

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Thursday, 14 June 2007

PRESENT: Councillor RMA Manning (Leader of the Council)
Councillor SM Edwards (Deputy Leader of the Council and Housing Options
Portfolio Holder)

Councillors: Dr DR Bard Growth and Sustainable Communities Portfolio Holder
Mrs SM Ellington Staffing and Communications Portfolio Holder
Mrs VG Ford Resources Portfolio Holder
MP Howell Community Services Portfolio Holder
Mrs DSK Spink MBE Housing and Environmental Services Portfolio Holder

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Holly Adams	Democratic Services Officer
Jonathan Dixon	Principal Planning Policy Officer (Transport)
Steve Hampson	Executive Director
Greg Harlock	Chief Executive
Gareth Jones	Corporate Manager (Planning & Sustainable Communities)
Dale Robinson	Corporate Manager (Health & Environmental Services)
Ian Salter	Performance Improvement Officer
Cecilia Tredget	Improvement Manager

Councillors JD Batchelor, NN Cathcart, Mrs A Elsby, R Hall, Mrs EM Heazell, SGM Kindersley, MJ Mason, Mrs CAED Murfitt, Mrs DP Roberts and Dr SEK van de Ven were in attendance, by invitation.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor NIC Wright.

Procedural Items

1. INTRODUCTIONS

Councillors Mrs SM Ellington and NIC Wright were welcomed to the Cabinet.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following personal interest was declared:

Councillor Mrs DP Roberts	Although advice from the Council's Legal Section was that, following her re-election, she could participate in discussions regarding Gypsy and Traveller issues, she would refrain from such participation for the time being, except where such issues related to her ward
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3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Leader was authorised to sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 10 May 2007.

4. QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

None received.

Recommendation to Council

5. RESPONSE TO REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY CONSULTATION - TRAVELLERS

The East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) had published an Issues and Options paper relating to the proposed revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) to address provision of Gypsy and Traveller Caravan Sites in the East of England. The Growth and Sustainable Communities Portfolio Holder introduced the proposed response, and highlighted the Council's position that district boundaries were irrelevant in a regional situation, and were unduly restrictive to the Gypsy and Traveller community, whose needs should be addressed holistically across the region. He reminded members that the Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document was underway and would provide a development control policy framework, and which would be assessed for its compliance with the RSS. The Council supported having a regional policy to ensure that all authorities provided Gypsies and Travellers with the same opportunities, and to prevent an imbalance of responsibility amongst authorities.

Cabinet **AGREED** the responses to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) Single Issue Review Issues and Options Report, as set out in the report and including the date of the Needs Assessment and making reference to "food producers" rather than "orchards", to be submitted to the East of England Regional Assembly and **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** that this be endorsed as the Council's final response to consultation on the RSS review.

Decisions made by Cabinet

6. PERFORMANCE PLAN 2007-2008

On 24 May 2007 Council delegated authority to Cabinet to approve the Performance Plan, the revised structure of which was considered by Cabinet on 10 May. A request by Councillor Mrs EM Heazell to distribute paper copies of the draft document to all members, and paper copies of all Cabinet information to all Scrutiny and Overview Committee members, was rejected due to cost and sustainability implications and as being contrary to the aims and objectives of the Climate Change Working Group. Paper copies of all Cabinet information would be sent to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee Chairman and Vice-Chairman in future and, as in previous years, all members would receive a paper copy of the final Performance Plan.

The Improvement Manager undertook to approach IDeA for assistance with provision of an officer to address the many training needs identified in the Plan.

Cabinet **AGREED** the draft Performance Plan 2007/08 and authorised the Planning Services Portfolio Holder, as Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Performance Management, to approve drafting changes to the Plan to meet the statutory publication date of 30 June 2007.

7. CORPORATE OBJECTIVES 2007/2008

The Council's Corporate Objectives and Service Priorities had been reviewed to achieve improved linkages with the Community Strategy. Councillor Mrs EM Heazell requested that sustainability be mentioned specifically in the priorities.

Cabinet **AGREED** to:

- (a) approve the Corporate Objectives and Service Priorities as listed in the Appendix and with the inclusion of "sustainability" as the basis for consultation with members and partners; and
- (b) review the objectives and priorities at their meeting on 9 July 2007 in the light of comments received, prior to recommending them to Council on 19 July 2007.

8. SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY 2007-2010: DRAFT STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The Sustainable Community Strategy draft strategic objectives would feed into the Local Strategic Partnership and would be linked to the Council's corporate objectives. Cabinet commended the draft priorities, which had been developed following an extensive programme of public consultation and research.

