

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Thursday, 28 September 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
Peter McDonald	Lead Cabinet Member for Economic Development

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Liz Watts	Chief Executive
Anne Ainsworth	Chief Operating Officer
Peter Maddock	Head of Finance
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
Jonathan Dixon	Planning Policy Manager
Terry de Sousa	Planning Policy and Strategy Team Leader
Ben Thackray	Development Officer – Homes for Ukraine
Kirstin Donaldson	Service Manager Acquisitions and Development

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

Kate Yerbury	Policy and Performance Officer
Sara Cheng	Senior Conservation Officer
Christian Brady	Historic Environment Team Leader
Clare Gibbons	Growth Manager - Communities

Councillor Stephen Drew was in attendance, by invitation.

Councillor Heather Williams and Councillor Anna Bradnam were also in attendance.
Councillor Peter Fane and Councillor Lisa Redrup were in attendance remotely.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

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, 27 June 2023.

4. **Announcements**

There were no announcements.

5. **Public Questions**

A public statement had been received from Mr Dave Kelleway, as a tenant representative, in relation to Agenda Item 9, 'Mutual Exchange Policy'. This statement would be heard ahead of the consideration of this item.

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

Cabinet noted the Scrutiny and Overview report summarising the meeting held on Thursday, 7 September 2023. Councillor Stephen Drew was in attendance on behalf of the Committee, and advised that she would feed back at each of the following agenda items:

- Final Report from the Young People Task and Finish Group
- Mutual Exchange Policy
- 2023-24 Quarter One Performance Report

7. **Young People in South Cambridgeshire**

Councillor Bill Handley, Lead Cabinet Member for Communities, introduced the report and moved a revised set of recommendations. In so doing, the Councillor recognised the importance of youth engagement and thanked the members of the Task and Finish Group for all their work.

Councillor Stephen Drew, made the following comments on behalf of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee:

- It was often considered difficult for local authorities to fully engage with the public, particularly so with certain hard to reach groups, though the Council had taken steps in the past to improve on this.
- It was felt that while young people represented a significant portion of the population, and the portion that would be impacted by decisions for the longest time, generally, did not engage with the Council in the same way adults did.
- During the work of the Task and Finish Group it was found that the Council was already acting in some of the most effective ways, including engagement within the planning service.

- It was noted that the young people spoken to by the Task and Finish Group appreciated that not everything put forward could be acted upon but appreciated that their comments would be considered, and an effort was being made.
- It was advised that the Task and Finish Group had engaged with local secondary schools and colleges, though had encountered difficulties when engaging local employers.
- Comment was made that the work initiated by the Task and Finish Group should continue in the coming years, to make engagement with young people central to the Council's business.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Henry Batchelor. In so doing, the Councillor commented that greater engagement with young people would allow for an easier transition into elected Member.

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

- The Task and Finish Group Members were thanked for their work and contributions.
- It was noted that young people were not afraid of expressing their views, which were often more forward-looking.
- A request was made for the Foamex Boards included at Appendix 4 to the report to be made available to Members.

Other Members in attendance raised the following points during consideration of the report:

- It was noted that Cambridgeshire County Council's Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee invited children in care to attend and their contributions were consistently thoughtful, engaged and insightful.
- Comment was made that young people had strong voices and needed a vehicle in place for these to be heard.
- It was noted that the report would be considered at the meeting of Council on 5 October 2023 and it was hoped that the work of the Task and Finish Group was continued past that point.

Cabinet:

- a) endorsed this report; and
- b) recommended that Full Council:
 - asks ~~instructs~~ officers to share the general feedback received from young people during the Task & Finish Group's work with local authorities and educational providers so they can take this into account when providing their services.
 - asks officers to write to village colleges in South Cambridgeshire to offer the opportunity to present to them on the elections process and ask if we can further support their curriculum.
 - notes the successful youth engagement programme currently run by the

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service and supports the provision of appropriate coaching to enable officers in other priority areas such as housing and local business to find ways of similarly involving young people.

