

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Planning and New Communities Joint Portfolio Holders' Meeting held  
on  
Tuesday, 1 September 2009 at 9.45 a.m.

Portfolio Holders: Dr DR Bard and NIC Wright

### **Councillors in attendance:**

Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitors: Mrs VM Barrett and R Hall

Opposition spokesmen: Mrs PM Bear, AN Berent and JH Stewart

Also in attendance: Mrs PS Corney, Mrs JM Guest, Mrs EM Heazell,  
Mrs CAED Murfitt, RJ Turner and  
Dr SEK van de Ven

### **Officers:**

David Grimster	Accountant
Peter Harris	Principal Accountant (General Fund and Costing)
Gareth Jones	Corporate Manager, Planning & Sustainable Communities
Fiona McMillan	Senior Lawyer and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Jo Mills	Corporate Manager, New Communities
Ian Senior	Democratic Services Officer

## **16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **17. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The Planning Portfolio Holder and New Communities Portfolio Holder agreed that the minutes of the meetings held on 19 June 2009 and 7 July 2009 were correct records, and signed them accordingly.

## **18. REVIEW OF CHAIRMAN'S DELEGATION MEETING**

On 7 October 2009, Planning Committee would be considering the future of the Chairman's Delegation Meeting (ChDM). The Planning Portfolio Holder had been consulted and had opted to consider his response at a Planning and New Communities Portfolio Holders' meeting, at which a number of parish council's were represented. Comments had been received from the parish councils in Bourn, Caxton, Comberton, Harlton, Heydon, Histon, Impington, Linton, Little Gransden, Longstowe, Meldreth, Milton, Stapleford, Steeple Morden and Swavesey.

Recognising parish councils' concern relating to the transparency of discussion at ChDM, the Corporate Manager (Planning and Sustainable Communities) reminded those present that such meetings had been introduced as a means of introducing an element of local member involvement at officer delegation meetings. ChDM. He emphasised that ChDM did not determine planning applications but simply decided whether to forward those applications before it to officers or to the full Planning Committee. It represented a statutory procedure with democratic input.

Central Government required a minimum of 90% of all planning applications to be dealt

with under delegation. The Planning Portfolio Holder reminded those present that this created its own pressure in terms of timescale. He also noted that every application present at ChDM was accompanied by a report prepared by officers.

The Planning Portfolio Holder confirmed that the options outlined in the report had been publicised through the Weekly Bulletin.

Members and parish council representatives made the following points:

- The notice given of upcoming items was often too short
- Transparency and local knowledge were crucial
- Parish councils are consulted early in the process and are often unaware of what other consultees are saying. This made it difficult to identify and request Conditions.
- Parish councils should at least be allowed to listen to discussions, even if representatives could not speak
- Reversion to all-day Committee meetings considering items previously dealt with under delegation had significant cost and officer-time implications, and would conflict with the Council's aim to determine at least 90% of applications at delegation.
- Approximate times for ChDM agenda items would be useful
- Parish councils and local members sometimes have different opinions about planning applications
- Parish councils should be given "listening rights" at ChDM for a trial period of 6-12 months
- All comments submitted in writing were given proper consideration

It was suggested that where a local member could not attend ChDM, an elected or co-opted parish Councillor should be allowed to attend, with full speaking rights, as substitute. In reply, the Legal Officer said that only local members had the right to speak at ChDM.

The Planning Portfolio Holder **agreed** to submit the following consultation response to the Planning Committee meeting on 7 October 2009:

"Central Government requires that South Cambridgeshire District Council determines a minimum of 90% of planning applications through delegation to officers. The Council introduced the Chairman's Delegation Meeting in an effort to recognise a statutory process but, at the same time, inject an element of local democracy. It is important to make sure that procedures remain effective, relevant and widely accepted. My view is that the contribution made by the Chairman's Delegation Meeting in its present form should be recognised and welcomed, but that, in the interests of transparency, interested parties (applicants, agents, objectors and parish councils) should from now on be invited to attend meetings, as observers only without speaking rights, subject to review in October 2010. Some amendments to the current Chairman's Delegation Procedure would be necessary for clarification and an amended procedure should be brought to the November meeting of the Committee. "

## **19. PRE-APPLICATION CHARGING - PROGRESS TO DATE**

Further to Minute no. 8 of the meeting held on 7 July 2009, the Planning Portfolio Holder considered a report containing more information about the charging structure for pre application advice.

