

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on  
Thursday, 12 September 2013 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Ray Manning (Leader of the Council)  
Councillor Simon Edwards (Deputy Leader of the Council, Finance and Staffing  
Portfolio Holder, Vice-Chairman of Employment Committee)

Councillors:	Pippa Corney	Planning Policy and Localism Portfolio Holder
	Mark Howell	Housing Portfolio Holder
	Mick Martin	Environmental Services Portfolio Holder
	David Whiteman-Downes	Corporate and Customer Services Portfolio Holder
	Tim Wotherspoon	Northstowe Portfolio Holder
	Nick Wright	Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Alex Colyer	Executive Director, Corporate Services
Jean Hunter	Chief Executive
Fiona McMillan	Legal & Democratic Services Manager and Monitoring Officer
Graham Aisthorpe-Watts	Democratic Services Team Leader
Mike Hill	Health and Environmental Services Director
Stephen Hills	Affordable Homes Director
Richard May	Policy and Performance Manager

Councillors David Bard, Kevin Cuffley, Sue Ellington, Cicely Murfitt, Charles Nightingale, Ben Shelton, Hazel Smith, Bunty Waters and John Williams were in attendance, by invitation.

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### Procedural Items

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#### 13. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Further to minute number 5 of the previous meeting regarding the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, Councillor Ray Manning, Leader of the Council, reported that he had appointed Councillor Caroline Hunt as the Council's Member Champion for Children.

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 27 June 2013, were **AGREED** as a correct record and signed by the Leader of the Council.

#### 14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mark Howell declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute number 17 as his friend lived close to the plot of land at Fen Road which was proposed for purchase by the Council.

**15. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor Ray Manning, Leader of the Council, informed those present that the date of November's Cabinet meeting would need to be re-scheduled. A revised date would be confirmed in due course.

**16. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No public questions had been received.

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**Recommendations to  
Council**

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**17. MILTON AND WHADDON: IMPROVING EXISTING GYPSY AND TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION**

A report was considered, which sought a recommendation to Council for the establishment of a budget to acquire an existing run down private site for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation, the acquisition of two existing Gypsy and Traveller sites from the County Council, together with funding to complete a site refurbishment at no cost to the local Council Tax payer.

Councillor Mark Howell, Portfolio Holder for Housing, presented the report and highlighted that there was a need for sites at affordable rents for the Gypsy and Traveller population, similar to the affordable housing sector, as not every Gypsy or Traveller was able to afford access to a private site and there was currently a waiting list for affordable rented pitches.

It was noted that the Council currently acted as the managing agent for the occupied Gypsy and Traveller sites at Blackwell (Milton) and Whaddon and was successful in 2010 in securing significant inward investment in the site at Blackwell from the Homes and Communities Agency. The County Council had signalled its intention to sell these sites in 2011 and Councillor Howell felt that their purchase by the District Council would make the sites much easier to manage.

The site at Fen Road already had planning permission for use as a Gypsy and Traveller site and was currently in private ownership. It had become run down and had been served with Environmental Health enforcement notices. Councillor Howell reported that liaison with local Members had been very positive, who themselves had also been very helpful in liaising with the Gypsy and Traveller community. Upon purchasing the site, the intention was that it be redeveloped to modern standards.

Ian Manning, County Councillor for the East Chesterton Division, was invited to speak and outlined his support in opening up a dialogue and working constructively with South Cambridgeshire District Council. He expressed a concern regarding additional traffic on Fen Road should the proposed purchase go ahead, but acknowledged that the District Council was seeking to improve the situation following the poor management of the site. He was very keen to see the Council consult with residents at the other end of Fen Road to explain the reasons behind the proposals and extended an invitation to Members of Cabinet to attend meetings of the Fen Road Steering Group.

Councillor Howell, in response, stated that he was happy to enter into consultation with residents and clarified that one of the pitches would be owned by Cambridge City Council, emphasising that the District Council and City Council were working very closely together on this issue. The Council was determined to manage the Fen Road site effectively and Councillor Howell confirmed that the proposal's business case included the additional recruitment of a part-time site warden. In responding to concerns about additional traffic, Councillor Howell reminded Cabinet that planning permission already existed for nine pitches meaning that associated traffic was already there and not as a consequence of this proposal. He did however accept that there would be some additional traffic on a temporary basis whilst the refurbishment works took place.

