

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Council held on
Thursday, 23 March 2006 at 1.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs CAED Murfitt – Chairman
Councillor JH Stewart – Vice-Chairman

Councillors: SJ Agnew, Dr DR Bard, RE Barrett, JD Batchelor, RF Bryant, EW Bullman, BR Burling, NN Cathcart, JP Chatfield, Mrs PS Corney, Mrs J Dixon, Mrs SJO Doggett, R Hall, Mrs SA Hatton, Mrs JM Healey, Mrs EM Heazell, MP Howell, Mrs CA Hunt, HC Hurrell, Mrs HF Kember, SGM Kindersley, RMA Manning, RB Martlew, MJ Mason, DC McCraith, DH Morgan, Mrs JA Muncey, CR Nightingale, R Page, EJ Pateman, JA Quinlan, A Riley, Mrs DP Roberts, NJ Scarr, J Shepperson, Mrs GJ Smith, Mrs HM Smith, Mrs DSK Spink MBE, RT Summerfield, RJ Turner, Dr SEK van de Ven, Mrs BE Waters, DALG Wherrell, JF Williams, Dr JR Williamson, TJ Wotherspoon, NIC Wright and SS Ziaian-Gillan

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor SM Edwards, Mrs A Elsby, Dr SA Harangozo, JA Hockney and Dr JPR Orme.

PRESENTATION

The Chief Constable of Cambridgeshire, Mrs Spence, gave a presentation on “Developing the Police for Tomorrow” about policing challenges over the next 12 months. She outlined the main issues: workforce modernisation, neighbourhood policing and structural change; explained the new structures within the Cambridgeshire Force, particularly the proactive neighbourhood policing approach and gave comparative crime figures. Mrs Spence also outlined the functions of the new national Serious and Organised Crime Agency and the Constabulary’s opposition to the proposed merger of forces.

In answer to questions, Mrs Spence responded that

- She wanted local sergeants to talk to local councillors
- There were lessons to learn from the handling of the Fred Moss murder investigation, particularly the early stages
- Partnership working was essential, but it must be partnership with a purpose
- There was a concern that fewer people might be reporting crimes under the new call handling system
- Crimes on the level of burglary were being dealt with, lower level incidents were perhaps not dealt with so well
- Neighbourhood Watch still existed, any problems were related to particular areas: there was a good response when the Community Beat Officer was on duty, slower when he or she was not
- It was critical for neighbourhood teams to look at anti-social behaviour and adjust their reaction to the severity of the behaviour
- The government was putting in funding for PCSOs, so some communities would not necessarily lose.

1. MINUTES

23 February 2006

The Chairman was authorised to sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 February

2006 as a correct record, subject to the addition, in the third paragraph of **Minute 11(b), Operation of Members' Code** of:

"the Leader responded to Councillor Mrs Spink's *request that posters should be confined to notice boards*, that he believed...."

Other matters raised included:

Minutes (Minute 1)

Councillor Page stated that the Chief Executive's response that figures referred to by Councillor Mason were not in the public domain had not been recorded in the minutes, and asked for a reply to his letter seeking confirmation of the answer. The Chief Executive apologised that that part of the letter had not been answered and promised to do so.

Reports of Meetings – Cabinet 9 February 2006 (Minute 11(a)) – Concessionary Fares
Councillor Scarr sought to clarify why the new scheme operated only within each district, and was advised that many Members had been receiving calls and letters about this. The Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder advised that the Council was £250,000 short of the funds needed to join a totally free scheme throughout the county and authorities were doing the best they could until more money was available. The current scheme was, however, transitional as the bus operators did not yet know the costs or take up. He reported that representations had been made to the Government and that a press release had been issued.

At the end of consideration of the Minutes, the Chairman allowed further debate on the concessionary fares scheme. The scheme was regarded as a fiasco despite co-operation between and the best efforts of the local authorities and the bus operators to deliver a workable scheme and, the Leader pointed out, 100% the responsibility of the Government.

A request for the publication of FAQs was accepted, and Members were invited to send questions to the Portfolio Holder

Standards Committee 8 February 2006 (Minute 11(b))

Councillor Mrs Roberts having declared a personal and prejudicial interest in view of two complaints against her to the Standards Board, queried whether the complainants should also declare interests. The Monitoring Officer reported that the Standards Board had said there was no need for a Member complained against to declare an interest, although it was for the individual to decide, nor did the complainants have to declare an interest. Councillor Mrs Roberts nevertheless left the room while this part of the Minutes was discussed.

