

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on
Thursday, 19 October 2023 at 5.30 p.m.

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

Councillors: Paul Bearpark (substitute) Anna Bradnam
Dr. Martin Cahn Libby Earle
Peter Fane James Hobro
Helene Leeming Richard Stobart
Dr. Aidan Van de Weyer

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Anne Ainsworth (Chief Operating Officer), Gareth Bell (Communications and Communities Service Manager), Peter Campbell (Head of Housing), Aaron Clarke (Democratic Services Technical Officer), Kirstin Donaldson (Service Manager - Acquisitions and Development), Bode Esan (Head of Climate, Environment & Waste), Clare Gibbons (Northstowe Healthy New Town Programme Lead), John Murphy (Monitoring Officer), Chris Riches (Project Officer (Cost of Living)), Ian Senior (Scrutiny and Governance Adviser) and Pippa Turvey (Democratic Services Team Leader)

Councillor Bill Handley (Lead Cabinet Member for Communities) was in attendance in the Chamber, by invitation.

1. Apologies for absence

Councillors Tom Bygott, Sue Ellington, Sally Ann Hart and Judith Rippeth sent apologies. Councillor Paul Bearpark substituted for Councillor Hart.

Councillor Ellington had been present in the Chamber but was summoned away before the meeting started.

2. Declarations of Interest

In connection with Minute 5 (Northstowe Community Facilities Update):

- Councillor Anna Bradnam declared an interest as a substitute for Planning Committee and would refrain from contributing to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee review.
- Councillor Dr. Martin Cahn declared an interest as Chair of the Planning Committee and would withdraw from the Chamber during consideration of the report before Scrutiny and Overview Committee.
- Councillor Peter Fane declared an interest as Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee and would refrain from contributing to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee review.

- Councillor Bill Handley declared an interest as a member of Planning Committee but said he would not be present at the meeting at which the planning application for the Civic Hub would be determined.
- Councillor Helene Leeming declared an interest as a substitute for Planning Committee.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Committee authorised the Chair to sign, as a correct record, the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2023.

In response to a query about the final report from the Young People Task & Finish Group (Minute 8), the Chair confirmed that the word 'instructs' where it appears in the recommendation from the Scrutiny and Overview Committee to Cabinet had been changed to 'asks' by Cabinet at its meeting on 28 September 2023 before making its recommendation to Full Council.

4. Public Questions

There were no public questions or statements.

5. Northstowe - Community Facilities Update

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee received and reviewed a progress report on the planning and delivery of community facilities at Northstowe, acknowledging the additional investment provided by South Cambridgeshire District Council and the Shared Prosperity Fund. The Committee noted how lessons learned from previous strategic sites had helped inform the current project.

With reference to paragraph 39 of the report, the Lead Cabinet Member for Communities assured the Scrutiny and Overview Committee that the District Council continued to work closely with its partners but needed Homes England to identify a location for the Civic Hub within the plot reserved for it before a detailed design could be finalised for the building. Committee members agreed with the Lead Cabinet Member for Communities that regular consultation with, and feedback from, the community would remain essential for many years to come. For that reason, they welcomed the news that funding had been agreed for the continued provision of community development workers to support the development of Phases 3A and 3B.

Members made it clear that learning from the past and using that knowledge to improve matters in future was really important. While the Committee welcomed efforts by the Council to cover the shortfall in funding from the Legal Agreement negotiated under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, it also welcomed an assurance from the Lead Cabinet Member for Communities that future such agreements would be negotiated in a way that removed or limited the Council's financial liability.

6. Cost-of-living support update

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee received and reviewed the draft Cabinet report that provided an updated analysis of the cost-of-living schemes agreed at Cabinet on 20 March 2023 and an evaluation of work undertaken during the first phase of this project, from 14 November 2022 to 31 March 2023.

The Lead Cabinet Member for Communities outlined how it was envisaged cost-of-living support would be provided during the coming few months.

Councillor Helene Leeming thanked all those, including volunteers, who had worked so hard to make the network of warm hubs (now community hubs) such a success. The Lead Cabinet Member for Communities was confident that the change of emphasis from somewhere to keep warm to somewhere to socialise would help to break down barriers and lessen any stigma felt by those whom this element of cost-of-living support was intended to help. The Committee urged the Cabinet to recognise and address the potential impact on local businesses such as cafes when setting up community hubs offering similar services but at no cost to consumers. Councillor Peter Fane said that learning lessons from the scheme's first year would be crucial in making sure that best value could be achieved and that those in real need could be identified.

Committee members and the Lead Cabinet Member for Communities briefly discussed the concept of Community Vegetable Gardens.

On behalf of Councillor Sue Ellington, Councillor Anna Bradnam asked officers to ensure that so-called village agents would not duplicate services already being provided by others within communities.

The Lead Cabinet Member for Communities undertook to consider how social value could be assessed.

7. Work Programme

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

8. To Note the Date of the next meeting

Members noted that the next scheduled Scrutiny and Overview Committee meeting would be on Thursday 16 November 2023 starting at 5.30pm.

The Meeting ended at 7.00 p.m.
