

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Thursday, 7 July 2011 at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Ray Manning (Leader of the Council, Vice-Chairman of Constitution Review Working Party)
Councillor Simon Edwards (Deputy Leader of the Council, Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder)

Councillors:	Tom Bygott	Policy and Performance Portfolio Holder
	Sue Ellington	Environmental Services Portfolio Holder
	Mark Howell	Housing Portfolio Holder
	Peter Topping	Sustainability, Planning and Climate Change Portfolio Holder; Climate Change Working Group Vice-Chairman
	Nick Wright	Economic Development Portfolio Holder

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Holly Adams	Democratic Services Team Leader
Alex Colyer	Executive Director, Corporate Services
Steve Hampson	Executive Director, Operational Services
Paul Howes	Corporate Manager, Community and Customer Services
Jean Hunter	Chief Executive
Paul Knight	Senior Policy and Performance Officer
Nicole Kritzinger	Development Officer
Fiona McMillan	Legal & Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Jo Mills	Corporate Manager, Planning and New Communities

Councillors Lynda Harford, Peter Johnson, Sebastian Kindersley, Mike Mason, Cicely Murfitt, Ben Shelton, Bridget Smith and Bunty Waters were in attendance, by invitation.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tim Wotherspoon, who was giving a guided tour of Orchard Park.

Procedural Items

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Leader signed the minutes of the 31 March 2011 meeting as a correct record.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Simon Edwards declared a personal interest in item 8, Customer Contact Review, as his company sold software to contact centres, but not to the Council's Contact Centre. Notwithstanding this interest, he remained in the room and participated in the discussion and decision.

Councillor Sebastian Kindersley declared a personal interest in item 7, Gamlingay Village College Capital Grant, as an associate member of the Gamlingay Village College governing body. Notwithstanding this interest, he remained in the room and participated in the discussion.

Councillor Bridget Smith declared a personal interest in item 7, Gamlingay Village College Capital Grant, as the Council's representative on GVC Leisure at Gamlingay Village College, and as the wife of a member of the governing body. Notwithstanding these interests, she remained in the room and participated in the discussion.

3. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members congratulated Paul Knight, Senior Policy and Performance Officer, for winning the Local Government Challenge and receiving the Bruce Lockhart Scholarship.

The Leader spoke of his recent visit to Councillor Mervyn Loynes, and conveyed Councillor Loynes' gratitude for all the cards he had received.

The Leader and Councillor Tim Wotherspoon had met with Secretary of State Eric Pickles and Bob Neill, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, to discuss the new guidance on Travellers, and in particular the use of the phrase "historical need", which it was hoped would be reviewed. Councillors Manning and Wotherspoon had written personally to Mr Neill at his request to make further representations on the guidance. Councillor Wright had attended an Economic Development Portfolio Holder Network meeting in Colchester at which it had been reported that new guidance was to be issued.

The new A14 Steering Group had met for the first time on Tuesday 5 July. The group included representatives from the Department of Transport, Council Leaders from authorities along the A14, and representatives from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Economic Partnership (LEP). The Group agreed that its priority was to find cheaper, viable alternatives to the previous proposals, as it had now been announced that the Draft Order for the A14 had been revoked. Much of the work undertaken for the previous order would feed into new proposals. South Cambridgeshire's priorities were to address the Huntingdon Viaduct and to ensure that development at Northstowe and elsewhere would be able to proceed.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None received.

Decisions made by Cabinet

5. SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY 2011-2014

The Leader presented the outline proposals for the Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire Sustainable Community Strategy, the fine detail of which would be considered by the joint Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) board before returning to Council for agreement. Members suggested additional priorities of specific importance to South Cambridgeshire, such as addressing the needs of elderly people in rural areas, balancing new housing with opportunities for local employment, and encouraging energy efficiency in local businesses. It was acknowledged that the larger, more widespread population in South Cambridgeshire made it more difficult than in Cambridge City to identify areas of deprivation, but that such areas did exist and that the voluntary sector could be approached to help develop improvement opportunities.