9 March 2006

The Chairman was authorised to sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2006 as a correct record, subject to the following

Apologies

Add Councillor Mrs GJ Smith

Exclusion of Public (Minute 4)

Add record of Councillor Mrs SA Hatton's vote against the resolution.

Councillor R Page recorded his name against the authorisation of the Minutes.

Other matters raised included:

Statement by the Chairman (Minute 3)

Councillor Page claimed that the last sentence of the Minute did not reflect the words used by the Chairman; and stated that he had made a complaint about the Chairman to the Standards Board; that a request to the Monitoring Officer for the exact words used had not been answered; and that he had reported the Monitoring Officer to the Police for glaring at him. On a vote being taken, the Minute was declared correct, with four votes against, including Councillor Page.

Exclusion of Public (Minute 4)

Councillor Page claimed that it was wrong to say that he made accusations against the Council and that he would have expected protection under the Chairman and the Chief Executive to investigate officers acting wrongly.

Councillor Scarr asked whether the matter of recording meetings should not be re-visited and the Chairman invited him to bring this to another meeting.

Councillor Mrs Hatton claimed that she had seen 6 abstentions from the vote and asked that in future the electronic voting system should always be used.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made:

JD Batchelor, SGM Kindersley, DC McCraith MJ Mason	As County Councillors By reason of a complaint against him registered by the Standards Board for England, no. 14128/06
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3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Batchelor gave a recognition of the late Councillor Dr Heap's career and person.

The Chairman reported:

- That the ODPM had held up the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment compiled by officers of the Council as a good example and was discussing its inclusion in a best practice guide
- Comments from a teacher at Comberton Village College on the way the debating competition had helped their students to grow and mature
- That CIPFA had ranked the Council 4th out of 120 benchmarked authorities for its management of its investments
- Some quotes from Gloria Buckley at the very worthwhile Traveller Issues workshop held the previous Friday

The Environmental Health Portfolio Holder then presented the Chairman with the award of Beacon status gained by this Council for recycling and waste management.

4. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND THE PUBLIC

4 (a) From Councillor JA Hockney

Councillor JA Hockney asked as a written question: "Could the Portfolio Holder update us on how the Housing reorganisation is progressing?"

The Housing Portfolio Holder responded that there had been a slight delay recently, but that:

“Cllr Hockney will be aware that reorganisation has affected four areas of the housing service over the past 12 months:

Shire Homes Management Team

These changes are estimated to deliver annual savings of £70,000 and the final appointment, of Property Services Manager, was made earlier this month.

DLO Review

The reorganisation was completed earlier this month with the appointment of Repairs Operations Manager.

Efficiency savings of £225,000 are projected to be realised by the DLO in 2005/06.

Housing Management

Appointments to the Supported Housing Manager, Housing Options Officer, Housing Services Team Leaders, and Housing Services Officers posts were completed last week.

Sheltered Housing

Appointments to the three Sheltered Housing Team Leader and forty Sheltered Housing Officer posts were made last week. 20 staff have been served with redundancy notices, of whom 10 applied for and were granted voluntary redundancy.

The new staffing arrangements, arising out of the sheltered housing review, are anticipated to yield ongoing annual savings of £460,000. For budget preparation purposes, one off redundancy and pension costs were projected to be £450,000 over 2005/06 and 2006/07. Actual costs are likely to be within that projection.

The operational arrangements for the new area teams are being finalised and meetings with scheme residents are scheduled to take place in April. A newsletter detailing the changes will be circulated in April.

A special briefing session is planned for Housing for Older People Advisory Group (HOPAG) members on Thursday 20 April at 11.30 am in the Council Chamber to brief them on progress with the sheltered housing review's implementation. All members are welcome to attend this briefing, which will also cover the future of residential care for older people.”

Councillor Mrs Heazell paid tribute and thanks to Pauline Gardner and Jill Mellors from the HR team for their conduct of a huge programme of interviews.

A copy of the answer would be sent to Councillor Hockney.

