

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Thursday, 13 March 2008

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
	NIC Wright	Planning Services Portfolio Holder

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Holly Adams	Democratic Services Officer
Philip Aldis	Community Safety Officer
Steve Hampson	Executive Director
Greg Harlock	Chief Executive
Paul Quigley	Environmental Services Manager

Councillors Mrs EM Heazell, SGM Kindersley, Mrs CAED Murfitt, Mrs DP Roberts and RT Summerfield were in attendance, by invitation.

Procedural Items

132. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Leader was authorised to sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2008.

133. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor MP Howell declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the Housing Futures item, as an employee of a Registered Social Landlord. He left the meeting room during consideration of this item and did not take part in the discussion or the vote.

Councillor Mrs DP Roberts declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in the Housing Futures item, as a member of South Cambridgeshire Against Transfer (SCAT). Notwithstanding this interest, she remained in the meeting room during the discussion, but did not participate.

134. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

Recommendations to Council

135. COMMUNITY SAFETY 3-YEAR ROLLING PLAN 2008-2011

The Community Safety Three-Year Rolling Plan 2008-2011, produced and overseen by the South Cambridgeshire Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP), set out the CDRP's aims, objectives and its five priorities. Council officers would monitor performance against the targets set out in the plan, which had already been the subject of widespread consultation.

The Community Services Portfolio Holder reminded those present that South Cambridgeshire remained a low-crime area compared to the national average, but that there were still areas of concern. Members discussed the successful implementation of Neighbourhood Panels and considered it worthwhile to identify some funding in the 2008/09 municipal year to help support and expand the panels' scope and to offer assistance with communications to ensure that as many people as possible were aware of the panels. Although speeding traffic, a major concern for residents, had not been identified as a CDRP priority, the three-year rolling plan identified the partnership's joint priorities rather than the priorities of the individual partners. The police had identified speeding traffic as one of their priorities.

Cabinet **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** adoption of the Community Safety Three-Year Rolling Plan 2008-2011.

136. SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY 2008-2011

The Leader, who was chairman of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) Board, commended the Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2011 and highlighted its links to the Council's Corporate Objectives and to the Neighbourhood Panels discussed earlier in the meeting. He expressed some reservations about those National Indicators which measured performance based on perceptions rather than on evidence, and also the target for measuring those VAT registered businesses in the district showing growth, which precluded many small or new businesses which were not yet VAT registered but which played an important role in the local economy.

Members seeking detailed information about the LSP consultation and discussion group results were asked to contact Gemma Webb, Strategic Partnerships Officer.

Cabinet **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** adoption of the Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2011, subject to the "signing-off" of the Strategy by the Local Strategic Partnership Board on 9 April 2008.

Decisions made by Cabinet

137. RECAP WASTE DESIGN GUIDE

The Recycling in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership (RECAP) Design Guide would ensure that a more consistent waste management-centred approach was adopted at the planning and design stage of developments, resulting in the provision, as far as practicable, of integrated waste management infrastructure which supported sustainable growth and development.

Cabinet **AGREED**

(a) to adopt the RECAP Waste Design Guide as Council policy; and

- (b) that, in the longer term, the RECAP Waste Design Guide should be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) under Cambridgeshire County Council's new Minerals and Waste Plan, once approved.

138. INVESTMENT STRATEGY (TREASURY MANAGEMENT) 2008/09

The 2008-09 investment strategy sought to maintain the status quo, which had again produced good results; the only change from previous years was, given the current financial climate, the removal from the list of approved organisations and limits a maximum investment of £1 million in building societies with assets between £350 million and £1,500 million.

Cabinet congratulated the treasury and investment team for another successful year and **APPROVED** the Investment Strategy 2008/09.

139. HOUSING FUTURES: AGREEMENT OF PROCESS FOR THE SELECTION OF MODEL FOR A NEW LANDLORD

Councillor MP Howell, having declared a personal and prejudicial interest as an employee of a Registered Social Landlord (RSL), left the room during consideration of this item and did not take part in the discussion or vote.

Full Council agreed on 31 January 2008 to develop a housing transfer proposal in consultation with tenants and delegated authority to the Leader and Cabinet to agree the new landlord selection process, the results of which would be presented to Council for approval. The Independent Tenant Advisor (ITA), PS Consultants, had already reported to the Housing Futures Working Group that consultation work carried out during the first phase of the Housing Futures process suggested that there would be no support amongst tenants for the model of the new landlord to be an existing housing association, and so it was proposed that a new landlord selection panel be established to look at the remaining options of either a new stand-alone housing association or a subsidiary of an existing or new group of housing associations.

The Housing Options Portfolio Holder drew attention to the fact that, if a stand-alone association were selected, a shadow board would be established in the early stages, appointments to which would be made according to government guidelines. Members of the new landlord selection panel could be included if they met the criteria set out in the guidelines, but appointments would not be made automatically from amongst those who had participated in previous stages of the process.