Cabinet **AGREED** the draft Sustainable Community Strategy objectives and priorities to be fed back to the next meeting of the Local Strategic Partnership on 3 July 2007, subject to the re-wording of priority 20 in the appendices to "Achieving the improvement of high quality public transport".

9. OMBUDSMAN REPORT - COMPLAINT FROM LOCAL FACTORY

Cabinet received the report of the Local Government Ombudsman following his investigation of a complaint from a local business and **AGREED** to notify the Ombudsman that it:

- (a) accepts the findings in paragraphs 48 and 49 of his report; and
- (b) agrees to contribute £5,000 towards the reasonable legal costs incurred by The Factory in pursuing the complaint with the Council and the Ombudsman.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT

Cabinet received a report outlining the risk management processes currently in operation, the prioritised list of strategic risks, action plans in place to address risks above the tolerance line and the further actions being taken to embed risk management culture within the Council. The Corporate Governance Inspection had identified an historic lack of member consideration of the risks of any decision, but, the Resources Portfolio Holder explained, many of the risks the Council faced arose from the Council's continuing position as one of the lowest-funded authorities and its substantial growth agenda. In response to a question, the Chief Executive explained that flood risk was an operational risk covered by existing policies while the report being considered dealt with strategic risks.

Cabinet **AGREED**

- (a) the risk management process in operation at the Council, as set out in the report, including training for Cabinet and Corporate Governance Committee members;
- (b) the Risk Scenarios provided at Appendix A, the Prioritisation Matrix (Appendix B), the Strategic Risk Register (Appendix C) and the Management Action Plans (Appendix D); and

- (c) the proposals to enhance consideration of risks, to strengthen the risk management process and to implement partnership risk management.

11. **GERSHON 2006/07 BACKWARD LOOK: ANNUAL EFFICIENCY STATEMENT**

The Council's final Backward Look Annual Efficiency Statement (AES) demonstrated that the Council would meet its predicted efficiency targets and cost savings. The Resources Portfolio Holder cautioned that the government's plans to change the Gershon regime would lead to a more complicated process in the future.

Cabinet **AGREED** to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, with the Leader and the Resources Portfolio Holder, for finalising the Council's Backward Look 2006/07 Annual Efficiency Statement. The finalised statement will be copied to all members, as in previous years, and a report will be presented to the following meeting of Cabinet.

12. **INSURANCE SERVICES**

The Council's current five-year insurance contract with Zurich Municipal was due to expire on 28 September 2007. The Resources Portfolio Holder proposed investigating joint contracts with other local authorities for insurance services, which could be complicated due to different timescales, but could provide an opportunity for future savings.

Cabinet **AGREED**

- (a) that the following companies be invited to tender:
 - (i) Zurich Municipal;
 - (ii) St Paul Travelers;
 - (iii) Risk Management Partners;
 - (iv) Heath Lambert National;
 - (v) D A Constable Syndicate Ltd; and
- (b) that authority be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Resources Portfolio Holder, to award the contract in whole or in part to the company / companies offering the perceived best value to the Council, not necessarily the one(s) quoting the lowest price.

Cabinet **NOTED** the responses to the Council's advertisement on the Journal of the European Union website for the provision of insurance services to the Council.

13. **APPOINTMENTS TO ADVISORY GROUPS, JOINT AND OUTSIDE BODIES 2007-2008**

Cabinet considered the future of Advisory Groups following the Corporate Governance Inspection criticism of their unclear relationship with Cabinet and the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, their inconsistent role in the policy-making process and their use of resources, leading to confusion, unnecessary duplication and a weakened focus of the Cabinet system.

The Leader set out a revised recommendation to disband all Advisory Groups whilst allowing Portfolio Holders discretion to establish issue-based task and finish groups as required. These groups would be distinct from any which might be established by the Scrutiny and Overview or Policy Development Committees. Although it had not intended these task and finish groups to be politically proportionate, Cabinet accepted the Major Opposition Group Leader's preference that they be so, and officers' advice that proportionality could pre-empt concerns that a decision was politically-motivated, especially if meetings were formal and minuted. Cabinet urged group leaders to

consider their members' expertise and interests when making appointments.

