

CABINET

At a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Monday, 16 February 2004

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs DSK Spink MBE (Leader of Council)
Councillor RT Summerfield (Deputy Leader of Council and Finance &
Resources Portfolio Holder)

Councillors:	Dr DR Bard	Planning & Economic Development Portfolio Holder
	CC Barker	Environmental Health Portfolio Holder
	JD Batchelor	Information & Customer Services Portfolio Holder
	RF Collinson	Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder
	Mrs EM Heazell	Housing Portfolio Holder
	Mrs DP Roberts	Community Development Portfolio Holder

Councillors RF Bryant, G Elsbury, Mrs J Hughes, CR Nightingale and Mrs BE Waters were in attendance, by invitation.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor SGM Kindersley.

Procedural Items

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Leader was authorised to sign as a correct record the minutes of the meetings held on 22nd and 29th January 2004, subject to the following amendments:

Priorities and Spending Plans 2004/05 – 2006/07 (Minute 3, 22nd January 2004):
Deletion of fifth bullet point (“Capital and General Fund reserves could not be used for revenue expenditure”).

Priorities and Spending Plans 2004/05 – 2006/07 (Minute 2, 29th January 2004)
Amendment of sixth bullet point to begin: “Restricting the new spend to £446,000 would allow only...”

With regard to **collective Cabinet responsibility** (Minute 9, 22nd January 2004), it was confirmed that legal advice was still pending, but it was hoped that a response would be available before the next Council meeting.

The Information and Customer Services Portfolio Holder updated members on the status of the expected **Electronic Services Delivery (ESD) grants** (Minute 2, 29th January 2004): the government had confirmed that the 2004/05 grant would be £350,000 rather than £200,000, with a further £150,000 for 2005/06.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

Recommendations to Council

3. CAPITAL AND REVENUE ESTIMATES AND COUNCIL TAX

The Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder presented the recommendations, drawing attention to the proposed use of housing capital receipts for affordable housing, the projected spending of the 2003/04 budget, and the new prudential indicators which had to be set even though they were not particularly relevant to this Council as a debt-free authority. He pointed out that the percentages in the first table in paragraph 33 should be in brackets.

The Finance and Resources Director reported that paragraph 11 of the report should read "...to ensure that other housing capital receipts are not subject to pooling."

The Finance and Resources Director asked that the delegated authority given to the Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder to approve expenditure on precautionary items for 2003/04 should be extended for future years. He also noted some precautionary items approved in 2003/04 which had not been rolled forward and perhaps should be. The relevant portfolio holders agreed with the assessment and asked that the items should be included for 2004/05 if other provision had not been made. The Chief Executive added a request that provision should also be included at the same level as this year for a contribution to the Infrastructure Partnership as it was not certain whether district councils would still be required to contribute, but it was essential to be involved.

The Environmental Health Portfolio Holder asked that the level of precautionary expenditure for the joint waste management PFI bid should be increased to £20,000

The Community Development Portfolio Holder asked how costs in relation to travellers were to be dealt with and suggested that the precautionary item for legal costs should be increased to £100,000. This met with agreement, in the knowledge that the actual costs could not be estimated at this stage. The Development Services Director reported on joint discussions between all those involved.

Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (1) that the precautionary items listed in Appendix C to the report be approved for inclusion in 2004/05, with the addition of:

Planning – Legal costs	£100,000
Planning – Local inquiry	£139,000
Employment Committee	£ 44,000
Car parks	£ 7,000
Implementation of changes in housing legislation	£ 30,000
Contribution to Infrastructure Deficit Project	£ 30,000
Contribution to joint waste management PFI bid	£ 5,000 (total £20,000)

- (2) that delegated authority be given to the Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder and the Finance and Resources Director for 2004/05 and future years to approve expenditure on precautionary items (to be met from reserves) up to the level indicated for the relevant year.

In relation to the capital estimates, the Finance and Resources Director confirmed that the 25% residual Right to Buy capital receipts were useable for projects other than affordable housing and that the definition of affordable housing was quite wide, including

expenditure on the Council's own housing stock and improvement grants.

