

## **South Cambridgeshire District Council**

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on  
Tuesday, 5 December 2023 at 10.00 a.m.

### **PRESENT:**

#### **Cabinet Members in attendance:**

Bridget Smith	Leader of Council
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

#### **Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:**

Liz Watts	Chief Executive
John Murphy	Monitoring Officer
Peter Maddock	Head of Finance
Anne Ainsworth	Chief Operating Officer
Kevin Ledger	Senior Policy and Performance Officer
Katherine Southwood	Business Support Key Projects Team Leader
Pippa Turvey	Democratic Services Team Leader
Laurence Damary-Homan	Democratic Services Officer
James Green	Liberal Democrat Political Assistant
Peter Campbell	Head of Housing
Lesley McFarlane	Development Officer, Health Specialist
Stuart Morris	Team Leader (Planning Policy and Strategic Planning)
Jonathan Dixon	Planning Policy Manager

Councillor Anna Bradnam was in attendance, by invitation.

Councillor Lisa Redrup was also in attendance.

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Tumi Hawkins, Peter McDonald, and Brian Milnes.

### **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 Tuesday, 7 November 2023.

#### **4. Announcements**

There were no announcements from the Leader of the Council.

#### **5. Public Questions**

A question had been submitted by a member of the public, however, they were not in attendance. The Leader, therefore, invited them to submit their question to the next meeting of Cabinet should they wish.

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

Cabinet noted the Scrutiny and Overview report summarising the meeting held on 16 November 2023. Councillor Anna Bradnam was in attendance on behalf of the Committee and advised that she would update Cabinet at the relevant agenda items.

#### **7. 2023-24 Quarter Two Performance Report**

Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor Williams advised that the Council continued to show positive improvement. One area in which the Council had reported a 'red' performance against its target had been the average number of days to re-let all housing stock. It was explained that the Council had set high targets for itself in this area and was still ahead the national average of 32 days.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor John Batchelor, who welcomed the recorded improvement during each quarter, particularly where call answer time had more than halved.

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

- Members asked a number of questions at the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and were satisfied with the progress being made by the Council.

#### **Resolution**

Cabinet:

- (1) Noted the Key Performance Indicator results and comments at Appendix A to the report and the progress in delivery of 2023-24 Business Plan outputs at Appendix B to the report.

#### **Options Considered**

No alternative options were considered.

## **Reasons for Decision**

The decision was required to enable management and members to understand the organisation's performance. The information included within performance reports contributed to the evidence base for the ongoing review of priorities and enabled, where appropriate, redirection of resources to reflect emerging priorities and address areas of concern.

## **8. Rural England Prosperity Fund**

Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor Williams emphasised the importance of this fund as a district that had neither a city nor a market town, as well as the value of supporting start-up businesses.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Bridget Smith, who commented that, as the authority who knew the needs to local business, it was sensible for Government to devolve this responsibility to district level.

## **Resolution**

Cabinet gave authority to proceed with proposal of fund delivery to:

- i) Allocate £292,034 of the fund to a series of capital projects within the district in the current financial year (2023/24).
- ii) Allocate £876,101 of the fund to a Grant scheme available for communities and businesses to apply for in financial year 2024/25.
- iii) Agree governance arrangement, grant funding level, and match funding levels outlined in the report.

## **Options Considered**

1. To proceed with Capital project and grants scheme as outlined in the report.
2. Do not accept outlined proposal, and not proceed with the REPF.
3. Do not proceed with Capital Projects and risk lose funding for financial year 23/24 and proceed with grants scheme for 24/25.
4. Propose other capital projects that are ready to start and could spend the REPF before the end of March 2024 to add to the capital projects list.

## **Reasons for Decision**

1. Due to delays on receiving clear guidelines on how local authorities were able to spend the funds, dividing the funding across a programme of capital projects in 23/24 and a grant scheme programme in 24/25 would allow the Council to allocate and spend funds within the specified timeframes set out by Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC).
2. On the 17 November 2023 the DLUHC indicated that there was an

opportunity for spend to be rolled over into the financial year, however, this may impact access to next financial year funding. It would be the preferred option to proceed with projects as soon as possible.

## **9. Health and Wellbeing Strategy Refresh 2024-2028**

Councillor Bill Handley, Lead Cabinet Member for Communities, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor Handley advised that the updated strategy included lessons learnt during the COVID pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, which had impacted the way health services were delivered. Members of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee had been involved in the development of strategy, including a workshop in the Summer and consideration at the most recent committee meeting.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor John Batchelor.

