

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Thursday, 10 November 2005

PRESENT: Councillor SGM Kindersley (Leader of Council)
Councillor RT Summerfield (Deputy Leader of Council and Resources & Staffing Portfolio Holder)

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|---------------------|-------------------|--|
| Councillors: | Dr DR Bard | Planning & Economic Development Portfolio Holder |
| | JD Batchelor | Information & Customer Services Portfolio Holder |
| | Mrs JM Healey | Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder |
| | Mrs EM Heazell | Housing Portfolio Holder |
| | Mrs DSK Spink MBE | Environmental Health Portfolio Holder |

Councillors RE Barrett, RF Bryant, NN Cathcart, Mrs A Elsby, Mrs CA Hunt, Mrs HF Kember, J Shepperson, Mrs GJ Smith and JH Stewart were in attendance, by invitation.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs DP Roberts, Community Development Portfolio Holder, and from Councillor Mrs CAED Murfitt, both of whom were attending the final children's concert of the Council's Celebrating the Classics series.

Procedural Items

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Leader was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2005 as a correct record.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following personal interests were declared:

| | |
|----------------|---|
| RE Barrett | As a Member of the Housing for Older People Advisory Group |
| JD Batchelor | As a Member of Cambridgeshire County Council |
| RF Bryant | As a Member of the Housing for Older People Advisory Group |
| Mrs A Elsby | As a Member of the Housing for Older People Advisory Group |
| Mrs HF Kember | As a Member of the Housing for Older People Advisory Group |
| SGM Kindersley | As a Member of Cambridgeshire County Council |
| J Shepperson | As a Member of the Housing for Older People Advisory Group |
| RT Summerfield | Mother-in-law lives in one of the Council's sheltered schemes |

Recommendation to Council

3. RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CONSTITUTION REVIEW WORKING PARTY - CONSERVATION AREAS

Mindful of the number of Conservation Area appraisals due to be considered, Cabinet

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

that Table 2B of Part 3 of the Constitution, paragraph 51 (page C-17) be amended to give authority to the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder to designate Conservation Areas and agree amendments to their boundaries.

Recommendation to Council and Decision made by the Cabinet

4. LOCAL AREA AGREEMENTS

Cabinet considered the implications of involvement in a Local Area Agreement (LAA) being developed by the County Council and partners to provide government funding against specific targets. There would be resource implications, but it was essential for the Council to be involved in order to ensure that it benefited from the allocation of funds. Urgent decisions were likely to be needed over the next few months.

Cabinet

NOTED the report;

REQUESTED further updates;

AGREED that the Leader of the Council have Portfolio Holder responsibility for this Council's involvement in the development and implementation of the Local Area Agreement; and

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

that the Leader be given authority to approve drafts of the Local Area Agreement on behalf of the Council (in consultation with other Portfolio Holders where practicable) when it is not possible to refer the matter to Cabinet and Council in the time available.

Decisions made by the Cabinet

5. SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE CLIMATE PLAN

Council, at its meeting of 22 September 2005, had received enthusiastically the draft South Cambridgeshire Climate Plan and the constructive comments offered then had been incorporated into the final document. The Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder had been delighted with the response to this important issue and commended the Plan to Cabinet.

Cabinet

AGREED to formally approve the Council's Climate Plan.

6. SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DESIGN GUIDE

The Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder commended to Cabinet the Design Guide and Cabinet

AGREED to adopt the Design Guide as Council Policy, subject to the incorporation of the changes agreed by the Conservation Advisory Group, as set out in the appendix to the report to Cabinet.

7. FUTURE OF SHELTERED HOUSING

The Housing Portfolio Holder commended the work of the Housing for Older People Advisory Group (HOPAG), citing it as a strong example of co-operative working with outside partners. She drew Cabinet's attention to:

- (a) the County Council's best value review of sheltered housing, which suggested that South Cambridgeshire was "overprovided" with sheltered housing compared to other districts;
- (b) possible significant reductions in the County Council's Supporting People budget over the next five years;
- (c) the number of South Cambridgeshire residents with special needs living in general housing, who were effectively subsidising part of the sheltered housing service;
- (d) that it would no longer be a requirement for sheltered housing staff to live on-site;
- (e) the number of out-of-hours calls did not justify the amount spent on the response service, which could be transferred to a deal of health and social care staff;
- (f) the need to review whether the right choices were being offered to residents; and
- (g) the benefit gained from visits to Cambridge City and Hereward Housing Association schemes.