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

- (a) that the capital programme up to the year ending 31st March 2007 be approved as submitted, including the sum of £34.189 million to be spent on affordable housing for the years from 2004-05 to 2006-07;
- (b) that the revised revenue estimates for the year 2003-04 and the revenue estimates for 2004-05 be approved as submitted;
- (c) that the District Council demand for general expenses for 2004-05 be £3.821 millions;
- (d) that the Council sets the amount of Council Tax for each of the relevant categories of dwelling in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 on the basis of a District Council Tax for general expenses on a Band D property of £70 plus the relevant amounts required by the precepts of Parish Councils, Cambridgeshire County Council and the Cambridgeshire Police and Fire Authorities, details of those precepts and their effect to be circulated with the formal resolution required at the Council meeting; and
- (e) that the prudential indicators from the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities be approved.

4. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT, RENTS AND CHARGES

An amended page G1 of the estimate book, reflecting additional recharges from the General Fund, was distributed.

Rents

The Housing Portfolio Holder outlined the recommendation for a variation in housing rents of up to £0.50 a week towards the phasing in of rent restructuring. Extensive debate ensued on the reasons for this small (1%) variation and the penalty the Council would pay to the Government on a higher increase.

Following a deferral of consideration to allow figures to be verified, the position was indicated to be:

- the Government sets guideline rent limits and imposes a financial penalty on the HRA if rents are set above the limitation figure
- the Council's rents have for some years been above this level, but while housing benefits were funded from the HRA and the authority was not in receipt of housing subsidy, this was not an issue
- however, as housing benefits will be transferred to the General Fund and subsidised by the Government, the Council will be penalised if it fails to abide by the guideline rent
- the Government has also set target rents for all social housing with the aim of being reached by 2012; most of the targets are above current charges
- in this Council's case the two government policies are in conflict
- in the 6% increase in the guideline level the Government has allowed a 2.46% inflation increase and +/- £2 per week for rent equalisation towards target rents.
- a variation of £0.50 would not attract any rent rebate penalty and is the amount considered to be required to meet expenditure

Cabinet's attention was drawn to Council's opposition to being forced to put up rents to meet the Government's target rent.

To keep rents for 2005/06 at around the Government guideline rent, it was expected that a reduction in operational revenue funded expenditure of about £1m would be required in that year. The Head of Shire Homes was confident that savings could be made to cover that loss, possibly by extending the decent homes standard programme. The Finance and Resources Director emphasised that the £1m reduction in revenue expenditure would need to be on a permanent basis.

Members had the choice of increasing rents further for 2004/05 and paying approximately one half of the additional income generated to the Government as a penalty, but phasing rent increases; or making an increase of £0.50 only in 2004/05 with the likelihood of a higher increase in the following year, in line with the Government's recommendations. The Housing Portfolio Holder warned of a possible underspend if rents were increased too much.

A proposal was made to increase rents in 2004/05 by £1.25 per week and received an equality of votes (3 either way).

Before decided on her casting vote, the Leader proposed an amendment of an increase of £0.75 a week. This was **LOST** by 2 votes to 5 with one abstention.

The Leader then made her casting vote, and Cabinet

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

- (a) that the Housing Revenue Account revised revenue estimates for 2003/04 and estimates 2004/05 be approved;
- (b) that the HRA rents for 2004/05 be increased by £1.25 per week (i.e. this means a maximum plus or minus variation of £1.25 per week)

Charges

It was noted that the proposed sheltered housing services and facilities charges to equity shareholders were not in accordance with Council's decision arising from the Equity Share Advisory Group but that further work by the Housing and Environmental Services Department was needed on the practicalities of implementing that decision. The recommended charges were therefore based on the existing formula and Cabinet was asked to endorse these, while recognising that they might have to be revisited during the year.

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL

- (c) that the following proposed charges be adopted:

Services and Facilities – Charges to Tenants

Service or Facility	Current charge per week £.p	Proposed charge per week £.p
Sheltered Housing Service Charge for Tenants		
• support element		

those in residence prior to 01/04/03	7.92	8.12
other tenants	14.42	14.78
• other (communal facilities etc)	5.50	5.64
Garage Rents		
• up to two garages rented to a Council house tenant	5.50	5.64
• other garages rented to a Council house tenant	5.50 +VAT	5.64 +VAT
• garages not rented to a Council house tenant	6.50 +VAT	6.66 +VAT
Rent reduction for tied accommodation occupied by wardens, deputy wardens or rangers	(12.13)	(12.43)

Services and Facilities – Sheltered Housing Service Charges to Equity Shareholders

Service or Facility	Current charge per week £.p	Proposed charge per week £.p
Sheltered Housing Service Charge for Shareholders		
• schemes with all facilities		
those in residence prior to 1/04/03	16.20	16.61
other shareholders	22.70	23.27
• schemes without a common room		
those in residence prior to 1/04/03	10.70	10.97
other shareholders	17.20	17.63

- (d) that the Portfolio Holder for Housing be given delegated authority to vary any charges that qualify for aid from the Supporting People Pot in order to bring such charges in line with the level of financial assistance available in 2004-05.