The importance of staff involvement was emphasised and it was confirmed that the officer representatives on the landlord selection panel would have equal status to elected members and elected tenant representatives, but they would not participate in voting for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Officers had expressed support for this decision, which could have created tensions by jeopardising their apolitical role by asking them to make potentially political decisions. The Executive Director explained that the Corporate Project Manager (Housing Futures) had received very positive feedback about the officer communications group, which involved staff from the Cambourne offices, Waterbeach depot and sheltered housing schemes. Officers on the landlord selection panel would be accountable to all staff and would be expected to attend meetings of the officer communications group to disseminate information and receive feedback.

Following a suggestion that the elected member representatives on the landlord selection panel be one member from each of the three recognised political groups, and

two of the three non-group members filling the other two positions, the Housing Options Portfolio Holder assured members that he would be addressing concerns raised about applying political proportionality to the composition of the panel.

The Housing Options Portfolio Holder had received an e-mail on 12 March 2008 from an elected tenant representative on the Housing Futures Working Group (HWFG), and addressed the concerns raised in the e-mail, which was read out in part at the meeting and is available in full on the Council's website:

- Concerns about tenants' awareness of opportunities to participate were noted but a good response already had been received and it was likely that there would be tenant elections for the various positions on the panel;
- It was confirmed that sheltered housing tenants would elect their own representative if more than one candidate came forward; the same held true for leaseholders and their representative.
- During the elections held last year for the tenant representatives on the Housing Futures Working Group, individuals had been allowed to say as much or as little as they wanted in support of their candidacy, but the previous exercise had led to confusion amongst a large number of tenants as the candidates' statements had been distributed by the Council and had been seen mistakenly as views endorsed by the Council. All interested parties for the landlord selection panel would be asked to complete the candidate profile form, which would be distributed by the Council, but any further information they wished to disseminate amongst tenants in their geographic region should be undertaken by the candidates themselves;
- The report stated specifically that any elected representatives who created a vacancy by not taking up their place on the panel or through resignation would be replaced by the tenant with the next highest number of votes in that geographical area. The Ombudsman, having considered a complaint made by the e-mail's author, had found that there was no case to answer and therefore the appointments made to fill those vacancies which had arisen on the Housing Futures Working Group had been done correctly.

Cabinet **AGREED**

- (a) that a new landlord selection panel be set up of five tenants, five staff and five elected Members that will evaluate the options and present their findings to the Housing Options Portfolio Holder who will make a recommendation to Full Council on the preferred model of new landlord, which will be either:
 - (i) a new stand-alone housing association or;
 - (ii) a new subsidiary of an existing or new group of housing associations;
- (b) the draft terms of reference for the new landlord panel as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (c) that tenant representatives on the selection panel be drawn from the various interest groups within the tenant population as follows:

Sheltered Housing Forum representative	1
Leaseholder Forum representative	1
Representatives of other tenants by geographical area as follows:	
East	1
South	1
West	1
- (d) that an election be the agreed means of deciding on representation for non-sheltered housing tenants should there be more than one expression of interest in any of the three geographical areas;
- (e) that the elected Member representatives be nominated in accordance with political proportionality and that invitations be extended to each of the groups;
- (f) that staff representation on the new landlord selection panel comprise the

- Housing Services Manager, Property Services Manager, Supported Housing Manager, Property Sales Officer and a nominated union representative but that wider staff engagement form a key part of the process;
- (g) that the Housing Options Portfolio Holder make a recommendation to Full Council based on the outcome of the work of the new landlord selection panel at the end of the initial activity within the process; and
 - (h) that a further competitive stage to the selection process be commenced only in the event that establishing a new subsidiary of an existing Registered Social Landlord (RSL) or establishing a new group of housing associations is the recommendation considered and agreed by Full Council.

140. DATA QUALITY STRATEGY

The Council had implemented the CorVu performance management system which would provide much clearer performance indicators, but the accuracy of the results was dependent upon the quality of the data input, and therefore a Data Quality Strategy had been devised to ensure the most precise statistics. The Planning Services Portfolio Holder, lead member for performance management, commended the system as a very useful tool for all members, particularly those on the Council's scrutiny committees. The information generated by CorVu would be available on the public website likely from the end of April 2008 once officer and member training sessions had been completed.

Members were reminded of the training session scheduled for 14 April 2008. Further training would be organised after the 1 May elections for new members and those unable to attend the April session.

Cabinet **AGREED** to

- (a) approve the data quality strategy; and
- (b) request Corporate Managers to ensure that the requirements of the strategy be implemented in their areas of responsibility.

Standing Items

141. INSPIRE PROJECT

The Improvement Board had not met since the February Cabinet meeting and was not scheduled to meet until after the Corporate Governance Re-inspection report had been received on 20 March 2008. Cabinet **NOTED** the progress of the Inspire Project.

142. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

There were no issues arising from the Scrutiny and Overview Committee.

143. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

There were no issues arising from the Policy Development Committee.

144. UPDATES FROM CABINET MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Members noted that Councillor Dr DR Bard had been interviewed in the local media earlier in the day about the distribution of funding from Cambridgeshire Horizons towards aspects of the Local Development Framework.

**The Meeting ended at 2.54
p.m.**
