

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on  
Thursday, 8 October 2009

**PRESENT:** Councillor RMA Manning (Leader of the Council)  
Councillor SM Edwards (Deputy Leader of the Council, Finance and Staffing  
Portfolio Holder)

<b>Councillors:</b>	TD Bygott	Sustainability, Procurement and Efficiency Portfolio Holder
	Mrs SM Ellington	Environmental Services Portfolio Holder
	MP Howell	Housing Portfolio Holder
	TJ Wotherspoon	Policy and Performance Portfolio Holder
	NIC Wright	Planning Portfolio Holder

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Patrick Adams	Senior Democratic Services Officer
Philip Bird	Revenues Manager
Alex Colyer	Executive Director, Corporate Services
Dawn Graham	Benefit Manager
Steve Hampson	Executive Director, Operational Services
Greg Harlock	Chief Executive
Stephen Hills	Corporate Manager, Affordable Homes
Nicole Kritzinger	Economic Development Officer
Jo Mills	Corporate Manager, New Communities
Dale Robinson	Corporate Manager, Health & Environmental Services
Susan Walford	Health Protection Team Leader

Councillors Mrs FAR Amrani, RE Barrett, JD Batchelor, SGM Kindersley, MB Loynes, MJ Mason, Mrs CAED Murfitt, CR Nightingale, Mrs BZD Smith and RT Summerfield were in attendance, by invitation.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dr DR Bard.

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### **Procedural Items**

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#### **32. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Leader was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2009 as a correct record.

#### **33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **34. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Leader announced that, with effect from 10 December 2009, all Cabinet meetings would begin at 7 pm instead of 2 pm. This affects previously-scheduled meetings on:

- 10 December 2009
- 14 January 2010
- 11 February 2010

- 11 March 2010
- 8 April 2010
- 13 May 2010

The 12 November 2009 meeting would be at 2 pm, as originally scheduled.

### **35. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

There were no public questions received.

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#### **Recommendation to Council**

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### **36. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder presented this item which set the financial parameters for the service planning and budget preparation processes for the Council. Officers were congratulated for identifying £481,000 worth of savings, greatly exceeding the target of £325,000. Councillor Edwards expressed confidence that the twelve actions proposed at September's Cabinet meeting would be delivered within the budget of £50,000. It was explained that the Council was legally required to undergo the Job Evaluation Project, to ensure that it paid its staff equally, regardless of gender.

The Environmental Services Portfolio Holder explained that not only had £333,000 of savings been identified through the Refuse and Recycling Strategic Review, it was expected that the total savings would increase to approximately £460,000. Cabinet would receive a report on this at its November 2009 meeting.

#### **Cabinet RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL**

- (a) approval of the twelve actions as proposed at the September 2009 meeting of Cabinet;
- (b) that £50,000 be provided in the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to meet the cost of the twelve actions;
- (c) approval of MTFS and the underlying assumptions as the basis for the planning of the budget for 2010/11 onwards; and
- (d) approval of the next steps as outlined in the report to Cabinet.

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#### **Policy Items**

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### **37. AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN**

The joint Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) sought to bring about the changes required to achieve the health-based national air quality objectives and improve local air quality and quality of life for local residents.

It was noted that measuring stations at Impington and Milton had indicated that the national air quality objectives were not being met along this stretch of the A14. It was understood that, whilst the economic downturn had resulted in a decrease in the amount of Heavy Goods Vehicles on the A14, the traffic volume was expected to increase due to improvements to the road and the new development in the area.

Cabinet **AGREED** to adopt the joint Air Quality Action Plan as prepared by South Cambridgeshire District Council, Huntingdonshire District Council and Cambridge City Council for submission to DEFRA by January 2010.

### **38. PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY**

The Performance Improvement Strategy for 2009-2012 related to the systems and cultures of the Council in all aspects of delivering better services to the public. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee had requested minor amendments to the Strategy, clarifying the role of that body in the improvement process. A member workshop be arranged to train councillors on their role in the performance improvement process, particularly how this could be achieved through use of the CorVu performance management system, and it was hoped that this workshop would be well attended.

It was agreed that the achievements of the Council, such as Investors in People accreditation and completion of Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government, should be better publicised.

Whilst it was recognised that the Council would find it increasingly challenging to deliver improvements whilst reducing its budget, it was acknowledged that accurate performance management would assist the authority in recognising which areas needed extra resources and which areas where budget reductions could be made.

Cabinet **AGREED** to adopt the 2009-2012 Performance Improvement Strategy.

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### **Operational Items**

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### **39. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) SUBSIDY REVIEW: RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION**

The Housing Portfolio Holder introduced the Council's formal response to the Government's consultation paper on the reform of council housing finance. He explained that under these proposals the national £17 billion debt would be distributed amongst housing authorities and that this Council would be expected to take on £164 million of that debt. Details on how this would be repaid were unclear although it would have to be paid from the Housing Revenue Account and not the General Fund. It was understood that these proposals made a future stock transfer unviable. Some authorities would benefit from these proposals, which would make it difficult to unite Councils against the Government's plans, and that those authorities which stood to gain from these proposals were not debt-free and were predominantly Labour-run authorities. It was confirmed that the District's two MPs had been contacted regarding this matter.

