

## **South Cambridgeshire District Council**

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on  
Tuesday, 12 March 2024 at 10.00 a.m.

### **PRESENT:**

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

Bridget Smith	Leader of Council
Brian Milnes	Deputy Leader of the Council and Lead 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
John Murphy	Monitoring Officer
Peter Maddock	Head of Finance
Anne Ainsworth	Chief Operating Officer
Bode Esan	Head of Climate, Environment and Waste
Jeff Membery	Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services
Pippa Turvey	Democratic Services Team Leader
Laurence Damary- Homan	Democratic Services Officer
Emma Dyer	Development Officer
Sue Carter	Service Manager – Housing Advice and Options
Duncan Vessey	Head of Ermine Street Housing
Gareth Bell	Communications and Communities Service Manager
Caroline Hunt	Strategic Planning Manager
Terry De Sousa	Planning Policy and Strategy Team Leader
Linda Gallagher	Development Officer
Orla Gibbons	Project Officer
Alex Snelling-Day	Strategic Climate Change and Sustainability Manager
Kevin Ledger	Senior Policy and Performance Officer
Jonathan Dixon	Planning Policy Manager
Lizzie Wood	Policy – Senior Planner
James Green	Political Assistant – Liberal Democrat
Daniel Sillett	Political Assistant – Conservative

Councillors Heather Williams and Lisa Redrup were also in attendance.

## **1. Apologies for Absence**

No apologies for absence had been received.

## **2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

## **3. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Cabinet authorised the Leader to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 6 February 2024.

## **4. Announcements**

The Leader of the Council announced that South Cambridgeshire District Council had won a Bronze Award at the iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards 2024 in the Efficiency and Effectiveness category for its four-day week trial. Councillor Smith attended the event along with Principal People Partner, Chloe Whitehead.

## **5. Public Questions**

There were no public questions received.

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

Cabinet noted the Scrutiny and Overview report summarising the meeting held on 15 February 2024.

## **7. Update on the Four-Day Week Trial**

Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, he explained that the original intent when beginning the four-day week trial was to be considering the results of the trial shortly, with Full Council making a final decision on whether to adopt a four-day week in the Summer. This was no longer the case, as the Government had announced its intention to introduce financial penalties for authorities working under such arrangements. As it was felt that the Council could not properly consult on the introduction of a four-day week without including details of any financial implications, any final decision would need to wait until full details of any penalties were understood and included in a consultation. Councillor Williams further advised that a report would still be brought to Full Council in the Summer setting out the results of the trial.

It was commented that the purpose of the trial was to consider KPI performance, the health and wellbeing of staff, the number of applicants to advertised positions,

retention levels, and savings. It was not an aim of the trial to save £1 million, which was an estimated figure of the cost of the Council's hard to fill posts.

Finally, it was noted that the proposals included the harmonisation of working arrangements between waste services and desk-based staff to 32 hours per week.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Smith. Councillor Smith noted that full time was generally considered to be 35 hours, so the Council would be just short of this.

In response to questions from non-Cabinet Members, the following points were raised:

- It was advised that four waste collection vehicles had been purchased. Two of these were specifically due to the four-day week trial, however the other two were required to address growth generally.
- Recruitment and retention incentives had been stopped within the waste service in September 2023. These had been specifically to address the challenge of recruiting licensed drivers after the COVID-19 pandemic. So far, the end of these incentives had not affected recruitment levels.
- Members were advised that market factor supplements were used in some services in addition to the salary scheme and was a way of recognising when a particular job market was challenging. If the market were to change, these could be reimplemented for other service areas.
- Comment was made in relation to the comparison of cost of agency workers and Council staff. It was noted that real costs were being compared, with agenda workers still operating five days a week.
- Regarding sickness reporting, it was acknowledged that sickness on non-working days were not being recorded. It was commented, however, that the sickness recorded was only that which was disrupting work.
- It was advised that nine out of ten of the originally identified hard to fill posts had been in the planning services, which was split 65/35 between South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council due to work around the local plan. This meant that savings from these posts were around £220,000 to £230,000.
- Members noted that other hard to fill posts had since been identified and filled since those originally set out when the trial began.
- It was commented that efforts had been made to fit the four-day week for the waste service into 30 hours, however it became apparent that 32 hours would be needed.
- It was noted that during discussions at the Scrutiny and Overview Committee in April 2023 it was acknowledged that the waste service and desk-based workers hours needed to be level.
- Members were advised that 'golden handcuffs' (a financial incentive to discourage new recruits from leaving) were available for use under the current evaluations scheme. Officers would confirm when the Council had begun using them.

