

## South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on  
Thursday, 8 June 2023 at 5.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Graham Cone – Chair  
Councillor Stephen Drew – Vice-Chair

Councillors: Anna Bradnam Dr. Martin Cahn  
Libby Earle James Hobro  
Helene Leeming Judith Rippeth  
Richard Stobart Heather Williams (substitute)

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

**In the Chamber:** Bode Esan (Head of Climate, Environment & Waste), Andrew Francis (Elections and Democratic Services Manager), Linda Gallagher (Development Officer), Kathryn Hawkes (Communities Manager), Ian Senior (Scrutiny and Governance Adviser), Liz Watts (Chief Executive).

**Remotely:** Anne Ainsworth (Chief Operating Officer), Philip Bird (Corporate Programme Manager), Peter Campbell (Head of Housing), Heather Jones (Deputy Director of Planning & Building Quality), Jeff Membery (Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services), John Murphy (Monitoring Officer) and Toby Williams (Area Development Manager)

Councillors Bill Handley (Lead Cabinet Member for Communities), Dr. Tumi Hawkins (Lead Cabinet Member with responsibility for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) and John Williams (Lead Cabinet Member for Resources) were in attendance, by invitation, in the Chamber.

Councillor Sue Ellington (Scrutiny and Overview Committee member) was in attendance remotely.

### 1. Chair's announcements

The Chair made several brief housekeeping announcements.

### 2. Apologies for absence

Councillors Tom Bygott, Peter Fane, Sally Ann Hart and Aidan Van de Weyer sent apologies. Councillor Heather Williams substituted for Councillor Bygott.

### 3. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Helene Leeming declared an interest as one of South Cambridgeshire District Council's representatives on the Community Safety Partnership.

### 4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

By affirmation, the Committee authorised the Chair to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2023.subject to the following:

## Minute 6 - Collection Changes - The future of waste collections

Expand the third paragraph (“Councillor Henry Batchelor (Lead Cabinet Member for Environment) informed the Committee that the feedback from waste collection crews at both South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council, as well as from Trade Unions, had been positive”) to read as follows:

“Councillor Sue Ellington asked whether the proposed four-day-week was affecting South Cambridgeshire District Council’s relationship with local authorities such as Huntingdonshire District Council, and whether this Council would be causing them problems if new working arrangements had the effect of attracting their own refuse operatives. She also asked about South Cambridgeshire operatives working elsewhere on their non-working day. Councillor Henry Batchelor (Lead Cabinet Member for Environment) informed the Committee that the feedback from waste collection crews at both South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council, as well as from Trade Unions, had been positive. Officers felt that, on balance, the benefits were likely to outweigh any risks, and that South Cambridgeshire District Council would be setting an example that other local authorities might eventually follow.”

### 5. Public Questions

There were no public questions.

### 6. South Cambridgeshire Community Safety Partnership - Operational Plan 2023/24

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee considered a draft report and the South Cambridgeshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Operational Plan for 2023-24 that would be presented to Cabinet on 27 June 2023.

Councillors Anna Bradnam and Judith Rippeth, both Members for Milton and Waterbeach, welcomed the fact that their ward would be getting a data ‘deep dive’ to help CSP partners to better understand local issues. Councillor Bradnam urged Cabinet to reflect the findings of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee Task & Finish Group that looked at Orchard Park a few years ago and consider incorporating into the Operational Plan lessons learned from places like Cambourne and Northstowe about the delivery of community facilities and measures designed to minimise the incidence of anti-social behaviour.

In reply to Councillor Richard Stobart, the Communities Manager explained how data was collected and how trends were identified.

Other issues explored during the debate included

- a. The importance of developing a communications plan capable of making residents aware of issues that might affect them, such as changes in legislation.
- b. The need, acknowledged by the Lead Cabinet Member for Communities, to clearly define unavoidable jargon and acronyms so that residents could better understand the Operational Plan.
- c. The nature of the existing and allocated sum of £15,000 in South

Cambridgeshire District Council's budget which the Lead Cabinet Member for Resources assured Members would continue to be available (and inflation proofed) for community safety.

Having reviewed the draft Cabinet report and its appendices and being satisfied that Lead Cabinet Members and operational officers had undertaken to address Members' concerns, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee agreed by affirmation to **support in principle** the presentation of the report to Cabinet.

## 7. 2022-23 Quarter Four Performance Report

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee considered a report on South Cambridgeshire District Council's Quarter Four (Q4) position regarding its operational Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and 2020-25 Business Plan actions.

