

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on
Thursday, 30 April 2015 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Roger Hickford – Chairman
Councillor Jose Hales – Vice-Chairman

Councillors: David Bard Lynda Harford
Philippa Hart Bunty Waters

Councillors Anna Bradnam, Simon Edwards, Sue Ellington, Mark Howell, Ray Manning and Alex Riley were in attendance, by invitation.

Officers: Gemma Barron Partnerships & Sustainable Communities
Manager
Mike Hill Director of Health and Environmental Services
Jean Hunter Chief Executive
Jo Mills Director of Planning and New Communities
Stephen Reid Head of Service, Environmental Commissioning
Planning Lawyer
Helen Taylor Waste Minimisation and Recycling Officer
Victoria Wallace Democratic Services Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Douglas de Lacey, Alison Elcox, David Morgan and Mick Martin.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Roger Hickford declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the Recap Board, which was relevant to Agenda Item 5.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Mr Tony Goss addressed the committee regarding street cleansing in Gamlingay, raising the following points:

- Litter picking and mechanical street sweeping was not being undertaken by the Council in Gamlingay. As a resident, Mr Goss undertook voluntary litter picking on a regular basis and was provided with litter bags by the Council.
- Mr Goss had complained to the Council regarding the lack of mechanical street sweeping in Gamlingay, and had also volunteered to undertake this himself were it possible for the Council to provide use of a mechanical street sweeper. Mr Goss last complained to the Council in January 2015 but had not received a response.

The Director of Health and Environmental Services, Mike Hill, responded to the points raised by Mr Goss. A written response would also be provided:

- Mr Hill apologised for the lack of response to Mr Goss' complaint which had been

- received by the Council in January 2015.
- Mr Hill explained that the ten biggest villages were targeted for street sweeping and was confident that street sweeping had taken place in Gamlingay within the last year but would get in touch with Mr Goss following the meeting with further detail.
 - Interviews had taken place on 13 May 2015 to recruit street sweeping staff to the Council. These staff would be trained to use the mechanical street sweepers in due course and Mr Hill would look into whether local volunteers such as Mr Goss, could be trained along with new Council staff in the use of the mechanical street sweepers.
 - Mr Hill informed Mr Goss that staff shortages had been an issue for the service and that due to staff vacancies and recent high levels of staff sickness, street sweepers had not seen much use since December 2014. Due to recent high levels of staff sickness, vital services such as waste collection had been prioritised with staff moved over to cover this service. This had resulted in less street sweeping being undertaken.

Mr Goss thanked Mr Hill for his response and was pleased to hear that action was being taken. He assured Mr Hill that Gamlingay had not been mechanically street swept for a year.

Councillor Hickford requested that Parish Councils be informed when the Council's waste collection and street cleansing services were experiencing difficulty, so that communities could be informed.

The resilience of the waste collection and street cleansing services was queried. Mr Hill assured the committee that in normal circumstances the service was very resilient, with staff trained to undertake multiple tasks so that various functions within the service could be covered by other members of staff. The committee was informed that three new drivers had been recruited and two loaders would be undertaking driver training. The levels of staff sickness experienced in the last three months had been unusual, with one day seeing 20 staff absences due to sickness.

Councillor Lynda Harford informed Mr Hill and colleagues that she had not experienced any complaints from residents with regards to waste collection and street cleansing services, until recently when staff sickness levels were very high.

Councillor Anna Bradnam queried whether recent efficiencies made to the service had led to the recent problems, with concern that staff levels had dropped below a manageable level. Mr Hill assured Councillor Bradnam and the committee that this was not the case and that with the changes being implemented to the service merging with City Council waste collection services, operational staffing levels had remained the same with only senior management team members needing to reapply for their jobs. The senior management team had been reduced by one post.

The committee was informed that litter picking along the A14 and other major trunk roads was contracted out. Extra litter picking took place along the A14 once a year when vegetation had been cut back, making litter more visible. Whilst this work was contracted out it was monitored closely by the Council.

5. WASTE AND RECYCLING SERVICE CHANGES EVALUATION

The Director of Health and Environmental Services presented the report which provided an evaluation of the waste and recycling service changes. The committee was informed that efficiency savings targets had been met, with residents experiencing few impacts of the changes.