Councillor Hazel Smith, speaking as a local Member, was pleased to see money being spent in the locality and welcomed a good model rental site alongside private rentals, which she felt may bring the whole area up to a good standard. Councillor Smith advised Cabinet that working closely with the community throughout this proposal would be extremely important.

Councillor Ray Manning, Leader of the Council, stated that he and Councillor Mark Howell would be pleased to attend meetings of the Fen Road Steering Group, as requested.

Cabinet: -

(a) **APPROVED** in principle: -

- (i) the acquisition of the sites at Fen Road and Blackwell, Milton and New Farm, Whaddon;
- (ii) the allocation of funds to refurbish the site at New Farm, Whaddon, to include the addition of two further pitches;
- (iii) the purchase of the site at Fen Road, Milton.

(b) **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council that an initial financial contribution of up to £900,000 be established to achieve these transactions, on a business case, with the Council investment being recovered through the income collected from the sites.

(c) **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council the delegation on the final decision to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder pending the completion of a full detailed business case that demonstrates financial viability.

## 18. LOCALISED COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2013/14: REVIEW OF OPERATION

Cabinet considered a report which reviewed the operation of the 2013/14 Localised Council Tax Support Scheme and set out options for the Localised Council Tax Support Scheme for 2014/15.

Councillor Simon Edwards, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing, presented the report and stated that the Localised Council Tax Support Scheme for 2013/14 had worked well for the first six or seven months of its implementation. Only one appeal had been submitted to the Council, which Councillor Edwards was pleased with as he felt it showed that people understood the changes introduced as part of the Scheme. He reported that there were around 150 fewer benefit claimants as a result of the Scheme, the number of which would have increased to 200 had the Scheme not been introduced, saving approximately £6,000 and equating to a 6% reduction.

The report included reference to the parish grant and it was noted that the formula grant the District Council received would be significantly reduced in 2014/15, no longer including a separately identifiable grant for parishes. The Council would be informing Parish Councils in September 2013 of their anticipated tax bases for 2014/15 and it was proposed that parish grant would not be payable for 2014/15.

In closing, Councillor Ray Manning, Leader of the Council, took this opportunity on behalf of Cabinet to thank the team for their outstanding work in developing and implementing the Localised Council Tax Support Scheme.

Cabinet: -

- (a) **NOTED** the feedback from the operation of the 2013/14 Localised Council Tax Support Scheme.
- (b) **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council the continuation of the current Localised Council Tax Support Scheme for 2014/15.
- (c) **AGREED** that the parish grant would not be payable in 2014/15.

#### **19. DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS: REVISED POLICY**

Consideration was given to a report which requested the adoption of an amended policy for the granting of Discretionary Housing Payments.

The report was presented by Councillor Simon Edwards, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing, who explained that the amended policy included the following additions: -

- support for tenants who were affected by changes to the under occupation rules, particularly where a move to alternative accommodation would be problematic;
- support for tenants who were affected by the benefits cap;
- support for tenants who were in employment but were unable to meet their housing costs due to additional expenses.

Cabinet **ADOPTED** the amended policy for Discretionary Housing Payments, as appended to the report.

#### **20. DISCRETIONARY HOUSING PAYMENTS (DHP) FOR COUNCIL TENANTS: ADDITIONAL FUNDING REQUEST**

Cabinet considered a report regarding the provision of additional funding for Discretionary Housing Payments for council tenants to be made available from the Housing Revenue Account.

Councillor Simon Edwards, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing, presented the report which followed the previous item and sought to put the necessary funding in place to deliver the aims set out in the revised Discretionary Housing Payments Policy.

