

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Thursday, 8 April 2010 at 7.00 p.m.

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

Councillors: David Bard New Communities Portfolio Holder
Tom Bygott Policy and Performance Portfolio Holder
Sue Ellington Environmental Services Portfolio Holder
Mark Howell Housing Portfolio Holder
Nick Wright Planning Portfolio Holder

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Holly Adams Democratic Services Team Leader
Alex Colyer Executive Director, Corporate Services
Steve Hampson Executive Director, Operational Services
Greg Harlock Chief Executive
Paul Howes Corporate Manager, Community and Customer Services

Councillors Roger Hall, James Hockney, Sebastian Kindersley, Cicely Murfitt, Charles Nightingale and Bridget Smith were in attendance for all or part of the meeting, by invitation.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Tim Wotherspoon.

Procedural Items

86. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Leader signed the minutes of the 11 February 2010 meeting as a correct record.

87. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

88. LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader made two announcements:

(1) Uttlesford District Council (UDC) had confirmed formally that it would not continue with the proposed partnership arrangements for a shared revenues and benefits service, and gave notice that it intended to claim some costs against South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC). The Chief Executive had advised UDC that SCDC would meet any such claim with a strong rebuttal and possibly a counter-claim, as it was this authority's opinion that the offer was still on the table if UDC wished to enter into partnership arrangements. Senior Management Team would make a final report to Cabinet on 13 May 2010 on the conclusion of the project.

(2) On 25 March 2010 the Housing Minister announced proposals to end the current

housing subsidy system, and was seeking the voluntary agreement of councils in England to redistribute £25 billion of housing debt as a 'once and for all settlement', in return for which councils would be able to retain all of the rent which they collected, together with the proceeds of right to buy sales, both of which currently are pooled across England. The Minister also announced proposals to use any 'surplus' generated to fund new council house building and to provide new social housing grant to help councils get their housing stock up to the Decent Homes Standard. Authorities like SCDC in a 'negative subsidy' would instead have to pay the costs of servicing this new debt, so there might not be any immediate benefit to the authority's finances. In SCDC's case, the authority was being asked to take on up to £198 million of new debt. A detailed report on the implications to the Council and its suggested response to the proposals would be presented to the Housing Portfolio Holder at his 19 May 2010 meeting, with recommendations to Council at its 27 May 2010 meeting.

The Leader also wished good luck to those councillors seeking re-election on 6 May.

89. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None received.

Recommendations to Council

90. CORPORATE PLAN 2010/11

Cabinet received the draft Corporate Plan 2010/11, which represented the culmination of the service and budget-setting processes begun in autumn 2009, and which formed part of the Council's policy framework, setting out progress against targets during the past year and plans for the coming year. The Corporate Manager (Community and Customer Services) undertook to incorporate amendments made by the Cabinet.

Cabinet **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** that the Corporate Plan 2010/11 as amended by Cabinet be adopted, subject to the Chief Executive being authorised to approve the final draft for publication, incorporating performance information and achievements for the 2009/10 year for which final information was awaited, and other minor amendments.

91. FRINGE SITES JOINT DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE - REVIEW OF SITE BOUNDARIES

Cabinet **DEFERRED** consideration of this item to allow preparation of a revised report detailing the implications of Marshall Aerospace's recent announcement of its intention to remain in Cambridge.

Decisions made by Cabinet

92. LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT (LAA) ANNUAL REFRESH 2010-11

The Leader presented the refreshed Cambridgeshire Local Area Agreement (LAA) 2008-2011, which set out performance indicators and targets for Cambridgeshire authorities, a number of which had been revised in light of the economic downturn.

Since publication of the report, the Cambridgeshire Together Board had estimated that, based on current performance, it was likely that they would receive between £1.4 and £1.9 million of the available reward money figure (£3.3 million).

The Chief Executive explained that, due to the complexities of the LAA structure, the Secretary of State had already approved the refreshed LAA after its submission by the lead partner authority, Cambridgeshire County Council. The District Council had already made its representations through its membership of the Cambridgeshire Together Board.

Cabinet, having had regard to every local improvement target specified in the Local Area Agreement that related to this authority, **ENDORSED** the refreshed Local Area Agreement 2008-11.

93. ADDRESSING THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN - YEAR-END REPORT

The Planning Portfolio Holder commended the continuing success of the Council's economic development work, paying special tribute to the efforts of Economic Development Officer Nicole Kritzinger, which had seen the Council's profile raised significantly in the business community. He explained that the Economic Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) had been delayed due to the amount of officer time required to review all the representations made on the Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document, but that the SPD remained a high priority and was on schedule for completion by 2012.