The following discussion ensued:

- Regarding the potential move of green waste to the black bin, which County Council officers had identified as a risk as this could have led to the County Council incurring additional costs; Councillor Hickford whilst pleased that there had been no significant cost shunting, requested officers note that this was a risk and that this would be monitored. Mr Hill clarified that South Cambridgeshire District Council officers had recognised this as a risk, but it had been hard to estimate the potential risk.
- Members of the committee informed Mr Hill that they had not received any complaints regarding the service following the implementation of the changes and congratulated Mr Hill and his colleagues for this.
- The committee was informed that the customer satisfaction survey had closed and that the service would look at how best to publicise satisfaction surveys in future. Committee members advised the service should in future go directly through Parish Councils to communicate information to communities in order to get a better response rate.
- Councillor Bunty Waters queried the disposal of dog waste. Members were advised that it was not a problem for dog waste to be disposed of in household black bins. Where possible, dog walkers should utilise dog waste bins, however as a last resort public litter bins could be used to dispose of dog waste where dog waste bins were not available.
- Clarity was sought regarding the Council's policy in the supply of dog waste bins. Members were informed that where there was a demonstrable need, the Council would supply communities with dog waste bins and would remove the waste from these bins provided they were accessible from the highway. If the need was justified then the bin would be provided by the Council free of charge. Additional bins would be supplied to Parish Councils, however there may be an additional charge for these.
- Members were informed that unexpected savings from fuel costs and vacant senior management posts were not factored into the overall savings for the service.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee, having **NOTED** the report, congratulated Mr Hill and colleagues for the successful delivery of the service changes.

6. ENFORCEMENT AND INSPECTION POLICY UPDATE

The Director of Health and Environmental Services presented the Enforcement and Inspection Policy update.

The Director of Planning and New Communities Director informed the committee that interviews had taken place for a new Housing Enforcement post. No applications were received for the new Planning Enforcement post.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **NOTED** the report.

7. UPDATE ON SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

The Director of Planning and New Communities presented an update on Section 106 agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

Discussion and questions ensued:

- Councillor Hales raised concern with regards to an entrepreneurial planning application for 199 houses in Melbourn and the CIL money being lost by

communities and the Council. The Director of Planning and New Communities responded by clarifying that requirements to mitigate the impact of development needed to be looked at on a case by case basis. The committee was assured that with any development of a significant size, the need for certain infrastructure to mitigate the impact of the development could be demonstrated. For developments of over 500 homes, Section 106 would apply.

- The committee was informed that options to bring forward CIL in advance of the Local Plan, were being considered by the Council. However the potential implications to the Local Plan if this were done had to be considered carefully and specialist advice was being sought on the risks of doing this.
- The committee was informed that the Council was keeping the situation across the country with regards to CIL and Section 106 under review, and was considering what the Council's options were.
- The Council was also seeking advice as to whether to make changes to the CIL schedule. If this were done, public consultation would be required.
- Members were assured that CIL and S106 was on the Council's risk register and that communication was ongoing with Parish Councils.
- The Director of Planning and New Communities clarified that with medium sized developments of over 11 dwellings for example, the 'rule of five' applied when considering securing a planning obligation. The committee was informed that mitigation of the impact of smaller development schemes was more of a challenge than for larger developments.
- The Director of Planning and New Communities confirmed that the Local Plan examination had delayed CIL and that the Council had anticipated that the examination would have been concluded sooner. The timetable for the Local Plan examination was not known.
- Members were informed that CIL would not be rolled out automatically and would be subject to its own examination. The duration of this however would only be a matter of days.
- Councillor Alex Riley raised concern with regard to 7000-10,000 Northstowe homes which would be built on land in Longstanton, as the parish would not receive any financial contributions to mitigate for this development. In response, the Director of Planning and New Communities referred back to the five tests for local planning authorities to use when considering securing a planning obligation and informed Members that Northstowe would provide school places for children from the parish of Longstanton.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee having **NOTED** the report, requested a briefing note regarding Section 106 and CIL, including the impact on new communities, be circulated to all Members. The Committee also requested that the arrangement of a Member workshop regarding this also be considered. The Director of Planning and New Communities assured the committee that this would be considered.