At the Chair's invitation, the Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services gave Members an overview of the results from the Customer Contact Centre's recent mystery shopper exercise that the Committee had requested last year. The Committee noted that South Cambridgeshire District Council had achieved a rating of "+43" as against an average of "-36" at the group of local authorities against which it had been benchmarked. In response to concern raised by Councillor Heather Williams, the Corporate Programme Manager outlined the steps taken to support Contact Centre staff during the exercise. Councillor Judith Rippeth suggested that when a follow-up exercise takes place, account should be taken of the Council's extended opening hours where they occur.

Following a comment, officers undertook to explore ways of presenting graphical information in a way that enabled the Scrutiny and Overview Committee to identify trends while at the same time recognising the more strategic requirements of Cabinet.

With regard to CC307 (average call answer time (seconds)) the Lead Cabinet Member for Resources reiterated the reason for the March figure with reference to the narrative.

Referring to the amber Business Plan measure (completion of the measure has been delayed but is on track to be delivered by a revised delivery date) at the end of Q4, the Lead Cabinet Member for Resources assured the Committee that the remaining measures would be delivered against revised timescales necessitated by changing circumstances. He emphasised that the majority of Business Plan measures were purple (completed). The Chief Operating Officer undertook to investigate reasons for the delays. Councillor Heather Williams asked officers to make the narrative more "substantive" and called on the Cabinet to make sure that available resources were sufficient to complete tasks on time.

The Head of Climate, Environment and Waste agreed to speak with Councillor Sue Ellington outside the meeting regarding her question about public recycling bins.

The Chair raised two queries. In reply to the first, the Head of Climate, Environment and Waste said that residents in general were coping well with the co-mingling of domestic recycling and that the 6% threshold for cross-contamination had not been breached. In reply to the second, the Head of Housing undertook to identify any trends in tenants' dissatisfaction with responsive repairs.

Councillor Rippeth asked about FS105 (Council Tax collected). The Lead Cabinet Member for Resources explained that the option for residents to pay over 12 months instead of ten was becoming more popular and affecting collection rates at the beginning of the Quarter.

In connection with PN511 (percentage of major applications determined within eight weeks or agreed timeline – two-year reporting period cumulative (government KPI), Councillor James Hobro noted that the matrix had changed. The Deputy Director (Planning) assured the Committee that this had not distorted the data provided in the report but undertook to meet with Councillor Hobro to explain the methodology.

The Vice-Chair applauded the achievement of the measure and target for 2022-23 against Action D3 in the Business Plan (Generate income through delivering the Council's Investment Strategy).

Having reviewed the Key Performance Indicators, the overview of results from the Contact Centre's recent mystery shopper exercise, and the progress against Business Plan actions, and subject to comments made during the debate, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee **endorsed** the report by affirmation for presentation to Cabinet.

## 8. Draft Annual Equality Scheme Review

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee considered a report and draft version of the Council's revised Equality Scheme for the 2023-24 fiscal year. Councillor Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member responsible for Equality and Diversity, gave a brief introduction.

Members welcomed the report's style (including infographics) and inclusion of a national context with an assurance that, moving forward, further comparisons, such as age, would be identified with the local position defined in terms of both percentages and actual numbers. However, Councillor Heather Williams said care was needed to differentiate between the local and national contexts, especially when referring to 'staff'. The Committee encouraged the identification of new sources of data as they emerged and added that the presentation of trends would be helpful.

The Committee acknowledged the importance of collaborating with partners to tackle those situations where local data compares unfavourably with the national context, such as in the case of stop-and-search and the gender pay gap. In terms of recruitment at South Cambridgeshire District Council, the Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services assured Members that, before interview panels got to see them, applications were anonymised as far as possible.

The Lead Cabinet Member responsible for Equality and Diversity assured Members that South Cambridgeshire Hall remained accessible to people with disabilities in spite of ongoing renovation work. A full disability assessment of both the building and parking arrangements would be conducted during 2023-24.

Having reviewed the draft Equality Scheme revision for 2023-24 and the 2022-23 Equality Scheme action plan progress report, and together with comments made and assurances given during the meeting, the Scrutiny and Overview Committee **supported** the Annual Equality Scheme's onward submission to Cabinet for approval.

## 9. Work Programme

Members **received and noted** the Scrutiny and Overview Committee work programme attached to the agenda.

**10. To Note the Date of the next meeting**

Members noted that the next Scrutiny and Overview Committee meeting would take place on Thursday 7 September 2023 starting at 5.30pm.

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**The Meeting ended at 7.45 p.m.**

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