In response to queries and concern on whether scheme managers currently living on site would be required to move in the future, the Housing Portfolio Holder and the Housing and Environmental Services Director stated that it had never been the intention to remove scheme managers from their accommodation but that it was no longer a requirement for them to live on site. Until decisions had been taken on redundancies, it had not been possible to see the effect on accommodation. Any changes would only be achieved through negotiation and the Council's policies and procedures would be followed absolutely. The changes to the sheltered housing service had come about through the county-wide review as part of Supporting People: scheme managers would

now be on duty from 9 am to 5 pm; outside those times an emergency scheme of trained assistance would be available.

The Housing and Environmental Services Director indicated that the HOPAG meeting would be more than a briefing; it would be an opportunity to contribute.

Councillor Scarr declared a personal interest as a member of Unison since any negotiations would be likely to involve the union.

5. PETITIONS

None received.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET 6 MARCH 2006:

6 (a) Investment Strategy 2006/07

As recommended by Cabinet, Council

RESOLVED that the Investment Strategy 2006/07 be approved.

6 (b) Alarm System Service Charges

Council **RESOLVED** that from 1 May 2006

- (a) the reduced charge be maintained for those in receipt of benefit; and
- (b) all alarm system service charges be increased by 2.5% for inflation, bringing the full charge to £3.61 per week (where the Council supplies the alarm) and £2.92 per week (where the user supplies the alarm), and the reduced charge to £2.30 (where the Council supplies the alarm) and £1.63 (where the user supplies the alarm).

Councillor R Page recorded his vote against this decision.

6 (c) Protection of Vulnerable Adults Policy

Arising from the policy on the protection of vulnerable adults, Cabinet had recommended that all councillors be CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checked. The Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee advised that the Committee had been told that checking could not be compulsory for councillors and could not be made so retrospectively for anyone already with the Council. The opportunity for checks had been available voluntarily for two years.

A number of Members spoke in favour of CRB checks since councillors inevitably came into contact with vulnerable people. It was noted that the checks were organisation specific so could not be transferred. There was, consequently, a cost implication. However, any individual could carry out their own check via the Internet or through the Licensing Act.

Councillor Batchelor reported that at the County Council checking for those already in office was voluntary, but acceptance of checking was included as part of the declaration of acceptance of office and he assumed a similar system could be adopted.

The principle was accepted and the difference between standard and enhanced checks discussed. It appeared that the need for enhanced checks depended on the extent of

involvement with vulnerable people. Council

RESOLVED that all District Councillors be Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checked, with advice to be sought in each case whether this should be standard or enhanced checking.

7. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

Councillor Bryant, as Chairman of the Constitution Review Working Party, introduced changes required by government regulation. This requirement was the reason it had not been felt necessary to take the changes to the Working Party. Councillor Bryant acceded to a request for the relevant pages to be reproduced for Members to insert into the Constitution.

Council **RESOLVED** that the following changes be made to the Access to Information Procedure Rules in the Constitution:

Delete existing paragraph 10.4 on pages E-3 to E-5 and **insert** the following:

10.4 Meaning of exempt information

Exempt information means information falling within the following categories (subject to any relevant conditions):

	Category	Condition
1.	Information relating to any individual	
2.	Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual	
3.	Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)	Information is not exempt information if it is required to be registered under – (a) the Companies Act 1985 (b) the Friendly Societies Act 1974 (c) the Friendly Societies Act 1992 (d) the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts 1965 to 1978 (e) the Building Societies Act 1986 (f) the Charities Act 1993
4.	Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.	
5.	Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.	
6.	Information which reveals that the authority proposes – (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.	

7.	Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.	
8. (7A)	Information which is subject to any obligation of confidentiality.	Relates to meetings of Standards Committee/sub-committee convened to consider a matter referred under the provisions of paragraph 10 of the Schedule
9. (7B)	Information which relates in any way to matters concerning national security	Relates to meetings of Standards Committee/sub-committee convened to consider a matter referred under the provisions of paragraph 10 of the Schedule
10. (7C)	The deliberations of a standards committee or a sub-committee of a standards committee reaching any finding on a matter referred under the provisions of Section 60(2) or (3), 64(2), 70(4) or (5) or 71(2) of the Local Government Act 2000.	

Information is not exempt information if it relates to proposed development for which the local planning authority may grant itself planning permission pursuant to regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992.