The Housing and Environmental Services Director clarified that this review focussed on front-line staff, and that a Shire Homes management structure review was currently underway. Initial proposals from the latter review were expected at the end of November and would encompass an analysis of the number of area managers: at present there were three area managers and one weekend manager. Members would be kept informed.

The Housing Portfolio Holder agreed with comments that, given changes in the lifestyles of the elderly, care must be taken to ensure that the right service was being offered. She also assured Members that housing for scheme managers would be taken into account during one-to-one discussions.

Cabinet **AGREED**

- (a) to endorse the following vision for the Sheltered Housing Service:
 - I. "Our vision for the future is to develop a service that:
 - (i) is financially sustainable;
 - (ii) provides a high quality, flexible management and support service, tailored to the needs of our older residents;
 - (iii) encourages independence and allows dignity and quality of life; and
 - (iv) is integrated with other complementary services for older people";
- (b) to endorse the following key principles for the Sheltered Housing Service:
 - I. A new role for Scheme Managers – so that they become the hub of housing support activity within their scheme:
 - (i) increased skills, including training on enhancing the support role;
 - (ii) closer working with Neighbourhood Managers;
 - (iii) closer working with Primary Care Trust locality managers and teams; and
 - (iv) able to respond to Lifeline calls;
 - II. Support based on a firm and familiar relationship between residents and staff:
 - (i) a team approach – schemes to be managed in groups which will reflect the dispersal of the schemes but with a dedicated team that will serve that locality. This will involve a move from scheme

- management – scheme managers will provide support to a number of residents, with a more equal distribution. There would be a lead manager for each property, with the ability to provide cover from within the team – meaning residents would see only familiar faces;
- (ii) a 9-to-5 on-site service with no resident Scheme Manager;
 - (iii) a small flexible team, but large enough to cover the scheme and to promote other activities, including social activities and promoting links between the schemes in that locality; and
 - (iv) able to carry out other duties linked with Lifelines;
- III. A fast and appropriate response to out-of-hours calls for assistance:
- (i) a night response service provided through the Primary Care Trust;
 - (ii) able to assist with falls and to assess whether emergency services are required;
 - (iii) access to nursing help if needed;
 - (iv) guaranteed response times;
 - (v) service to be offered to other Lifeline users (including private sector);
- IV. Promoting further use of communal facilities – the current provision differs across the schemes, this is an opportunity to ensure consistency of service:
- (i) seen as a community resource – promoted by the Team;
 - (ii) increasing resident involvement in organising activities at the scheme and in the wider community;
 - (iii) increasing use by the wider community of the facilities and with other organisations;
 - (iv) possible base for delivery of health or care services;
- (c) the outline staffing structure set out at Appendix 3 to the review report, subject to further consultation with staff on the final composition of teams;
- (d) that work continue with staff, stakeholders and residents on the long-term vision for housing for older people, to be incorporated into a South Cambridgeshire Strategy for Older People;
- (e) that the following Difficult to Let flats be re-designated as non-sheltered properties for letting to single people in the 40 to 60 age group
- I. 27-32 Greenleas, Histon (6 flats, all 1 bedroom);
 - II. 1-9 Fairview, Longstanton (9 flats, 1 x 2 bedroom and 8 x 1 bedroom);
 - III. 1 and 1A Chapel Street, Waterbeach (2 flats, both 1 bedroom); and
 - IV. 1-4 Chapel Close, Waterbeach (4 flats, 1 x 2 bedroom and 3 x 1 bedroom); and
- (f) to commend and thank the Members, officers, residents and partners involved in the Housing for Older People Advisory Group.

