

The Cabinet considered alternative options as set out in the motion as referred from Council.

Reasons for Decision

It was considered that the Employment and Staffing Committee was the appropriate route for monitoring for the 4-day week trial and was due to receive the latest update report on 9 November 2023.

15. Exclusion of Press and Public

Cabinet resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the following items in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(a)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of the Act). Paragraph 3 related to information about the financial or business affairs of any person, including the Authority holding that information.

16. Acquisition of 47 Affordable Homes, Sawston

Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report and moved the recommendations.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Brian Milnes.

Resolution

Cabinet:

1. Approved as specified in paragraphs 5-6 of the exempt report.

Options Considered

As specified in the exempt report.

Reasons for Decision

As specified in paragraphs 22-24 of the exempt report.

17. Acquisition and Delivery of Rural Exception Site, Cottenham

Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report and moved the recommendations.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Henry Batchelor.

Resolution

Cabinet:

1. Approved as specified in paragraphs 4-5 of the exempt report.

Options Considered

As specified in paragraphs 22-23 of the exempt report.

Reasons for Decision

As specified in paragraphs 19-21 of the exempt report.

**The Meeting ended at
11.07 a.m.**