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

- During discussion the committee had asked the Lead Cabinet Member to look again at how the Council could support community transport schemes, particularly in finding volunteer drivers.
- The committee also considered mental health services, recognising the complexity of this work and the importance of working with the integrated health system.
- Scrutiny and Overview Committee had emphasised that, if there was anything the committee could do to support communication of support services, this would be welcomed.

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

- The comments from the Scrutiny and Overview Committee were appreciated and had been taken onboard.
- It was considered that the Council's relationship with the Integrated Care Services was good and could be built on.
- Further comment was made that public health was a top priority for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

### **Resolution**

Cabinet approved the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and its appendices.

### **Options Considered**

Recommended option – for Cabinet to agree the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-28 and its appendices.

Alternative option – for Cabinet to make recommendations for further alterations to the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy for 2024-28, providing

details.

### **Reasons for Decision**

The original Health and Wellbeing Strategy was developed in July 2019 prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and prior to the Health and Care Act July 2022 (which saw the formation of 42 Integrated Care Systems across England). A cost-of-living crisis had also since developed, therefore the Strategy was no longer reflective of the environment in which people now lived, worked and aged.

The pandemic had created greater inequalities across a range of factors, affecting people's living standards and health outcomes, which had prompted a greater focus for the Council on cost-of-living support for the most vulnerable.

Working as a signatory to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care System (CPICS), the Council's activities must align with achieving the goals outlined in the CPICS Health and Care Strategy to create greater synergy in achieving shared goals.

## **10. Proposed Fees & Charges 2024/2025**

Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In doing so, Councillor Williams commented that it wasn't right for council taxpayers to be subsidising the work of developers. As such, the proposed fees and charges would aid in recovering costs through planning fees for developers. Other increases were in line with inflation, in order to allow the Council to continue to deliver services to a high standard.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Henry Batchelor, who advised that the fee lines coloured in 'peach' were those set nationally. Some were blank and these were yet to be set by government.

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

- It was commented that pre-application planning advice provided great benefit to those who used it, and it was hoped that any increase in fees would not discourage its use.

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

- It was noted that seeking pre-application planning advice was in applicants' interest.
- Comment was made that focus would be on large-scale developments covering the relevant costs.
- It was recognised that a balance was needed between cost recovery and accessible services, however it was felt that the right balance had been found.

- Finally, it was noted that people were generally willing to pay for quality services.

## **Resolution**

Cabinet:

- (1) Approved the fees and charges as detailed in Appendix A to the report to take effect from 1 April 2024 (unless otherwise stated) or the earliest feasible date thereafter.
- (2) Noted the proposed variations to fees and charges in comparison to the prevailing inflation rate detailed in the report.

## **Options Considered**

While the Council could choose to do so, the option of not adopting the revised fees and charges from 1 April 2024 was not considered to be appropriate. The Council was required by law to set a balanced budget and the additional income from fees and charges contributed to this, albeit marginally. In determining the new fee scales, due regard had been given to the sensitivity of price increases on service demand.

## **Reasons for Decision**

To ensure that the Council received income from fees and charges where allowable to contribute to the funding of services, to enable discretionary services to be provided and to assist the Council in preparing its Revenue Budget for 2024/2025.

## **11. General Fund Revenue Bids and Savings**

Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In doing so, Councillor Williams advised that budgets were continually reviewed, including areas that were underspent, to ensure that money provided for in the budget was spent. It was advised that the aim of 25% income from commercial investments had been met. Further comment was made that revenue bids were mostly in relation to creating new posts or making temporary posts permanent, growing the Council's offer to residents.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor John Batchelor.

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

- The committee had been encouraged by the report and the work undertaken.
- A few questions had been raised during debate at the meeting, particularly in relation to the move to digital phone lines. The committee raised concerns about whether a move away from an analogue system would render red-button alarm systems useless.
- It was further advised that, following questioning, the committee had

been reassured that the addition of an Empty Homes Officer was vital and would provide value for money.

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

- Comment was made that the addition of a traffic light system for climate impact was beneficial.
- It was noted that the alarm system 'Lifeline' was a commercial operation, though the practicality of whether this would be impacted by a change to digital phone lines was still being investigated.
- Further comment was made that many services were moving to a digital platform.
- Members were advised that the Empty Homes Officer had previously been a temporary position and was now to be made permanent, as a result of the positive impact of seen as a result of the position.