8. SCRUTINY ORCHARD PARK TASK AND FINISH GROUP INTERIM RECOMMENDATIONS

Councillor Lynda Harford presented the report which set out interim recommendations from the Working Group set up to review the lessons learned from Orchard Park and requested that these be recommended to Cabinet for endorsement.

Councillor Hickford thanked the Working Group for their work to date and Councillor Hales commended and thanked Councillor Harford for her leadership of the Working Group.

Councillor Harford informed the committee that work would be complete by the end of August.

Recommendation 5 regarding 'New Town Blues' was discussed:

- It was suggested that a further piece of work could be undertaken to look at how organisations were picking up the costs further down the line of 'New Town Blues'.
- The set up of a cross organisation group was suggested, to look at what intervention and measures could be put in place earlier on in new communities, to prevent issues occurring later on.
- Such a piece of work would be outside the remit of the current Working Group but could be looked at once the current piece of work was concluded.
- The Director of Health and Environmental Services informed the committee that the Director of Public Health would be commissioning a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for new communities. Mr Hill would be meeting with Director of Public Health and would discuss this and the committee's concerns regarding 'New Town Blues' with her.

Councillor David Bard advised that good practice should be shared amongst organisations and that new developments in Europe should also be looked at.

Councillor Alex Riley expressed concern with regard to the lack of community infrastructure being provided for Northstowe. Councillor Riley informed the committee that a community facility was planned for Phase 1 but was not confident about the funding for this. With regard to Phase 2, a town centre facilities were planned but these would be provided after all the housing was built. Councillor Riley expressed concern about this given the estimated number of residents there would be without any town centre facilities.

The Director of Planning and New Communities responded to Councillor Riley's concerns, making the following points:

- The Partnerships and Sustainable Communities Manager was working closely with her to ensure a joined up approach.
- The committee was informed that the allocation of homes in Northstowe would be very different to the allocation that had taken place in Cambourne and led to problems in Cambourne. It was hoped that this allocation, which would be much more sensitive than at Cambourne, would avoid 'New Town Blues'.
- A Community Engagement Officer for Northstowe was appointed by the Council in January 2015.
- Other organisations such as the NHS and Police had been involved in the work on Northstowe and the first PCSO for Northstowe had been appointed, as well as the first vicar. Therefore there would be community representatives in place for the first Northstowe residents.
- Longstanton Parish Council's involvement in provision at Northstowe would be very welcome.
- A school would be ready for the first Northstowe residents, which would also provide a community space for the first residents. A community centre, sports pavilion and hub would then take over the provision of community space from the school.
- In order to ensure infrastructure would be in place when the Council wanted it to be, funding and triggers would be secured through Section 106. The Council would make sure there was no slippage in the timetable for infrastructure to be in place.

Councillor Alex Riley requested Section 106 for Northstowe Phase 2 be as solid as possible and raised concern that there was not a town park in the Northstowe plans.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **AGREED** the interim recommendations and **RECOMMENDED** that these be endorsed by Cabinet and forwarded to the Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee.

9. SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15

The Scrutiny Annual Report 2014/15 was **NOTED**.

Councillor Harford would liaise with Democratic Services to amend the section on the Orchard Park Working Group.

10. WORK PROGRAMME 2015

The Work Programme was noted.

Councillor Bunty Waters requested that the committee look at Mears following issues experienced in Bar Hill following flooding. The Chief Executive informed the committee that the Council would be reviewing its contract with Mears and advised the Scrutiny and Overview Committee could add value by contributing to evidence gathering. The Chief Executive would liaise with the Director of Housing and Democratic Services regarding this and suggested that the Director of Housing may add an item to the next Scrutiny Committee meeting agenda regarding the timescale and process for reviewing the Mears contract.

11. MONITORING THE EXECUTIVE

Councillor Lynda Harford had attended the Leaders Portfolio Holder meeting in her capacity as Scrutiny Monitor and informed the committee that further Community Chest funding had been allocated by the Leader.

12. TO NOTE THE DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The dates of future meeting were noted. The next meeting would take place on Thursday 2 July at 6pm.

The Meeting ended at 8.20 p.m.