## **Resolution**

## Cabinet:

- a) Agreed to continue with four-day week working arrangements for desk-based colleagues (pro rata for part time colleagues) until: (i) information was provided by the Government regarding potential future financial levers they might impose on Councils using this working practice, as announced in their Local Government Financial Settlement consultation in December 2023, and (ii) a subsequent consultation was carried out by the Council, analysed, and all trial data was presented to Full Council for a final decision.
- b) Agreed to continue with four-day week working arrangements for the Waste service operational colleagues (the crews) (pro rata for part time colleagues) until: (i) information was provided by the Government regarding potential future financial levers they might impose on Councils using this working practice, as announced in their Local Government Financial Settlement consultation in December 2023, and (ii) a subsequent consultation was carried out by the Council, analysed, and all trial data was presented to Full Council for a final decision, noting that with a seasonal service, ideally a full year's data was required.
- c) Agreed to undertake a consultation on the four-day week, once the financial implications of the Government's Local Government Financial Settlement consultation were confirmed and all implications of considering adoption of a four-day week permanently were understood.
- d) Agreed that, for all colleagues working a four-day week (desk-based and waste operations), the hours were harmonised at 32 hours per week (pro rata for part time colleagues) at 86.5% of contracted hours from 1 April 2024.
- e) Noted that the proposal to approve a continuation of a four-day week (pro rata for part time) working model for waste and desk-based colleagues post the end of March 2024, would also be brought to the Strategy and Resources Committee at Cambridge City Council on 25 March 2024, and that both Councils were required to support the decision for the services which were shared (Waste and Planning).
- f) Agreed that an update report to Employment & Staffing Committee, Cabinet and Full Council and Cambridge City council committees, no later than the end of July 2024, would provide data on the trial periods (desk-based and waste), up until the end of March 2024, and information about the ongoing effectiveness, including recruitment and retention, costs and savings of a four-day week working model.

## Options Considered

As set out in the report.

## **Reasons for Decision**

As set out in the report.

## **8. 2023-24 Quarter Three Performance Report**

Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor Williams noted that KPI's were one method of measuring performance, though which the Council had seen consistent improvement.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Handley.

## **Resolution**

Cabinet:

- a) Noted the KPI results and comments at Appendix A and progress against Business Plan actions at the draft Appendix B.

## **Options Considered**

No other 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 enables, where appropriate, redirection of resources to reflect emerging priorities and address areas of concern.

## **9. Lifeline Service (Dispersed Scheme) and the Financial Impact of the Digital Changeover**

Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor Batchelor advised that to move the Lifeline Service to a digital platform would be costly and, as such, unviable. It was appreciated that some residents were dependent on the service and, therefore, the Council wished to provide as much support to residents in arranging a new supplier as possible. It was further advised that the Council's own sheltered housing is not included in the Lifeline Service and a similar service would be maintained for all sheltered housing tenants.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Handley.

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

- Following resolution from Cabinet, officers would be contacting customers advising them of the service end.

- There would be a three month period where officers would be available to provide support to residents.

## **Resolution**

Cabinet:

1. Approved the recommendation that the Council bring the Dispersed Lifeline service to an end.
2. Agreed that the proposed increase to the fees for 2024/25, as agreed in the Cabinet report from 5th December 2023, are not activated so that colleagues could focus on assisting customers to find an alternative supplier.
3. Agreed a three-month notice period for bringing the service to an end, so that the Council's customers had sufficient time to find another service and the Council could offer help and assistance where needed.