5. INVESTMENT STRATEGY (TREASURY MANAGEMENT)

From 1st April 2004 local authorities had the power to invest for the purposes of prudent management of their financial affairs. The Council's Investment Strategy was an update of the previous Treasury Management Policy Statement, taking account of the latest requirements including the prudential indicators for external debt and treasury management. The Strategy continued to restrict investment to the same groups of organisations as before and with the same maximum investment limits with any one organisation.

RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL that the investment strategy be approved.

Decisions made by the Cabinet and reported for information

6. CORPORATE IDENTITY

The Information and Customer Services Portfolio Holder explained that the Council's forthcoming move to Cambourne made it an appropriate time to re-address the corporate identity. Consultation with focus groups had demonstrated low public awareness of the Council's crest or logo. 2g Ltd, a local design agency from Fulbourn,

had been selected to create a new corporate identity and the two designs preferred by the corporate identity sub-group were presented to Cabinet. The first was a modern stylised 'S'; the second was a more classic design incorporating the Council's crest. 2g Ltd also displayed a complete stationery suite for each logo, explaining that departments would be identified through use of different colours. Staff would receive a set of style guidelines explaining the use of the preferred logo and colours to ensure consistent usage. A new font, Gill Sans, as used by the BBC, would be adopted as part of the new identity.

Members noted that the overall cost of the exercise was little more than the cost of reprinting all Council stationery with the new office address.

A lengthy discussion ensued as Members considered the two logos:

Modern Logo

- Had greater clarity than the crest;
- The crest was old-fashioned
- Would have greater longevity than the crest;
- Focussed attention on the Council name and address;
- Demonstrated that the Council was a modern authority and reflected the significant changes which had been undertaken in recent years;
- Would be recognised if used consistently.

Crest

- The modern logo was very similar to that used by other companies and did not convey anything about the Council;
- Unlike the modern logo, was clearly linked with the Council;
- Many organisations were returning to traditional crests as modern logos went out of fashion;
- Had gravitas and authority;
- Would be displayed on the new building.

Font

The Gills Sans font was preferred to Times New Roman, but Members asked that the size of the Council's address be increased on the new letterhead.

Members expressed disappointment that more designs had not been presented, but the Chief Executive explained that it was felt a wider range would have made a decision more difficult. He explained that, regardless of the final decision, it would be appropriate to retain the full-colour crest for the Chairman's letterhead.

Councillor RF Collinson proposed that the consultants design a modern logo incorporating the crest, elements of the crest, or the new office and to return to Cabinet. Although there was sympathy for this proposal, Members were conscious of the time constraints to introduce the new corporate identity in time for the move to Cambourne, and the proposal was not seconded.

Cabinet, with three in favour, two against and three abstentions,

AGREED that the modern logo be approved.

7. HOUSING STRATEGY AND BUSINESS PLAN CONSULTATION DRAFT

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented the two draft documents for approval for submission to GO-East and others for consultation, drawing attention to the possibility of

an Advisory Group being established to review sheltered accommodation; potential changes to Supporting People; and the consultation event already held.

Housing Strategy 2004-2007

It was agreed that the reference to travellers' sites in Chapter 4 should be corrected to reflect the actual number of authorised sites. The preference list for new housing in the Cambridge sub region was, however, taken from the current Regional Planning Guidance (RPG6) and could not be adjusted.

HRA Business Plan 2004/5-2034/5

In answer to queries, the Head of Shire Homes advised that

- the reference to a failure in management systems (Completion of Works on Time, page 26) should have been to management information systems
- in the planned maintenance table on page 28, the actuals shown under 2003/04 should be under 2002/03
- the timetable for meeting the decent homes standard in the action plan on page 37 should state 2010

Councillor Summerfield asked for the wording of the 2nd paragraph on page 34, relating to the equity share scheme and capital receipts to be clarified. The Housing Portfolio Holder asked that the last sentence on page 14 be rephrased to delete the words after "bathroom" and to indicate that only one of the properties surveyed had failed the kitchen and bathroom element of the decent homes standard.