8. REDUCING NUMBERS IN AND COSTS OF TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) required local authorities to reduce the use of temporary accommodation for homeless households by 50% by 2010 and the report outlined proposals to respond to this target. It was confirmed that letting one-bed units to families with one small child would not be considered statutory overcrowding: it provided more space than hostel accommodation and was a temporary housing solution. The recommendations would see a better use of the Council's own housing stock and Members were assured that there would be no effect on village exception sites where local people had priority for housing, since these were mainly housing association sites.

Cabinet **AGREED** to make the following amendments to the Council's Lettings Policy

with effect from November 2005:

- (a) To let up to 10% of Council vacancies as temporary accommodation, including allocations of accommodation that may be one-bedroom short of what the household would be entitled to on a permanent basis, for example, on-bed unites let to families with one child. To be reviewed after 12 months;
- (b) To increase the minimum number of village choices to homeless applicants to 25, with at least 4 of these being in the villages identified as having more than 60 non-sheltered Council or housing association homes, whilst allowing individual families the opportunity to submit exceptional circumstances for a specific location; and
- (c) To award homeless priority points at 6 months after the Council has agreed to rehouse them, rather than the current 2 years.

9. SERVICE FIRST

The Service First Customer Care Project was established to develop a “customer-centric” consistency in all Council services. Customer care standards booklets had been developed for each customer-facing service outlining corporate and service specific standards and customer obligations; amendments had just been circulated electronically including revisions made in light of the capping situation. Subsequent changes could be made as needed via the Service First project team.

Cabinet **AGREED** that

- (a) the *corporate* customer care standards be adopted as set out in Appendix A to the report and used as the basis for further consultation with staff and customers by December 2005;
- (b) training for Council and Contact Centre staff and elected Members be organised for January to March 2006;
- (c) a customer care element be introduced to the 2006/07 service plan and personal appraisal templates to focus attention on how customer service could be improved;
- (d) all Portfolio Holders be asked to agree by the end of November 2005 the final version of service-specific standards to take account of post-capping budget reductions; and
- (e) the Service First project team be tasked with making further recommendations to the Information and Customer Services Portfolio Holder on the following:
 - (i) monitoring of performance against standards;
 - (ii) review and development of standards;
 - (iii) use of mystery shoppers;
 - (iv) integration of customer satisfaction and complaints monitoring; and
 - (v) generation of ideas to improve customer care.

10. 6-MONTH (APR-SEPT) PERFORMANCE MILESTONES MONITORING REPORT 2005-06

The report highlighted milestones achieved and gave details of those where progress was delayed, such as the Comprehensive Performance Assessment actions which had been disrupted by capping. A further report would be brought to Cabinet in December.

Members noted that:

- (a) the Contact Centre’s customer satisfaction measuring software installation was expected in the next financial year, but a temporary manual arrangement was currently in place;
- (b) the Council had been proposed as a Beacon Council for its Waste and Recycling scheme (Milestone M88); and

- (c) work on the new integrated Waste and Recycling scheme was going ahead despite capping.

Cabinet

CONFIRMED

the importance of achieving milestones and performance indicators in relation to the following areas:

- (a) Completing Contact Centre Phase 2: maximising the use of the Contact Centre and identifying scope for efficiency gains through the use of the Contact Centre;
- (b) Ensuring that progress is maintained in the programme to achieve electronic service delivery;
- (c) Ensuring that progress is maintained on the Local Development Framework and in the planning for Northstowe;
- (d) Ensuring that the Council sets clear, realistic priorities for 2006/07 onwards to give direction to the work of officers;
- (e) The achievement of efficiency savings for 2005/06 and 2006/07 to 2007/08; and
- (f) Continuing to give priority to the achievement of performance indicator targets; and

REQUESTED

that the Chief Executive provide each Portfolio Holder with a list of their milestones which might not be achieved in 2005/06 and to arrange for consideration of these milestones at each Portfolio Holder meeting.