### **Resolution**

Cabinet:

1. Noted the growth bids put forward (both one off and ongoing), detailed at Appendix A and B to the report and approved those for 2024/2025 should be included in the Budget to be proposed in February 2024.
2. Noted the proposed range of service efficiency savings/additional income detailed in Appendix C to the report and approved those for 2024/2025 should be included in the Budget to be proposed in February 2024.

### **Options Considered**

The option existed of not approving new revenue funding bids and savings.

### **Reasons for Decision**

To enable the Cabinet to consider the new revenue bids and savings for 2024/2025.

## **12. Capital Programme Update and New Bids**

Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor Williams drew attention to the purchase of an ex-demonstration mechanical road sweeper and commended officers' ingenuity.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Bridget Smith.

### **Resolution**

Cabinet:

- (1) Considered the capital programme bids for new projects outlined at Appendix A to the report and approved the new capital schemes.
- (2) Recommended to Full Council the revised capital programme for the period 2023/2024 to 2028/2029, at Appendix B to the report for the General Fund and at Appendix C to the report for the Housing Revenue Account, to reflect the new scheme bids, amendments to the programme and the reprofiling of expenditure identified in the report.

### **Options Considered**

The option existed of not approving new capital funding bids.

### **Reasons for Decision**

To enable the Cabinet to consider the new capital project bids for 2024/2025 and the updated capital programme incorporating new items and reprofiling of expenditure.

## **13. 2023-2024 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring (Quarter 2)**

Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor Williams highlighted the money that hadn't been spent on agency staff, in comparison to the £250,000 that had been spent in Quarter 2 in the previous year. It was suggested that this was due to the four-day week trial and an indicator of its success.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Bill Handley, who expressed a wish to promote that success through official communication streams.

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

- It was felt important not to lose sight of the original problem the four-day week was intended to solve, including reliance on agency staff.
- It was further noted that agency staff would always be necessary for time limited pieces of work.

### **Resolution**

Cabinet:

- (1) Noted the 2023/24 revenue position against the approved revenue budget to date shown in Appendix B to the report, the projected major variances with reasons for these variances at Appendices C1 to C7 to the report and the action being taken to address the underlying issues.
- (2) Noted the latest Capital Programme 2023/24 position [and variances, if any] as shown in Appendix D to the report.



## Options Considered

The report provided monitoring information to ensure awareness of budget trends and emerging budget issues.

## Reasons for Decision

To advise the Cabinet of the latest monitoring information in respect of the 2023/24 revenue and capital budgets and emerging budget issues, for the second quarter period to 30 September 2023.

### **14. Response to the Uttlesford Draft Local Plan 2023-2041 (Regulation 18) Consultation**

Stuart Morris, Team Leader (Planning Policy and Strategic Planning), introduced the report and advised that the Council was still under a duty to co-operation. The local plan proposal being responded to was still a draft and it was anticipated that the final plan would be available in 2024. The key points for the Cabinet to note were that no new housing was proposed close to South Cambridgeshire. The most significant development would be additional employment land within Chesterford Research Park. The Local Plan did recognise the water stressed faced within the district, however impact on transportation was still unclear, with clarification requested within the proposed response.

Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Council, moved the recommendations and noted that it was advantageous if neighbouring local plans complemented each other.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Henry Batchelor and noted that it was a relief plans for development near the South Cambridgeshire boundary had been relocated.

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

- Comment was made in relation to monitoring water use. It was recognised that water meters couldn't be utilised with large-scale developments, but it was felt to be important to continue to monitor water usage following promises that levels would not rise.

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

- It was noted that water usage was one of the key points being discussed in relation to this plan.

## Resolution

Cabinet:

- (1) Agreed the proposed joint response to the Draft Uttlesford Local

- Plan 2021 – 2041 (Regulation 18) Consultation.
- (2) Agreed that any subsequent material amendments be made by the Lead Member for Planning.
  - (3) Agreed that any subsequent minor amendments and editing changes that do not materially affect the content be delegated to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development in consultation with the Lead Member for Planning.

### **Options Considered**

The options available to members were:

- a. Agree the proposed response to the consultation without amendments.
- b. Agree the proposed response to the consultation with amendments.
- c. Decide not to submit a response to the consultation – this option was not recommended as the plan would progress without awareness of potential impacts on Greater Cambridge.

### **Reasons for Decision**

The contents of the Draft Uttlesford Local Plan 2021 – 2041 (Regulation 18) Consultation, referred to in the report, could in principle impact on Greater Cambridge and have implications for the emerging joint Greater Cambridge Local Plan. The proposed response sought to minimise negative and maximise any positive impacts of Uttlesford's Local Plan on Greater Cambridge.

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

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