Cabinet AGREED

- (a) to disband all Advisory Groups on the understanding that they will be replaced by task and finish groups as required, appointed on a politically proportionate basis by, and reporting to, Portfolio Holders
- (b) to confirm the following *ex officio* appointments to joint and outside bodies:
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| Camb Sport | Community Services Portfolio Holder |
| Cambridge City Centre Management Consultative Forum | Planning Services Portfolio Holder |
| Cambridge East Joint Member Reference Group | Growth and Sustainable Communities Portfolio Holder |
| Cambridge Marriage Guidance Council (RELATE) | Staffing and Communications Portfolio Holder |
| Cambridge Southern Fringe Joint Member Reference Group | Growth and Sustainable Communities Portfolio Holder |
| Cambridgeshire Children's and Young People's Strategic Partnership Steering Group | Community Services Portfolio Holder |
| Cambridgeshire Councils' Association Waste and Environment Forum | Housing and Environmental Services Portfolio Holder |
| Cambridgeshire Horizons Board | Growth and Sustainable Communities Portfolio Holder |
| Cambridgeshire Together (Local Area Agreement [LAA] Board) | Leader |
| East of England Regional Assembly | Leader |
| Joint Transport and Planning Lead Member | Growth and Sustainable Communities Portfolio Holder |
| Local Government Association General Assembly | Leader |
| Local Government Association Rural Commission | Leader |
| North West Cambridge Joint Member Reference Group | Growth and Sustainable Communities Portfolio Holder |
| South Cambridgeshire Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Board | Leader and Community Services Portfolio Holder |
- (c) to make the following appointments to the Cambridgeshire Councils' Association and the South Cambridgeshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee:
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| Cambridgeshire Councils' Association | Conservative Group: SM Edwards, RMA Manning |
| | Liberal Democrat Group: JD Batchelor |
| South Cambridgeshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee | Conservative Group: Dr DR Bard, RE Barrett, CR Nightingale, with R Hall as reserve |
| | Liberal Democrat Group: JD Batchelor, with SGM Kindersley as reserve |
| | Independent Group: Mrs DP Roberts, with MJ Mason as reserve |

14. BUSINESS PROCESS RE-ENGINEERING

The Chief Executive advised that the covering report could be discussed in open session and Cabinet **AGREED** that the press and public not be excluded from the

meeting.

Cabinet considered the review of the effectiveness of the Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) project, introduced as part of the Transformation Project in 2005 and 2006, and considered the redirection of this project to a series of internal service reviews following best value methodology. Council, at its meeting of 22 February 2007, had disbanded the Transformation Committee and transferred its powers to Cabinet to enable a co-ordinated approach to be taken to implement the Transformation Project and Improvement Plan (Inspire Project). The Leader explained that, halfway through the project, successful efficiency improvements had been made, but the projected cashable savings had not been realised and could not be realised without a consequential impact on services. The external consultants who had predicted the cashable savings had based their conclusion upon a flawed premise: when the Council faced the threat of capping, the then-Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder made the correct decision to suspend making appointments to vacant posts pending a review, but the consultants had concluded wrongly that the vacant posts were dispensable and could be removed from the establishment, without paying due consideration to the service impact, and used this as the basis upon which they developed their proposals.

Members highlighted successful cost savings realised, including £150,000 per annum arising from the changes to the senior management team, and the reduction of Milton Country Park's running costs, but Cabinet felt that the further proposals for cashable savings would have a negative impact on services and could jeopardise future funding opportunities, such as Planning Delivery Grant, which relied upon achievement of service delivery targets.

A decision on the future of the housing stock would impact the Housing Revenue Account, not the General Fund, and Cabinet urged members not to misinform the public by making incorrect statements that the housing stock options were being reconsidered to support the General Fund, as the two accounts were distinct and separate and the two issues unrelated.

Cabinet **AGREED** to

- (a) end the Business Process Re-engineering programme of reviews and to re-direct the remaining resources to undertake a series of discrete service reviews using a best value approach;
- (b) request the Resources Portfolio Holder to include the shortfall in efficiency savings resulting from the end of the business process re-engineering in the next review of the medium term financial strategy in the autumn; and
- (c) delete the post of Business Analyst from the Council's authorised establishment list from 1 July 2007.

Standing Items

15. **INSPIRE PROJECT**

Cabinet received the monthly progress report of the INSPIRE project and the Leader drew attention to those items in the risk log identified as high probability / high impact, and the counter measures being taken to eliminate or reduce the risks. The first of the improvement objectives would be re-worded to "consider the question of future ownership of the housing stock". The Chief Executive undertook to advise members after the meeting of the outcome of the Scrutiny Support Officer post salary evaluation.

Cabinet **NOTED** the progress of the INSPIRE Project.

16. MATTERS REFERRED BY SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Nothing to report.

17. UPDATES FROM CABINET MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Nothing to report.

**The Meeting ended at 4.44
p.m.**