- ~~Asks Instructs~~ officers to investigate the feasibility of holding, within the next 12 months, a scheduled meeting of the Climate and Environment Advisory Committee at a local educational establishment, to which students and other young people should be invited.
- Asks ~~The Leader~~ officers to write a letter to the Mayor of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority highlighting the feedback from young people on the limitations of public transport and urging him to take into account their views when developing proposals for bus franchising.
- invites young people, including from the groups approached as part of the Task & Finish exercise (**Appendix 1**), to contribute evidence to officers involved in developing a new Equality Policy embracing generational differences.
- encourages all Members of South Cambridgeshire District Council to commit to engaging with young people and representative organisations in their wards by establishing regular visits to local schools, colleges, youth clubs and other locations as appropriate. ~~In the longer term, a more structured form of dialogue might be appropriate.~~

8. **Modern Slavery Statement 2023-24**

Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Council, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, the Councillor highlighted how important it was to be aware of modern slavery and to report anything that seemed not as it should.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Peter McDonald.

Other Members in attendance raised the following points during consideration of the report:

- The obligation on everyone to be aware of the issue of modern slavery was reiterated as a key issue for all communities.

Cabinet:

- a) Reviewed and approved the Modern Slavery Statement contained at **Appendix A** to the report.

9. **Mutual Exchange Policy**

The Leader of the Council invited Mr Dave Kelleway, Tenant Representative, to

address the Cabinet. In so doing, Mr Kelleway raised the following points:

- Concern was raised that, while Tenant Representatives were being permitted to speak, the issues raised would not be taken into consideration.
- It was advised that tenants had met with officers over four years ago to discuss mutual exchange, though no meaningful changes were made to the Council's policy at that time.
- Comment was made that while, now, everyone agreed that such a policy would be useful, the proposal in front of Cabinet made the process difficult.
- Concern was raised that the scope for use of discretion was too limited, and it was felt that tenants should have the right to mutual exchange without the requirement of special circumstances.
- It was further considered that resilience within the Council's housing service was necessary to avoid delays in individual cases.

Councillor Stephen Drew, made the following comments on behalf of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee:

- It was advised that numerous questions had been asked about the policy at the Scrutiny and Overview Committee meeting, which had all been answered by officers.
- It was felt that the policy in front of Cabinet would provide a policy that was successful.
- Comment was made that the policy should not be seen as the end of the process, but as something that would be reviewed if necessary.

Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor advised that the Tenant Representative speakers were all members of the Housing Engagement Board, which was in place to provide a link with tenants. Councillor John Batchelor was also a member of this board. It was suggested that their input had been active and was reflected in the final policy, leading to greater flexibility in the scheme. As with all policy, it was advised that this would be regularly reviewed with further amendments made if required.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins.

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

- Members of the Housing Engagement Board were thanked, and Councillors expressed disappointment that they did not feel they had been adequately heard.
- It was noted that any single point of failure was undesirable, and it was the aim of the Council to have as many officers as possible trained to fulfil numerous roles.

1. Cabinet considered the report and approved the officer recommendations listed below:

	Issue	Current Policy	Officer Recommendation
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1	Under-occupation	There is no under-occupation permitted from an exchange	That under-occupation is permitted, but this is limited to one bedroom.
2	Overcrowding	No overcrowding is permitted.	That overcrowding is only permitted in very specific cases linked to the lack of larger accommodation (i.e. where a tenant has a 4 bedroom requirement and wishes to swap to a 3 bedroom property where that property has an additional room that can be used as a bedroom)
3	Staffing	Mutual exchanges are dealt with by generic housing officers (note: this is practice not policy)	Mutual exchanges are dealt with by generic housing officers (but the situation is monitored)
4	Incentives to downsize	Incentives are offered to transfer tenants who are in receipt of housing benefit and are subject to the 'bedroom tax'.	Incentives are offered to all people who downsize through mutual exchange. This will be linked to the number of bedrooms freed up as an incentive to downsize fully.
5	Mutual Exchange Service	Applicants have access to mutual exchange service (Exchange Locata) free of charge to find suitable matches	Subscription to additional mutual exchange service (HomeSwapper) to provide improved access to greater number of potential matches free of cost to tenants.