Cabinet: -

- (a) **APPROVED** a Council application seeking consent from the Department for Local Government and Communities to use funding of up to £100,000 from the Housing Revenue Account for Discretionary Housing Payments for South Cambridgeshire District Council tenants who have been affected by a reduction in Housing Benefit due to welfare reform changes.
- (b) **APPROVED**, subject to consent from the Department for Communities and Local Government, implementation of a specific Discretionary Housing Payment fund for Council tenants to be allocated in accordance with the overall Council Discretionary Housing Payments Policy.

## 21. COUNTY-WIDE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

Cabinet considered a report which sought authority to progress work towards the creation of a publicly owned joint venture to deliver the Making Assets Count Programme.

Councillor David Whiteman-Downes, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Customer Services, presented the report and informed Cabinet that the Making Assets Count Programme Board had identified a recommended solution for the joint management of the property assets of the public sector in Cambridgeshire. The report set out how these property assets might be best managed to reduce costs and improve efficiency.

It was noted that Making Assets Count was a partnership of all five District Councils, the County Council, Police Service, Fire Service and Health providers.

Councillor Whiteman-Downes explained that the joint venture would provide partners with opportunities to share their assets and gave an example of employees from Cambridgeshire County Council being able to use South Cambridgeshire Hall as their main office, rather than County Hall in Cambridge. He emphasised that the Council would not be sharing liability for any other partner's assets by entering into this joint venture, it was simply to make better use of public sector assets in the county.

In discussing the benefit of forming a partnership, Cabinet noted the timeline it would take for a joint decision to be made by all partners during a normal decision-making cycle as being approximately thirteen weeks. The governance of the Making Assets Count Public Property Partnership would likely reflect a 'one member, one vote' arrangement with dividends returned to the partners in proportion to the assets invested in the joint venture. Cabinet agreed that only elected representatives should be entitled to vote, acknowledging the difficulties this presented with regard to public sector organisations such as Health providers.

Members noted that the proposal at this stage was for an agreement in principle only and, if supported, a more detailed report would be submitted to Cabinet in due course.

Cabinet: -

- (a) **AGREED** in principle to the proposal to create a publicly owned joint venture (Making Assets Count Public Property Partnership), in which South Cambridgeshire District Council would be a key partner, to manage public sector assets across Cambridgeshire.

- (b) **AGREED** that work be undertaken to develop the detail of the proposal and that this work be reported back to Cabinet.

## 22. ENFORCEMENT AND INSPECTION POLICY

Consideration was given to a report on South Cambridgeshire District Council's draft corporate Enforcement and Inspection Policy, which sought agreement to undertake a consultation exercise with local businesses and Parish Councils on the content of the document.

The report was presented by Councillor Mick Martin, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services, who reminded Cabinet that the draft Enforcement and Inspection Policy was a high-level statement of the Council's intent for the way it undertook its enforcement and inspection activities across all its enforcement and inspection teams.

Cabinet agreed that consultation should also take place with residents, as well as local business and Parish Councils.

Cabinet **APPROVED** the draft corporate Enforcement and Inspection Policy for consultation with residents, local businesses and Parish Councils, as appended to the report.

## 23. MATERIALS RECYCLING FACILITY (MRF) PROCUREMENT PROCESS

A report was considered which sought Cabinet's commitment towards the collaborative procurement and award of Materials Recovery Facility services for bulking, sorting and onward processing/sale of recyclable 'blue bin' materials with other RECAP waste partners. It also sought approval and reaffirmation of the RECAP Partnership Charter and, in particular, approval of the additional Schedule 2 Governance Agreement relating to the principles of commitment, collaboration and operation of joint Materials Recycling Facility contracts.

Councillor Mick Martin, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services, presented the report and referred to the Schedule 2 Governance Agreement appended to the report, which essentially set out the management of procurement in relation to the operation of a joint contract for bulking, sorting and onward progressing/sale of recyclable materials.