Cabinet **AGREED** the main thrust of the vision and priorities set out in the draft Sustainable Community Strategy prior to their consideration at the next Local Strategic Partnership Board meeting, noting in particular how the visions and priorities linked to emerging challenges / priorities for South Cambridgeshire District Council, subject to the inclusion of:

- More priorities to address the needs of elderly people, particularly in rural areas with limited access to public transport; and
- Recognition that sustainable communities must balance housing with opportunities for local employment; and
- Stronger emphasis on supporting local businesses to become and to remain energy efficient, the wording of this to include input from the Climate Change Working Group.

Cabinet **NOTED** that the detailed wording providing context likely would be subject to significant changes and that the final version of the Strategy would be presented to a future meeting of Council for approval.

6. REVIEW OF THE COUNTYWIDE HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY (HIA) SERVICES

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented the proposals for a shared Home Improvement Agency (HIA) service with Cambridge City Council and Huntingdonshire District Council. He emphasised that this was not a money-saving exercise, but a means of improving service provision for residents, with funds being invested in employing an Occupational Therapist to help reduce wait times. The service would be located at South Cambridgeshire Hall in Cambourne and managed by Cambridge City Council. Protocols would be prepared to direct how individual authorities would address governance, staffing issues and risk management, including financial and equipment risks. Residents would continue to contact their own authority.

Members commended the proposals and noted that other authorities had contacted South Cambridgeshire about joining the partnership or establishing similar schemes.

Cabinet **AGREED**

- (a) the implementation of a shared Home Improvement Agency service with Cambridge City Council and Huntingdonshire District Council as set out in the report; and
- (b) to delegate authority to the Executive Director (Operational Services), in consultation with the Executive Director (Corporate Services) and the Legal and Democratic Services Manager, to agree a legal protocol to govern the shared service.

7. GAMLINGAY VILLAGE COLLEGE: CAPITAL GRANT FOR MULTI-USE GAMES AREA (MUGA)

Cabinet had previously agreed to award Gamlingay Village College a £200,000 capital grant, but, following the announcement by Cambridgeshire County Council that the school might be closed, had had to suspend payment of the £150,000 then outstanding until such time as the school's future was certain. The Leader confirmed that the school would now stay open and that there was no reason not to release the remaining funds. Although the requirement for the Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) to remain available for community use was not enforceable, it was in keeping with the Council's Dual Use Scheme.

Councillors Sebastian Kindersley and Bridget Smith thanked the Leader and Chief Executive for their support throughout the recent concerns about the future of Gamlingay

Village College, and updated Cabinet on the County Council's decision to federate Gamlingay Village College with Stratton Upper School.

Cabinet **AGREED** to award to Gamlingay Village College (GVC) the remaining balance of £150,000 from the original £200,000 capital grant to further enhance the sports provision for all residents living in and around Gamlingay, subject to the Council's standard terms of grant, as well as the following:

- (a) Gamlingay Village College (GVC) to sign a revised Dual Use Agreement with conditions including that the MUGA remains available for community use into the future; and
- (b) That the works are carried out as soon as possible and facility is open by 31 December 2011 at the latest.

8. CUSTOMER CONTACT REVIEW

Councillor Tom Bygott, Policy and Performance Portfolio Holder, presented the findings of the Task and Finish Group which had researched how customers contacted the Council, improvements which could be made now and in the future, and whether or not to remain with the Contact Centre after the current contract expired on 31 December 2012. Research had shown that more customers were using web-based technologies instead of the telephone to conduct transactions with the Council, and therefore it would be more productive to bring the contact centre service back in-house after the end of the current contract to allow the Council to have more control over how it responded to call traffic volumes. At the same time, the range of self-service features on the Council's website and through applications would be enhanced.

Members described the research which had been undertaken to develop the recommendations, particularly the successful use elsewhere of text messaging for payment reminders, and the requirements for any Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software to be considered.

Cabinet thanked the members and officers who conducted the review for their thorough work and recommendations, and commended the number of service improvements already undertaken.