Cabinet added its thanks to the Economic Development Officer and

- (a) **NOTED** the report and the progress made on the economic downturn measures;
- (b) **AGREED** that the Council sign up to the prompt payment code; and
- (c) **ENDORSED** the actions and progress to date, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, and following measures and actions:
 - (i) The development and launch of the South Cambridgeshire Business Competition;
 - (ii) The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder's decision to amend performance indicator SF752 to require 70% of undisputed invoices to be paid within ten *working* days in 2010/11;
 - (iii) Senior Management Team consideration of the full implementation of paperless procure-to-pay systems;
 - (iv) Continuing promotion and operation of the Hardship Rate Relief Scheme to support local businesses;
 - (v) Continuing promotion and operation of the Business Support Fund, in partnership with Business Link, to assist companies most at risk from the slowing economy; and
 - (vi) Use of any remaining funds to support businesses in the implementation of the above measures.

Standing Items

94. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Nothing to report.

95. REPORT OF THE FINANCE TASK AND FINISH GROUP OF THE SCRUTINY AND

OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Councillor JA Hockney, Chairman of the Finance Task and Finish Group, presented the Group's final report to Cabinet, updating members on the progress against the recommendations made in the March 2009 interim report, and introducing the Group's more recent work on value for money and public consultation. The major issues identified were the need to publicise the excellent value for money provided by the Council, and to better communicate how money is spent on services in each specific parish.

Cabinet thanked the Task and Finish Group for its report and recommendations, but expressed some reservation about the recommendation to undertake joint public consultation with partner authorities, which could increase the difficulty of raising public awareness of the difference between the District Council's responsibility to collect council tax on behalf of a number of public services, and the small precept the District Council actually demanded.

The Executive Director (Corporate Services) was asked to investigate whether the logos from the other precepting authorities could be included on the council tax demand, although it was essential that the District Council logo be prominent so residents could identify the collection authority if they had a query about the bill.

Cabinet **WELCOMED** the report of the Finance Task and Finish Group and **INSTRUCTED** officers to draft an updated action plan for consideration at the 13 May 2010 Cabinet meeting.

96. CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S TASK AND FINISH GROUP OF THE SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Councillor Mrs Bridget Smith, Chairman of the Children's and Young People's Task and Finish Group, presented the Group's report and recommendations to Cabinet. The Group had met with a number of children and young people, and had identified that a common priority for youth was affordable public transport links between villages to enable independent access to facilities and activities. Members were encouraged to help their parish councils identify ways for youth involvement in local issues.

The Task and Finish Group made a number of recommendations about the substantial number of Cambridgeshire Together partnerships and the need to ensure that the Council was making the most efficient use of members' and officers' time with a thorough review to identify gaps and to minimise overlap. Councillor Dr David Bard requested that a review of all Council appointments to outside bodies also be undertaken.

Cabinet, during its forthcoming review of the Council's Aims, Approaches and Actions, would consider whether twice-yearly meetings with young people could increase youth engagement with local government.

Cabinet **WELCOMED** the report from the Children's and Young People's Task and Finish Group and **INSTRUCTED** officers to report on the feasibility of the recommendations and draft an action plan for consideration at a future meeting of Cabinet.

97. UPDATES FROM CABINET MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Mrs Bridget Smith, Champion for Children and Young People, presented

reports on the 22 February 2010 meeting of the Children's Trust and the March 2010 meeting of the Children and Young People's Area Partnership (City and South Cambs).

In response to queries about embedding the use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), the Executive Director (Operational Services) assured members that the District Council had the necessary infrastructure in place to respond appropriately if a situation arose, and that the appropriate officers were receiving updated training as required.

Cabinet asked Senior Management Team to ensure that the actions identified in Councillor Mrs Smith's report were addressed, and asked Councillor Mrs Smith to request that the Children's Trust work plan include investigation into the lack of support and treatment available for youth over the age of sixteen with eating disorders.

Cabinet thanked Councillor Mrs Smith for her reports.

98. REPORTS FROM CABINET MEMBERS ATTENDING PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

Councillor NIC Wright reported on his recent visit to Orwell Parish Council, where he and the Planning Area Team Leader had addressed a number of concerns about planning matters.

99. REPORTS FROM MEMBER CHAMPIONS

Nothing to report.

**The Meeting ended at 9.21
p.m.**