2. Cabinet approved the final version of the mutual exchange policy , and gave the Lead Member for Housing authority to make minor amendments and any subsequent changes relating to the value of the financial incentive.

10. **Response to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' Consultation on Plan-making reforms: implementation**

Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, the Councillor noted that the aim of the reform was to enable Local Plans to be made in 3 years, with the

timeframe for this beginning after the planning stage and when work on the plan started.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor John Batchelor.

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

- Comment was made that the Council was ahead of the curve on some of the points considered in the consultation.
- It was noted that there were some concerns in relation to the proposed approach to supplementary planning documents, which had been expressed in the response.

Cabinet:

- a. Agreed the joint response to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities' Consultation on Plan-making reforms: Implementation included in Appendix 1 to the report.
- b. Agreed that any subsequent material amendments be delegated to the Lead Cabinet Member for Planning in consultation with the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development.
- c. Agreed that any subsequent minor amendments and editing changes that did not materially affect the content be delegated to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development in consultation with the Lead Member for Planning.

11. Review of the Statement of Community Involvement (Draft for Consultation)

Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, the Councillor noted that the Council was required to review the Statement of Community Involvement every 5 years and set out how the Council would engage with communities.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Bill Handley, who was pleased with the proposals around community involvement in new towns.

Other Members in attendance raised the following points during consideration of the report:

- Comment was made that, in the past, planning officers had gone over and above to provide communities with a chance to express their views, which was considered to be of key importance.
- Thanks was expressed to the officers who managed the community and liaison forums for making the spaces so friendly and open.

Cabinet:

- a) Agreed the draft Statement of Community Involvement 2023 (attached at Appendix 1 to the report) and accompanying Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) (Appendix 2 to the report) be subject to public consultation;
- b) Agreed that the preparation of materials and the running of the consultation be delegated to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic

Development

- c) Agreed that any subsequent material amendments prior to consultation be made by the Lead Member for Planning, Policy and Development Management, and that any subsequent minor amendments and editing changes that did not materially affect the content prior to consultation be delegated to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development in consultation with the Lead Member for Planning, Policy and Development Management.

12. 2023/2024 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring (Quarter 1)

Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, the Councillor advised that, while there was a slight overspend on planning agency staff, this was ten times less than the costs of the same quarter of the previous year, concluding that the Council had been able to recruit into difficult to fill posts due to the four-day week trial.

The Councillor further noted that transformation savings had been reprofiled due to the Fair Funding review being deferred for a year. This provided extra time to deliver savings to meet the cost of a Fair Funding review to the Council. It was advised that, while transformation would save money, it was more about improving services.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Peter McDonald, who noted that the Council's income was ahead of planned levels.

Cabinet considered the report and:

- a) 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 and the action being taken to address the underlying issues.
- b) Noted the latest Capital Programme 2023/24 position [and variances, if any] as shown in Appendix D to the report.

13. Local Heritage List

Councillor Dr Tumi Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, the Councillor advised that the Council was required to have a local heritage list, which included heritage buildings of local interest. This was separate and distinct from statutory Listed buildings. It was noted that those who owned buildings to be included on the list would be given the chance to comment. The list would be able to be used by the public and developers, to see what buildings were of interest to communities.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Brian Milnes.

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

- Suggestion was made that the list should be linked from the Visit South

Cambs website as well as being included in the South Cambs magazine.

Other Members in attendance raised the following points during consideration of the report:

- Members were advised that the list was still open to further additions.

Cabinet:

- a) noted the progress made on the County-wide Local Heritage List Project (LHLP)
- b) agreed that consultation was now carried out with owners of the buildings identified for inclusion within the Local List of Buildings within South Cambridgeshire District
- c) Delegated to the Joint Director of Planning decisions to include and/or make changes the Local List following the consideration of responses received during the consultation period.