Cabinet **AGREED**

- (a) the responses to the Department for Communities and Local Government Housing Revenue Account finance consultation questions as set out in the appendix to the report; and
- (b) to give delegated authority to the Housing Portfolio Holder to amend the Council's response should the need arise.

### **40. ADDRESSING THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN - QUARTERLY REPORT**

Councillor NIC Wright, the lead member for Business and Employment, updated Cabinet

on the delivery of actions proposed to mitigate the impact of the recession on the District. Concern was expressed at the recent changes in the way in which the County Council awarded grants to voluntary organisations, which was seen as unnecessarily bureaucratic.

It was agreed that the hardship rate relief scheme needed to be better advertised.

**Cabinet AGREED**

- (a) that the use of Hardship Rate Relief be reviewed by 31 October 2009;
- (b) that up to £5,000 be made available from the contingency fund to local volunteer services assisting in people being up-skilled and returning to work (Reference Action xii); and
- (c) to approve in principle the following proposals for the contingency fund:
  - (i) consideration of further measures to support businesses, such as working with the Chamber and Business Link, to stimulate innovation and business start-up (Reference Action xiii – cost estimate £15,000); and
  - (ii) consideration of the roll-out of the electronic system to pay invoices more promptly (Reference Action viii – cost to be confirmed. Balance of contingency fund available).

Cabinet **NOTED** the report and progress made on the economic downturn measures, including further actions around payment of invoices stated in Action viii on agenda page 58.

**41. NI179 (FORMERLY ANNUAL EFFICIENCY STATEMENT) 2009/10 FORECAST**

Councillor TD Bygott, lead member for Value for Money, informed Cabinet of the cumulative amount of NI 179 value for money gains forecast to be achieved for the period from 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2010. It was noted that the Scrutiny and Overview Committee had reconvened its Value for Money Task and Finish Group.

Cabinet **AGREED** that the Leader and the Executive Director (Corporate Services), in consultation with the Finance & Staffing and Sustainability, Procurement & Efficiency Portfolio Holders, submit to the Department for Communities and Local Government against NI 179 the forecast of £1,564,000 for the total cumulative ongoing cash-releasing value for money gains expected to be achieved since 1 April 2008 by the end of the 2009/10 financial year.

**42. CONSIDERATION OF REVENUES / BENEFITS PARTNERSHIP WITH ANOTHER LOCAL AUTHORITY / AUTHORITIES**

Cabinet was asked to consider the introduction of a shared service with Uttlesford District Council for the delivery of the Council's Revenues and Benefits services. Whilst it was recognised that the project had the potential to secure significant financial savings and also to deliver key service improvements and strengthen service resilience, Cabinet requested that it receive a further report on this issue, with a business case written by officers instead of by the Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP). To this end it was agreed that the recommendation in the report should be amended to emphasise that the project was currently in the exploratory phase. The Executive Director (Corporate Services) informed the meeting that Uttlesford District Council needed the project to be implemented by the end of 2010.

In response to questioning, Cabinet explained that it was liaising with Local Authorities in the area on the Making Cambridgeshire Count initiative, which sought to encourage greater partnership working in public services across Cambridgeshire. However, any

savings that this project delivered would be in the longer term and would not assist the Council in its bid to reduce the budget by £1.6 million in the next financial year. Uttlesford was a neighbouring authority with a similar rural character to South Cambridgeshire and so was considered by the Cabinet as an ideal choice to engage with in partnership working.

Cabinet **AGREED** that a shared service model be explored in more detail for the delivery of revenues and benefits services from October 2010 in partnership with Uttlesford District Council.

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### Standing Items

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#### **43. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**

Councillor JD Batchelor had brought up matters arising from the previous week's Scrutiny and Overview Committee under the relevant agenda item.

#### **44. UPDATES FROM CABINET MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

None.

#### **45. REPORTS FROM CABINET MEMBERS ATTENDING PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS**

The Housing Portfolio Holder had visited the Sheltered Housing scheme at Gamlingay to explain how reductions in the housing budget would affect the service residents received, and thanked the other councillors who had been present at that meeting for their support.

The Leader explained that November's Cabinet would be asked to appoint Councillor Mrs BZD Smith as the Member Champion for Young People. Councillor Mrs Smith had been appointed to both the Scrutiny and Overview Committee's Young Person's Task and Finish Group and the Cambridgeshire Young Person's Strategic Partnership.

The Leader stated that Reports from Member Champions would become a standing item on Cabinet agendas in the future.

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**The Meeting ended at 3.55  
p.m.**

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