Referring to paragraph 5 of the report, the Corporate Manager (Planning and Sustainable Communities) said that, on 11 September 2009, he would be leading a session at which all the Chief Planning Officers in Cambridgeshire would be focussing on South Cambridgeshire District Council's pre-application charging scheme.

The Planning Portfolio Holder welcomed the positive impact the scheme had had so far on the Planning Service.

The Planning Portfolio Holder

1. **authorised** officers to

- a) charge a set fee, as set out below, covering the costs of planning officer time and specialist internal and external consultation

	<b>Written advice only</b>	<b>Meeting with planning officer (including written follow-up)</b>	<b>Follow-up meeting (including written advice)</b>
<p><b>Strategic Development</b> For all developments of over 100 residential units. For all other uses: over 5000 square metres or on sites greater than 2 hectares in area.</p>	Not applicable	£600 plus VAT	By negotiation
<p><b>Major Development</b> For residential development: 10 or more dwellings, or a site area of 0.5 hectares. For all other uses: 1000 square meters or more of floorspace, or where the site area is 1 hectare or more. This includes changes of use of existing buildings.</p>	£200 plus VAT	£600 plus VAT	£100 plus VAT
<p><b>Minor Development</b> For residential development: one to nine dwellings. For all other uses: new building or change of use of building of up to 999sqm floorspace.</p>	£100 plus VAT	£300 plus VAT	£50 plus VAT
<p><b>House Extension and Alterations</b></p>	No Charge	No Charge	No Charge
<p><b>Listed Building Advice</b></p>	No Charge	No Charge	No Charge
<p><b>Tree Advice</b></p>	No Charge	No Charge	No Charge

**Tree Preservation  
Orders (TPOs) and  
Trees in Conservation  
Area**

No Charge

No Charge

No Charge

- b) defer charging until 1 October 2009
- c) arrange staff training in relation to the role of the duty officer, and the giving of Informal and formal pre-application advice
- d) redesign the website to promote the pre-application advisory service

2. **instructed** officers to present him with a progress report in March 2010 in order to

- a) identify any areas for improvement
- b) review charging levels
- c) quantify use made of the service by Agents
- d) consider whether the service should be extended to other types of application and to functions forming part of the New Communities portfolio.

**20. COMMUNITY FACILITY GRANT APPLICATION - WATERBEACH PARISH COUNCIL**

The New Communities Portfolio Holder considered a request from Waterbeach Parish Council for a grant of £40,000 (10% of the total project costs) towards a new Youth and Community building.

He noted that the total budget for 2009-10 was £100,000, of which £66,149 was available to spend.

The New Communities Portfolio Holder **agreed** to the provision of a grant of £40,000 (10% of the total project costs) towards the costs of a new Youth and Community building at Waterbeach.

**21. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT - PLANNING PORTFOLIO EXPENDITURE TO 31 JULY 2009**

The Planning Portfolio Holder received a report comparing the actual revenue and capital expenditure to 31 July 2009 for the Planning Services Portfolio with the annual budget for the year ending 31 March 2010.

Referring to paragraph 7 of the report, the Corporate Manager (Planning and Sustainable Communities) said that the Planning Service had dispensed with two posts. He added that the Council was likely to receive a lower Planning Delivery Grant in 2009-10, while appeal costs would probably rise, partly as a result of expensive hearings relating to wind farm applications.

The Planning Portfolio Holder noted the report, saying that it reflected the difficult economic conditions facing the Council both now and for the next few years.

**22. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT - NEW COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO EXPENDITURE TO 31 JULY 2009**

The New Communities Portfolio Holder received a report comparing the actual revenue and capital expenditure to 31 July 2009 for the New Communities Portfolio with the annual budget for the year ending 31 March 2010.

The Principal Accountant (General Fund and Costing) said that expenditure levels were on

target, with savings likely to be found from within the growth agenda and community budgets.

The New Communities Portfolio Holder observed that major developments, in particular, were being adversely affected by the current economic climate. It was important to protect frontline services where possible.

**23. FORWARD PLAN**

The Planning Portfolio Holder and New Communities Portfolio Holder noted the Planning and New Communities Portfolio Holders' Forward Plan.

**24. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Planning Portfolio Holder and New Communities Portfolio Holder noted that there would be an extra meeting on Thursday 1 October 2009 to deal with items relevant only to the New Communities Portfolio. It would start at 2.00pm in the Jeavons Room, South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne.

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**The Meeting ended at 11.50 a.m.**

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