11. 6-MONTH (APR-SEPT) PERFORMANCE INDICATORS MONITORING REPORT 2005-06

The Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder confirmed that most targets were likely to be achieved and Cabinet

AGREED

to invite individual Portfolio Holders to discuss the following Performance Indicators at monthly Portfolio Holder meetings, with a view to satisfying themselves that all action that can be taken to achieve the targets is being taken:

Resources and Staffing

- BV 66a** % of rent collected as a proportion of rent owed (Housing Revenues Account)
- BV 78b** average time for processing notifications of changes in (benefits) circumstance that require a new decision on behalf of the local authority
- BV 179** % of Land Charges standard searches carried out in 10 working days
- SX 21** % SCDG employees single car users

Planning and Economic Development

- BV 109a** % of Major Planning applications determined within 13 weeks
- SH 311** Affordable Housing completions
- No PIs** Northstowe and the other growth areas
- No PIs** Affordable Housing Permissions, impact of officer's actions

Environmental Health

- SE 203** % of environmental health complaints responded to within 3 working days
- SE 225** % of pest control first treatments carried out within 4 working days

Community Development**The Arts, Sports and Community Development Strategies****SX 16** the number of villages with completed Parish Plans**12. PAY AWARD POLICY**

To correct inconsistencies in the policy which had arisen as a result of the former consultants' advice, Cabinet

AGREED that

- (a) future pay awards be based on a range of pay data, including the Retail Price Index (RPI), local government pay settlement and other public sector settlements; and
- (b) the payline be reviewed every four years.

13. COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (CPA) FOR DISTRICT COUNCILS

The Audit Commission were keen to streamline the CPA process for District Councils in the short-term, while the Government was seeking to replace CPA with area-based assessments of public services post 2008-09, and authorities were invited to respond to a consultation paper.

Cabinet **AGREED**

- (a) to approve the proposed response to the Audit Commission's consultation paper, as set out in paragraphs 8-22 of the report; and
- (b) that the Chief Executive send a written response to the Audit Commission reflecting the comments made in the report.

14. FIXED TERM CONTRACT - BUILDING CONTROL

The cost-cutting exercise had affected the Building Control section and the continued viability of the service necessitated maintaining this administrative post.

Cabinet

AGREED to renew the fixed-term contract for post D.5.13 for a period of one year.

15. GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITES GRANT 2006-08 - LATE ITEM

The Leader had accepted this report as an emergency item due to the short time frame in which the Council could bid for government funding to refurbish or develop local authority-owned traveller sites during 2006-08. It was important that the Council made sure it could access the funding and a bid must be submitted by 31 January 2006; Cabinet acknowledged that this would be a resource-hungry process. The Community Development Portfolio Holder's endorsement of the bid was reported.

Cabinet discussed that:

- (a) the Council's case should be strengthened by the results of the Travellers' Housing Needs Survey, which should be available before the bid was made;
- (b) a similar letter received in July related to a different funding year which was not applicable to the Council's position generally but did result in some funding for sites at Milton and Whaddon;
- (c) bidding for funding would demonstrate that the Council looked after the welfare of travellers; and

- (d) Members were asked to be alert regarding a potential media leak of a confidential discussion.

Cabinet **AGREED** to endorse efforts by officers to undertake the necessary preparations with a view to making an application for Gypsy and Traveller Site grant-funding in 2006-08.

Information Items

16. POOLING OF CAPITAL RECEIPTS

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) had confirmed that the final legislation regarding the Pooling Scheme would result in receipts from the Equity Share Scheme being subject to pooling and the Council had since written to the ODPM asking that consideration be given to amending the regulations to ensure that pooling of these receipts would be avoided.

Cabinet **NOTED** the report.

17. PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

Cabinet's attention was drawn to the likely General Fund underspends for 2005/06, which, when compared to the budget reductions approved by Council on 27 October 2005, resulted in a net additional underspend of £20,000. With regards to Prudential Indicators, the Council continued to remain within the set limits for Treasury Management.

Cabinet **NOTED** the projected expenditure position and the monitoring of prudential indicators.

Standing Items

18. MATTERS REFERRED BY SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

None.

19. UPDATES FROM CABINET MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES

None.

The Meeting ended at 10.55 a.m.