Information which

- (a) falls within any of categories 1 to 10 (7C) above; and
- (b) is not prevented from being exempt by virtue of the conditions attached to paragraph 3 or regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992

is exempt information if and so long, as in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Delete existing paragraph 24.1 on page E-10 and **insert**:

24.1 Material relating to previous business

All members are entitled to inspect any document which is in the possession or under the control of the Cabinet or its committees and contains material relating to any business previously transacted at a private meeting unless it appears to the Monitoring Officer that it discloses exempt information

- (a) as described in categories 1, 2, 4, 5 or 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act; or
- (b) relating to any terms proposed or to be proposed by or to the authority in the course of negotiations for a contract; or
- (c) involving the disclosure of advice provided by a political advisor or assistant

Exempt information as described in category 3 (except to the extent described in 24.1(b) above) or category 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A is open to inspection by members.

8. REPORTS OF MEETINGS

The Minutes of the following meetings were **RECEIVED**, subject to matters considered in Minutes 8(a) to 8(c) below:

Cabinet	9 March 2006
Transformation Committee	20 February 2006
Transformation Committee	6 March 2006
Development and Conservation Control Committee	1 March 2006
Employment Committee	23 February 2006
Licensing Committee	23 February 2006
Scrutiny and Overview Committee	16 February 2006

8 (a) Cabinet 9 March 2006

Declarations of Interest (Minute 2)

It was noted that Councillor Kindersley was a governor of Gamlingay First School, not the Village College, and that Councillor Mrs Healey was a governor of Impington Village College, not Linton.

Alarm System Service Charges (Minute 4)

Councillors Mrs Heazell suggested that further words of hers, commenting on the loss of revenue to both the HRA and Council Tax payers due to deferral of the decision, should be included in order to clarify the proposal.

Bassingbourn Dual Use Sports Facility Project (Minute 6)

Councillor Cathcart voiced thanks for the grant to the Village College and commented on the likely charging policy.

8 (b) Transformation Committee

Councillor Dr Bard asked that a decision taken by the Committee on 20 March should not be implemented until the Committee had reconvened to reconsider, as he believed the decision to be ultra vires. Members of the Committee agreed to this request.

8 (c) Scrutiny and Overview Committee 16 February 2006

Councillor Dr van de Ven advised that she would seek some amendments when the Committee considered the Minutes.

Public Questions (Minute 4)

Councillor Scarr, referring to Councillor Dr van de Ven's comments at the last Council meeting about the treatment of this questioner, commented that the Minutes indicated nothing untoward. He agreed that Councillors should be courteous to questioners.

Draft Agenda Programme and Programme of Key Decisions (Minute 5)

Energy Efficient Housing

Councillor Mrs Hatton stated that a simple way of increasing energy efficiency would be to insist on low E glass in all windows. The Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder had sympathy with this approach and stated that he was, with the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder, trying to press the green agenda. However, he had been advised that window glass was not a matter for planning policy documents but for Building Control, where there were national standards. Councillor Mrs GJ Smith commented that some councils were praised for their action and asked that the Climate Change Group should investigate this anomaly.

The Environmental Health Portfolio Holder reported on the scheme being run with British Gas for cavity wall insulation, where people taking up the offer had a £50 discount from their Council Tax and the Council received £15.

Concessionary Fares

Councillor Mrs GJ Smith reported that she had made extensive enquiries at the County Council about the new scheme and that information was available on their web site. However, figures were not yet available from the operators. She suggested that the Committee should review the operation of the scheme, possibly in about May, when some experience would have been gained. The Chairman of the Committee indicated that he would take this up.

9. QUESTIONS ON JOINT MEETINGS

None received.

10. UPDATES FROM MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Local Government Re-organisation

The Leader reported on a meeting between the Minister and Leaders and Chief Executives from the East of England. The feeling from authorities had been that the present system was working well enough and should not be touched. The Minister had indicated that any reorganisation would be guided by local authorities, but that they would bear the cost. It was hoped that the response had got through to the Minister. A recent local government journal article indicated that David Miliband had lost some of his enthusiasm for local government reorganisation.

As a result of this meeting, the new Director of GO-East had been invited to come to South Cambridgeshire. He had accepted the invitation and the Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder would be making the arrangements.