Discussion then centred on tenant participation and the increase in the budget ascribed to it (page 14). The Housing Portfolio Holder outlined the budgets transferred from elsewhere: internal painting from the planned maintenance budget; and the new budget provision: stock options appraisal (with compulsory independent tenant advisor), annual report to tenants and tenants handbook. Officers added that good practice encouraged the involvement of tenants in decisions affecting them. Repositioning some existing budgets under the heading of tenant participation to give tenants more influence over how money was spent was one way of demonstrating that involvement. The "other" capital schemes budget mainly related to the Meldreth sheltered scheme communal room, which was on hold while tenants considered if proposals were what they wanted. It was thought that the budget for tenant participation groups might need to increase slightly as more villages took part, but not to a great extent. Recharges were largely salary costs.

Concern was expressed about financial information still to be included in both the Strategy and the Business Plan and the Housing Portfolio Holder explained more work would be required following today's meeting. She suggested and it was

AGREED

- (a) to approve the Housing Strategy and Business Plan as consultation drafts;
- (b) that the Housing Portfolio Holder, Leader and Deputy Leader be authorised to approve any missing information, including financial information, and additions to the Action Plan, in conjunction with the Head of Housing Strategic Services and the Head of Shire Homes, so long as those changes did not constitute new policy; and
- (c) that the Housing Strategy and Business Plan be submitted to GO-EAST and

other consultees without further reference to Cabinet.

8. WATERBEACH - DEVELOPMENT BRIEF FOR LAND AT BANNOLD ROAD

The Development Brief had been prepared to help housing developers draw up proposals for land lying north of Bannold Road, Waterbeach. This site was allocated in Local Plan 2004. The Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder confirmed that the site would have 25 units of affordable housing.

The Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder noted that the development brief included guidance on sustainable homes and expressed his hope that developers would incorporate solar panels and rainwater harvesting as much as possible.

Members queried whether approval for similar schemes could be delegated to the Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder. The Principal Planning Policy Officer (Transport) reminded Members of the distinction between local Supplementary Planning Guidance and Supplementary Planning Guidance which affected the District as a whole.

Cabinet

NOTED the results of the consultation as set out in the consultant's report and

AGREED

- (a) to adopt the Bannold Road, Waterbeach Development Brief with the changes recommended as Supplementary Planning Guidance; and
- (b) to delegate authority to approve local Supplementary Planning Guidance to the Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder.

9. GREAT SHELFORD VILLAGE DESIGN STATEMENT

Urgent item with permission of the Leader.

Residents of Great Shelford had followed the successful example of Gamlingay in the production of its Village Design Statement, only to be informed upon its submission to GO-EAST that the requirements had been changed. Members were disappointed by the delay caused by GO-EAST in the adoption of the Village Design Statement, which had jeopardised project funding the village had received from Awards For All. Councillor CR Nightingale, local member, commended the project and spoke of the strong local support.

Cabinet

AGREED to adopt the Great Shelford Village Design Statement as Supplementary Planning Guidance.

10. PUBLIC ART POLICY

Cabinet, at its meeting of 16th October 2003, had deferred a decision on a Public Art Policy pending the establishment of a Working Party to investigate many of the points raised during discussion. The Community Development Portfolio Holder explained that it had been a worthwhile exercise to delay the decision and commended the efforts of the Working Party and, in particular, the Chief Executive for his valuable investigations

into similar policies already established by other authorities.

The Arts Development Officer explained that, although the contribution of 1-5% of the associated construction costs of a capital project was recognised as good practice, the exact percent for art would be negotiated as part of a section 106 agreement. He confirmed that the figure of 1-5% was not prescriptive, but a guideline. Members asked that the reference to site area under the eligibility criteria for residential developments of ten or more dwellings and other developments with a floor space of over 1000m² (paragraph 23 of guide) be deleted.

Cabinet

AGREED

- (a) to approve the Draft Public Art Policy as set out in paragraph 6 of the report; and
- (b) to the publication and distribution of Guidance to Developers regarding the inclusion of Public Art in new developments (with amendments requested above), such guidance to serve as informal Council policy in the short term and likely to be consulted on as a draft supplementary planning document if a public art policy becomes part of the Local Development Framework.

11. FUTURE MEETINGS OF CABINET

Cabinet **AGREED** that future meetings would start at 9.00am.

The Meeting ended at 2.10 p.m.