## **Options Considered**

As set out in the report.

## **Reasons for Decision**

As set out in the report.

## **10.Homelessness Strategy**

Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor Batchelor advised that the Homelessness Strategy was required to be reviewed on a regular basis, which had been done following a consultation process.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Hawkins. Councillor Hawkins commented that she was particularly keen to see improvement in housing options for single people.

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

- Members noted that homelessness figures were increasing nationally, and focus should be placed on early intervention.

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

- Attention was drawn to a particular situation where an individual presented as homeless as they were not able to use the stairs in their previous home, and no suitable accommodation was immediately available to them.

## **Resolution**

Cabinet:

1. Approved the new Homelessness Strategy 2023-2028.
2. Authorised the Lead Member for Housing to approve minor changes to this policy to correct errors, to provide more clarity and to reflect future changes in legislation, guidance or case law.

### **Options Considered**

No other options were considered.

### **Reasons for Decision**

The draft Homelessness Strategy included a homelessness review of the district identifying the main issues leading to housing need. From these, priorities for the next five-year strategy were outlined.

## **11. Amendments to the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Criteria**

Councillor Henry Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Licensing, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor Batchelor advised that the amendments proposed were straightforward. The criteria for grants required review in order to maintain fairness in the face of increased levels of applications.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor John Williams.

### **Resolution**

Cabinet approved the proposed amendments to the guidance, to come into effect for the 2024-2025 grant cycle.

### **Options Considered**

To reject the proposed amendments to the guidance, or to propose alternative or supplementary amendments to the guidance.

### **Reasons for Decision**

The clarifications had been proposed in response to the annual review of the officer panel scoring process, and comments made by the Grants Advisory Committee at the presentation of the 2023-2024 applications at the July 2023 committee.

The Climate and Environment Advisory Committee had the opportunity to review the proposed changes and support them.

The Grants Advisory Committee had the opportunity to review the proposed changes and recommended to the Lead Cabinet Member for Resources that these changes were approved.

## **12. Increasing Protections for the High Street ATM's (Automated Teller Machines)**

Councillor Handley, Lead Cabinet Member for Communities, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor Handley advised that attacks on ATMs in villages were common, impacting both businesses and residents. One common method was ram-raiding, which could be discouraged via the use of anti-ram bollards to stop close contact. It was noted that one site had been confirmed for such measures, with delegation proposed to the Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services to approve additional locations.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor McDonald. Councillor McDonald advised that the Council was keen to work with communities, police and local farmers to address this issue, as the theft of farm vehicles was often involved.

### **Resolution**

Cabinet agreed:

- a) To progress work, from 1 April 2024, to protect the ATM identified at the Co-op in School Lane, Cambourne.
- b) To delegate to the Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Communities, decisions to proceed with increasing protection to ATM following assessment of additional sites within the approved £100,000 budget, ensuring local district councillors and parish/town councils have been engaged.

### **Options Considered**

- Agree to progress the recommended Co-op site in Cambourne identified in the first tranche of 14 vulnerable ATMs.
- Delay a decision on the recommended Co-op site in Cambourne and ask officers for more information before making a decision.
- Agree to delegate to the Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Communities, decisions to proceed with ATM target hardening work following assessment of additional sites within the approved £100,000 budget.
- Decide to end the project at the investigation phase and return the entire £100,000 to the South Cambridgeshire District Council's SPF funding co-ordinator for use on other programme projects.

### **Reasons for Decision**



The research, site assessments and consultation with elected members, businesses and parish/town councils about this project had already been extensive. Many of the original 14 sites were not suitable for the installation of heavy-duty planters for a range of reasons (including available space, land ownership, business preference) but it was hoped that delivery at the Cambourne location may help others in the second tranche of sites assess whether the installation of planters would be a good option for their ATM.

The list of potential sites would be kept under review to ensure as many locations as possible were assessed and progressed during the 2024-25 period. If necessary, any unallocated funds would be returned to the District Council's SPF programme coordinator for use on other projects in South Cambridgeshire.

