

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Finance Portfolio Holder's Meeting held on
Thursday, 19 March 2009 at 10.00 a.m.

Portfolio Holder: AG Orgee

Councillors in attendance:

Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitor: R Hall

Opposition spokesmen RB Martlew and RT Summerfield

Officers:

Patrick Adams	Senior Democratic Services Officer
Adrian Burns	Head of Accountancy
Greg Harlock	Chief Executive
Lee Phanco	Head of Revenues

37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

38. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2009 were accepted as a correct record.

39. FINANCE AND SUPPORT SERVICES SERVICE PLAN

The Head of Revenues presented the detailed plan for the delivery and improvement of Finance and Support Services over the 2009/10 financial year.

Collection of rates and Council Tax

The Revenues Manager explained that due to the economic downturn the collection of the National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) had been 99% against a target for 99.8% and as a result the targets in the Plan had been adjusted. Unsurprisingly this was mirroring a national trend.

In response to questioning the Head of Revenues explained that the collection rate for Council Tax had not yet been affected by the economic downturn, although more effort had been required to maintain the current level of performance.

Processing of Benefit claims

The Head of Revenues explained that the target to process all benefit claims within 20 days was measured from the date of the receipt of the application. There was an internal target to write to applicants requesting more information within three days of the receipt of an application. It was noted that the application form had achieved the Plain English Crystal Mark and it was expected that the new form would also achieve this accreditation. It was understood that a new shorter application form that could be used by the majority of pensioners would be introduced.

Setting challenging targets

The Revenues Manager explained that the aim was to ensure that targets within the Service Plan were challenging but achievable. It was noted that any requests to revise the targets in the Service Plan would be taken to a meeting of the Portfolio Holder.

The Finance Portfolio Holder

AGREED The Finance and Support Services Service Plan, with the exception of the Operational and Improvement Plan from Legal, which had not been included in the Plan.

It was **noted** that to avoid unnecessary delay the Finance Portfolio Holder planned to agree the Operational and Improvement Plan from Legal prior to his next Portfolio Holder meeting.

40. CAPITAL STRATEGY AND ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Finance Portfolio Holder invited questions from the members present on the Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan.

Car parks

It was agreed that officers would report back on the apparent discrepancy between the number of car parks owned by the Council and the authority's policy regarding their disposal. **Action Adrian Burns.**

Allotments

It was agreed that officers would report back on the Council's current policy regarding the ownership of land for use as allotments. **Action Adrian Burns.**

Disposal of Council land

The Chief Executive explained that land that was currently marked for affordable housing would be transferred to South Cambs Village Homes if the Council's tenants vote in favour of the transfer of the housing stock. He explained that the past practice had been to transfer the land for little or no charge to Housing Associations, but under the proposals to transfer the land to South Cambs Village Homes the Council might receive extra revenue.

The Finance Portfolio Holder

AGREED The Capital Strategy 2009 – 2010 and the Asset Management Plan 2009/10 – 2011/12, subject to minor corrections and the authority to approve these was delegated to the Head of Accountancy.

41. TREASURY MANAGEMENT

The Head of Accountancy tabled a paper which showed the Council's investments with banks and building societies as at 18 March 2009.

The following points were noted:

- The Council's current investments were not effected by interest rate changes, as the interest rates were fixed throughout the lifetime of the investment
- Scarborough Building Society would be merging with the Skipton Building Society
- Historically the Council had achieved more revenue than expected from the interest on its investments
- The investments as at 18 March would produce interest of just over £0.5 million in 2009/10 with additional interest to come during 2009/10 from further investments arising from cash flows in the year.

The Finance Portfolio Holder **NOTED** the report.

42. FINANCIAL POSITION

The Head of Accountancy presented this report, which indicated the projected overspends and underspends for 2008/09.

It was noted that any rollover of an unspent budget to the following year would require the agreement of the Finance Portfolio Holder.

It was understood that income from Development Control and Building Control was less than expected due to the economic downturn.

It was noted that whilst underspends were more palatable than overspends the aim was to achieve accurate budgeting.

The Finance Portfolio Holder **NOTED** the report.

43. LAND CHARGES FEES 2009/10

It was noted that this item had been withdrawn because it amounted to a policy change and so had to be decided by Cabinet.

44. FORWARD PLAN

The Finance Portfolio Holder **NOTED** the Forward Plan.

45. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 21 April 2009 at 3pm.

The Meeting ended at 11.00 a.m.