Cabinet: -

- (a) **AGREED** the Council's commitment to the procurement and appointment of a contractor to deliver Joint Materials Recycling Facility services for bulking, sorting and onward processing/sale of recyclable materials for all participating RECAP partners, unless all partners agreed not to appoint.
- (b) **APPROVED** on behalf of the Council the 'RECAP Partnership Charter', as appended to the report, including approval of the additional Schedule 2 Governance Agreement relating to the operation of the Joint Materials Recycling Facility contract, commitment to participation in and commitment of recyclable materials into the joint contract.
- (c) **AGREED** delegation to the relevant officer responsible for authorisation of the final invitation to tender to award the contract, in consultation with Members as appropriate.

- (d) **AGREED** that Peterborough City Council would nominate a preferred supplier in collaboration with the participating partners, for the provision of the services of bulking, sorting and onward processing/sale of recyclable materials contract, on behalf of both Peterborough City Council and the RECAP participating partners.

#### 24. **MINUTES OF JOINT MEETING HELD ON 23 MAY 2013**

The minutes of the joint meeting between the Leader of the Council, the Environmental Services Portfolio Holder and the Planning Policy and Localism Portfolio Holder held on 23 May 2013 were **AGREED** as a correct record and signed by each respective Member.

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#### **Information Item**

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#### 25. **POSITION STATEMENT: FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND RISK**

Cabinet considered a report which provided a statement on the Council's position with regard to its General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and capital budgets, corporate objectives, performance indicators and strategic risks.

Councillor Simon Edwards, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing, presented the report and highlighted one area of concern which related to Non-Domestic Rates and the number of appeals that were awaiting resolution by the Valuation Officer. He reported that the Council's Executive Director, Corporate Services, had conveyed the Council's concerns to the Valuation Officer about the length of time it took to resolve these appeals.

In terms of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, Councillor Edwards reported that the Council was already planning for a substantial reduction in the amount of government grant received. The Chancellor's spending review set out proposals for local government to bear a 10% cut in funding from 2015-16, whilst at the same time preventing Council Tax increases above 2% without prior approval in a referendum. He also reported that the government had since announced that a proportion of New Homes Bonus would be top-sliced to fund Local Enterprise Partnerships. The Council had previously agreed not to rely on the New Homes Bonus when setting future budgets due to its vulnerability and Councillor Edwards stated that this announcement vindicated the Council's policy in this respect.

Councillor Edwards was pleased to report that rent collections continued to perform strongly at a rate of 96.6% for the first quarter. He also reported the on-going reduction in staff sickness absence as being 1.6 days per employee and took this opportunity to thank members of staff and managers for their contributions towards this performance.

It was noted that the recommendations within the report were supported by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee at its meeting on 5 September 2013.

Councillor Ray Manning, Leader of the Council, reported that a consultation over the New Homes Bonus was currently open, the closing date for which was 19 September 2013. Cabinet agreed that a response to the consultation should be submitted and signed by the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council

Cabinet: -

- (a) **NOTED** the Council's provisional outturn position together with the performance and risk matters set out in the report and appendices.
- (b) **AUTHORISED** the Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder to make representations to Government, expressing the authority's concerns regarding national Non-Domestic Rate appeals and requesting urgent action to address the issue.

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### Standing Items

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#### 26. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Cabinet: -

- (a) **REFERRED** the Scrutiny and Overview Committee's recommendation relating to Parish Council Neighbourhood Plans to the Portfolio Holder for Planning Policy and Localism, for her to provide a response upon invitation to a future meeting of the Committee.
- (b) **AGREED** that the draft 'high level' infrastructure list in relation to the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy proposals be referred to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee at the end of the consultation process, subject to agreement by the Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee.
- (c) **REFERRED** the Scrutiny and Overview Committee's recommendations relating to redundant ICT equipment to the Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Customer Services, for his consideration.

#### 27. UPDATES FROM CABINET MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES

No updates were received.

#### 28. REPORTS FROM CABINET MEMBERS ATTENDING PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

Councillor Mark Howell, Portfolio Holder for Housing, reported that he had recently attended a meeting at Milton Parish Council.

Councillor Nick Wright, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development reported that he had recently attended a meeting at Hatley Parish Council.

#### 29. REPORTS FROM MEMBER CHAMPIONS

No updates from Member Champions were reported.

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**The Meeting ended at 8.13 p.m.**

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