The second tranche of sites would be assessed using the same criteria as the original 14 sites identified as higher priority by the police before a decision by the Head of Service in consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member.

### **13. Mobile Warden Schemes - Additional Grant Funding to Support Age UK Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Schemes for 2024-25**

Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Resources, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, he advised that mobile warden schemes were typically run by national organisations, such as Age UK, although the Council had supported local schemes run by parish councils. A review of schemes in place across the district was planned to determine efficiency. Age UK had informed the Council that funding for the scheme had been lost and the service would cease without financial support. This support was suggested for 12 months, with further consideration following the outcome of a review.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Handley.

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

- It was noted that the Council was in regular contact with parish councils and would be encouraging contribution and involvement as part of the review.
- Members felt that those parish councils that ran such schemes were well managed.
- A final report would be received following the review that would set out the social return on investment of such schemes, learning from existing schemes, and best practice.

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

- Comment was made that it would be useful to understand how Age UK came to be in this position.

### **Resolution**

Cabinet agreed a supplementary estimate of £100,000 to fund Age UK Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to provide continuity of service to the 11 South Cambridgeshire Mobile and Community Warden Schemes during 2024-25.

### **Options Considered**

- Agree to fund Age UK Cambridgeshire and Peterborough with an additional £99,965 to provide continuity of service to the 11 South Cambridgeshire Mobile and Community Warden Schemes in 2024-25.
- Agree to allow Age UK Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to use the Council's previously approved £64,435 grant for 2024-25 to continue to deliver Mobile and Community Warden services to the areas they assess as most viable.
- Agree an alternative additional grant amount to Age UK Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, giving reasons, to provide continuity of service to named South Cambridgeshire Mobile and Community Warden Schemes in the 2024-25 period.
- Defer a decision ask officers for further specific information. This option would result in a likely disruption to services and potential staffing difficulties as Wardens have been placed at risk of redundancy.

### **Reasons for Decision**

MCWS offer a lifeline to older residents in South Cambridgeshire and to their families and carers. It was well-known that there were benefits to keeping older people living independently in their own homes in the communities they know. MCWSs offered a relatively low-cost opportunity for some older people to maintain their independence; offering an opportunity for social contact, falls prevention, medication assessment, respite and relief for carers and families and, in some cases, the opportunity to expedite discharge from hospital which reduces bed-blocking. This resulted in improved health and wellbeing for residents and was likely to save greater costs in other parts of the health system. The review being carried out by Rose Regeneration was expected to provide more data to demonstrate the value-for-money of the schemes and make recommendations for how schemes can become more self-sustaining.

## **14. Greater Cambridge Plan-making Timetable**

Councillor Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, she advised that the current timetable had been agreed in 2022 but was no longer accurate. The new timetable depended on four major factors: water supply, the transport strategy, the Cambridge Waste Water Treatment Plant relocation, and the new national plan-making system.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Smith.

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

- It was noted that no councils had been identified as frontrunners to pilot the new national plan-making system, though officers continued to raise South Cambridgeshire District Council's interest in this.
- There was no information available as to what would be involved in any pilot scheme, though it was recognised that a phased introduction of a new system would improve learning and avoid any bottlenecks resulting from the change.
- Members expressed disappointment regarding the uncertainty around the 'Cambridge 2040' proposal, which it was felt placed Greater Cambridge in a set of special circumstances.

## **Resolution**

Cabinet agreed that:

- a) The Local Plan Timetable Update at Appendix 1 be added as an Addendum to the Greater Cambridge Development Scheme 2022 and published on the Greater Cambridge Planning website.
- b) the Lead Member for Planning at South Cambridgeshire District Council would write to DLUHC, together with the Executive Councillor for Planning, Building Control and Infrastructure at Cambridge City Council, providing an update on the plan making timetable for Greater Cambridge reflecting the contents of this report.
- c) the Greater Cambridge local planning authorities should explore further with Government the opportunity to be a 'front-runner' pilot for the new plan-making process.
- d) a further report with a proposed specific timetable for both plans be brought to Members when there was clarity on the external dependencies of water, transport the WWTP DCO and the new plan-making system.