Cambridgeshire Horizons Conference

The Leader reported that at the conference, the Highways Agency had stated that some development at Northstowe would be permitted without changes to the A14. The message had been sent, and should be reinforced, that this Council, as Local Planning Authority, would decide when development at Northstowe could begin and under what conditions. A similar point had been made at the Joint Strategic Forum the previous day.

Councillor Morgan reiterated his request that improvements to the A14 must include further improvements to the A428, and referred to the particular problem in School Lane, Cambourne, which was becoming a cut-through from the A428 to the Caxton By-pass. The Leader repeated that he would raise the A428 wherever possible and Councillor Mrs Spink, agreeing that the A428 needed upgrading before the A14, reminded Members that anyone could write on this issue.

Archives Advisory Panel

Councillor Mrs GJ Smith reported that the threatened £100,000 cut in the County Council heritage budget was not now taking place and that the Historical Research Centre was to proceed with a £10.7m PFI. It was to open in 2007/08. The Panel's argument that the building was of little use if it had restricted opening hours and limited staff numbers and been accepted, and planned cover was reasonable.

A Local Heritage Initiative grant had been obtained for a Community Archives project, in which 40 community archives groups across the county would be assisted with the

digital archiving of local records.

Old West Drainage Internal Drainage Board

Councillor Mason reported on being contacted concerning an incident of serious pollution at Smithy Fen. He would pass details to the Environmental Health Portfolio Holder with a view to a meeting to address public health issues.

Cambridge Southern Fringe

Councillor Nightingale asked Members from the Southern Fringe villages to challenge the traffic management plans for the Addenbrooke's access road since the County traffic figures were seriously flawed.

11. NOTICES OF MOTION

11 (a) Standing in the name of Councillor JP Chatfield

Councillor JP Chatfield presented his motion, urging the Council to work towards Fair Trade status, and gave examples of some of the support being given elsewhere, including Parliament, and the increase in Fair Trade products available. He argued that free trade was not working properly as it was not allowing third world countries to get into the market. The motion was seconded by Councillor SJ Agnew, who favoured setting a good example with staff first and then becoming more proactive, and called for a small group of Members to monitor sustainable progress.

During debate, concerns expressed included:

- a) That Fair Trade products were not necessarily produced or transported in an environmentally friendly way
- b) That Fair Trade imports could damage the viability of locally grow products
- c) That Fair trade organisations could de-stabilise rural communities by causing people to move away
- d) Achievement of Fair Trade status was not easy
- e) There were cost and staffing (in research and monitoring) implications
- f) It would be impossible to make all villages support the scheme
- g) No problems were seen in serving Fair Trade tea and coffee, but the Council did not have the resources to go further

However, some of the concerns were countered by support expressed as:

- h) Fair Trade organisations had strict criteria
- i) Fair Trade encouraged trade within and between adjoining countries
- j) Lack of support condemned the companies to go out of business
- k) Free trade is retarding Fair Trade
- l) The Council should do what it could to support Fair Trade in a practical way
- m) A start could be made by serving Fair Trade tea and coffee at meetings

A number of Members supported the need for a small monitoring group, and Councillor Page stated that, despite his concerns, he would be happy to contribute to such a group. It was suggested that this could be Member-led and not involve much officer time.

Councillor Dr DR Bard proposed an amendment, seconded by Councillor Mrs DP Roberts, that a decision on the motion be deferred for a report setting out the full implications. The amendment was lost by 18 votes against to 17 for.

Councillor Chatfield emphasised that the motion was intended as a first step, and not to be as resource intensive as suggested. Council then, by 21 votes to 14 with 1 abstention,

RESOLVED that South Cambridgeshire District Council will research, develop and support a strategy to facilitate the promotion and purchase of goods with the Fairtrade mark, as part of its commitment to the pursuit of sustainable development and to give producers a fair deal. This will involve a commitment to serving Fairtrade tea and coffee at all council meetings and making Fairtrade products as widely available as possible. The Council will commit to working towards achieving Fairtrade status.

12. CHAIRMAN'S ENGAGEMENTS

The Chairman's engagements undertaken since the last meeting were **NOTED**.

The Chairman reminded Members of the concert on 8 April in aid of her charity for the year

The Meeting ended at 5.12 p.m.