14. 2023-24 Quarter One Performance Report

Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, the Councillor welcomed the improvement in the Council's performance from quarter one of the previous year. It was further noted that there were no red indicators within this report even with the tough targets set by the Council. It was advised that in some areas where the Council had not hit its target, it was still above the national average.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Peter McDonald.

Councillor Stephen Drew, made the following comments on behalf of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee:

- It was noted that the report had undergone challenge at the Scrutiny and Overview Committee meeting.
- The successes of the Council were highlighted, particularly in relation to target AH211 'Average days to re-let all housing stock', which had seen a 42% reduction in re-letting time.
- Congratulations were passed on to all those involved.

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

- Attention was drawn to the emergency repairs target, which had achieved 100% for the past three months.
- It was noted that the benchmark for the Council's peers in re-letting time was 32.6 days and that there was a great deal of variation in the state of the properties that were being handed over.

Cabinet:

- a) Reviewed the KPI 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.

15. **Strategic Risk Report**

Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report and moved the recommendations.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Brian Milnes.

Cabinet Members thanked Kevin Ledger and Kate Yerbury, who had worked on the report.

Cabinet:

- a) Reviewed the current Strategic Risk Register at Appendix A to the report.

16. **Homes for Ukraine – Landlord Incentive Scheme**

Councillor Bill Handley, Lead Cabinet Member for Communities, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, the Councillor noted that the Council had welcomed the highest number of guests from Ukraine for a lower tier authority. The first phase of this programme had been successful, and the Council was now looking to help guests move into independent accommodation. It was advised that the incentive scheme was based on a similar scheme at Bristol City Council with upfront payments to landlords and larger payments to those who offered accommodation at the local housing rate.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor John Batchelor, who advised that the scheme would be a further addition to the toolbox of support offered by the Council, and was wholly funded by government grants.

Other Members in attendance raised the following points during consideration of the report:

- Members were advised that the Council had a team in place to provide housing support, with grants being used to resource support for the whole 'Homes for Ukraine' journey.

Cabinet approved the proposed policy to increase the number of private rented homes accessible to Homes for Ukraine guests who were moving on from being hosted.

17. **Northstowe – Acquisition of Western Park Sports Pitches; governance arrangements for the Western Park facility; and procurement of an external operator**

Councillor Bill Handley, Lead Cabinet Member for Communities, introduced the report and moved the recommendations.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Bridget Smith.

Other Members in attendance raised the following points during consideration of the report:

- Members were advised that construction had commenced and that the Council had been assured that the buildings meet the standards of national bodies. These national bodies, including Sports England, would continue to be consulted on this and any future developments as well.

Cabinet noted the following:

- i. The acceptance of the freehold land transfer of the Sports Pitches within the Western Park through a Decision taken by the Chief Executive, having considered the valuation report and assessment of resultant liabilities.
- ii. The procurement of an external specialist operator for the unified Western Park sports facility has progressed and an operator has been identified; the contract has been awarded subject to satisfactory references and is conditional upon successful land transfer.
- iii. The establishment of a Governance mechanism by which Northstowe Town Council and the local community can partner with SCDC to ensure local accountability and oversight of the management and maintenance of the Phase 1 Sports Facility, i.e. the creation of a management board through a memorandum of understanding.

18. 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.

19. Northstowe Enterprise Zone – Option Agreement on Parcel 5

Councillor Bill Handley, Lead Cabinet Member for Communities, introduced the report and moved the recommendations.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor John Williams.

Cabinet:

- a) Approved as specified in paragraph 8 of the exempt report.

20. Affordable Housing Acquisition – 33no. New Homes, Fulbourn

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

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Henry Batchelor.

Cabinet:

- a) Approved as specified in paragraphs 6-7 of the exempt report.

21. Affordable Housing Acquisition – 43no. New Homes, Northstowe

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

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Henry Batchelor.

Cabinet:

- a) Approved as specified in paragraphs 6-7 of the exempt report.

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