## **Options Considered**

No other options were considered.

## **Reasons for Decision**

Given the remaining uncertainties regarding key determinants for GCLP and NECAAP, it was only possible to confirm an indicative timetable for the GCLP process.

## **15. Statement of Community Involvement**

Councillor Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, Councillor Hawkins advised of a correction to recommendation (c), to apply to South Cambridgeshire District Council. It was noted that the Council was required to publish a statement of community involvement every five years. The SCI had been published for public consultation and, following feedback, had been finalised recommending adoption for both South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Handley. Councillor Handley expressed his hope that communities engaging with the planning process would provide benefits to all.

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

- South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council required Equality Impact Assessments to be included within the SCI. Although this was not a national requirement, it was undertaken at every local authority level and Members considered to not do so would be to fail residents.

## **Resolution**

Cabinet:

- a) Noted the main issues raised in the public consultation, agreed responses to the representations received and agreed proposed changes to the Statement of Community Involvement as set out in the Statement of Consultation (Appendix 1 to the report);
- b) Subject to (a), agreed to adopt the amended Greater Cambridge Statement of Community Involvement (Appendix 2 to the report); and
- c) Delegate to the Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development, in consultation with the Lead Member for Planning, the authority to make any necessary editing changes to the SCI prior to publication.

## **Options Considered**

- Agree the Statement of Community Involvement as set out in Appendix 2 to the report without making any further amendments;
- Agree the Statement of Community Involvement as set out in Appendix 2 to the report and supporting documents, making further amendments; or
- Not agree the Statement of Community Involvement as set out in Appendix 2 to the report and supporting documents.

## **Reasons for Decision**

The report presented the reviewed SCI for adoption following the conclusion of a six week period of public consultation. Whilst there was no mandatory requirement for consultation on a draft SCI, the Cabinet agreed at the meeting of 28 September 2023 that the draft SCI should be consulted on for a six week period to ensure that the needs and aspirations of our communities, partners and stakeholders were considered and taken into account in finalising the document. The public consultation on the draft reviewed SCI commenced on Wednesday 18 October 2023 and concluded on Wednesday 29 November 2023.

There were a total of 52 representations received during the consultation period from a total of 24 separate individuals or organisations. This was more than the representations received from the previous SCI consultation and was typical of a document of this nature. There was general support for the aims and approach of the draft SCI. The Statement of Consultation detailed the comments received,

and provided a summary of the main issues raised and how they had been taken into account.

## **16. 2023/2024 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring (Quarter 3)**

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

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor Peter McDonald.

### **Resolution**

Cabinet:

- (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 to the report, 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.

### **Options Considered**

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

### **Reasons for Decision**

For Cabinet to be advised of the latest monitoring information in respect of the 2023/24 revenue and capital budgets and emerging budget issues, for the third quarter period to 31 December 2023. The comparison in the various appendices was against the revised estimate.

## **17. Review of the Ermine Street Housing Business Plan 2023- 2024 to 2032-2033**

Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report and moved the recommendations. In so doing, comment was made that Ermine Street Housing was a success story for the Council, contributing £4.6 million in revenue and £126 million worth of assets.

The recommendations were seconded by Councillor John Williams. Councillor Williams identified that Ermine Street Housing supported the Council in its response to the housing crisis, and not just as an income generator.

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

- Members thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for its recommendations, particularly in relation to accounting and risk.

## **Resolution**

Cabinet received, in their capacity as shareholder, the Ermine Street Business Plan for the period 2023/2024 to 2032/2033.

## **Options Considered**

No other options were considered.

## **Reasons for Decision**

The Council, as owner of the Company and sole shareholder, had an interest in reviewing the Business Plan to ensure that: (i) the Company was on target to achieve its objectives, (ii) to consider the past year's performance, and (iii) acknowledge the changes in the financial assumptions and the financial return to the Council resulting from the business activity.

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

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