Cabinet **AGREED**:

- (a) the following recommendations of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and Policy and Performance Portfolio Holder:

Stage One: Research and findings

1. that the reception area at South Cambridgeshire Hall be:
 - (a) equipped to cater for visitors accompanied by small children; and
 - (b) upgraded to create a quieter and less draughty environment, with access to privacy where desirable or requested.
2. that consideration be given to providing joint customer care training for Members and officers;
3. that a system be developed for using text messaging to send payment reminders to those who request it;
4. that research be conducted into the use of apps for smartphones such as My Council Services; and
5. that the Council consider producing a full range of easy-to-read booklets on SCDC's services for display on reception and via parish councils, libraries, local access points and other outlets;

Stage Two – Principles for Designing a Customer Contact Service

6. that the next customer contact service provision:
 - (a) include telephone, email, texting, social media, and webchat;
 - (b) provide a telephone service from 8.30 am to 6 pm, with further research into the need for one late night per week;
 - (c) include a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system capable of being used throughout the Council and with the capacity to link with partners' CRM systems;
 - (d) provide flexibility and scalability that would enable a timely response to any need to grow or reduce or serve other partner organisations; and
 - (e) reflect the Council's priorities, especially those regarding sustainability, equal opportunities and supporting local economic development;
7. that, if the next customer contact service should be based at South Cambridgeshire Hall, it should include the face-to-face service, and that inclusion of the post service should be considered as part of the management review of the post service planned for 2011/12; and
8. that the Council's emerging Customer Access Strategy should include the intention to encourage and support customers to use the most cost effective customer contact channels such as email, webchat and social media;

Stage 3 – Options for a Customer Contact Service

9. that the customer contact service provided by the Council from December 2012 be managed in-house and located at South Cambridgeshire Hall;
 - (b) to adopt the action plan attached as **Appendix 1** to the report; and
 - (c) that the Chief Executive be **authorised** to develop the preferred option for the future of customer contact services as part of the emerging Customer Access Strategy.

Information Items

9. ADDRESSING THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN - YEAR END REPORT

Councillor Nick Wright, Economic Development Portfolio Holder, presented the 2010/11 year-end report on the Council's measures to address the economic downturn. Although South Cambridgeshire had been rated as the most economically resilient area of the country, there had still been five thousand jobs lost. The Council had seen a good response to its local business support scheme, with 62 local businesses receiving funding in the past year. Councillor Wright drew attention to the Step Up business competition: the previous year's winner had signed contracts with major companies in the UK and was set to take her product worldwide; the runners up were also doing well. This year's competition had just begun and Councillor Wright encouraged members to help promote it. South Cambridgeshire District Council was being promoted in the business community as "business-friendly" and other authorities were looking to it as a model of best practice. Councillor Wright also reported that the proposed Economic Development Supplementary Planning Document had been deferred and would now form part of the new Local Development Framework.

Councillor Wright explained that, as Economic Development encompassed all portfolio

areas, he would be reporting primarily at Cabinet meetings rather than having separate Portfolio Holder meetings. Members asked him to consider how the Council could support local tradespeople, including opportunities for apprenticeships, and how the Council could encourage local businesses to become energy efficient.

Cabinet **NOTED** the year-end report.

Standing Items

10. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE: PLANNING SERVICES REVIEW

Councillor Peter Topping, Sustainability, Planning and Climate Change Portfolio Holder, commended the Planning Services Review, and undertook to see the recommendations implemented and to provide assurance. He would consider the action plan at his 8 July 2011 Portfolio Holder meeting.

Members appreciated the impact that the review had had on staff at a difficult time, and reported that residents had already begun complimenting the improved service, such as the mapping facility on the website. It was acknowledged that officers were responsible for implementing policies agreed by councillors, and that, where the same issues arose repeatedly, there could be a need to review the underlying policies.

Cabinet **NOTED** the Planning Services Review and 'The Way Forward' document and thanked the members of the Task and Finish Group for their report.

11. UPDATES FROM CABINET MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Nick Wright, member appointed to the Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust board, reported that the hospital had a £6 million surplus which it would use to increase its focus on research.

12. REPORTS FROM CABINET MEMBERS ATTENDING PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

There had not been any invitations since the last Cabinet meeting for Cabinet members to visit Parish Councils.

13. REPORTS FROM MEMBER CHAMPIONS

Councillor Ben Shelton, Champion for Policing, and Councillor Bridget Smith, Champion for Children and Young People, would both report to the next meeting of Cabinet.

**The Meeting ended at 8.58
p.m.**
