

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Thursday, 10 September 2015 at 6.00 p.m.

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

Councillors:	Mark Howell	Housing Portfolio Holder
	Mick Martin	Environmental Services Portfolio Holder
	Peter Topping	Corporate and Customer Services Portfolio Holder
	Robert Turner	Planning Portfolio Holder
	Tim Wotherspoon	Strategic Planning and Transportation Portfolio Holder
	Nick Wright	Economic Development Portfolio Holder

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Alex Colyer	Executive Director, Corporate Services
Jean Hunter	Chief Executive
Stephen Hills	Director of Housing
Richard May	Policy and Performance Manager
Fiona McMillan	Legal & Democratic Services Manager and Monitoring Officer
Caroline Ryba	Head of Finance
Graham Watts	Democratic Services Team Leader

Councillors David Bard, Anna Bradnam, Kevin Cuffley, Sue Ellington, Lynda Harford,
Ben Shelton, Bridget Smith, Bunty Waters and John Williams were in attendance, by invitation.

Procedural Items

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 July 2015 were signed as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of a sentence with reference to Members being identified as owners of risks as part of the Council's Strategic Risk Register in respect of minute number 11.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements were made.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

Operational Items

6. CAMBRIDGESHIRE HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY

Cabinet considered a report which sought approval for the continuation of the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency and to consider the extension of the shared service to include East Cambridgeshire District Council.

Councillor Mark Howell, Portfolio Holder for Housing, presented the report and referred Cabinet to the business case included as an Appendix. He highlighted that in 2010/11, prior to entering into the shared service agreement, it took 58 weeks for requests by service users to be completed and implemented. When the shared service agreement commenced in 2011/12 this had reduced to 42 weeks and the current completion and implementation time for service requests in South Cambridgeshire was currently 17.7 weeks. In answer to a question about the 2010/11 level of performance, it was noted that the national average was 52 weeks at that time. Cabinet, in agreeing that a reduction to 17.7 weeks was an excellent improvement, took the opportunity to put forward its thanks and congratulations to the team.

Discussion ensued on the extension of the shared service to East Cambridgeshire District Council and Members noted that East Cambridgeshire District Council was yet to make a formal decision as to whether or not it intended to join the shared service. Cabinet agreed, in principle, to extend the shared service to include East Cambridgeshire District Council with a condition that this should be reconsidered by Cabinet if a decision by East Cambridgeshire District Council to join the partnership was made after the next six months.

Reference was made to the re-use and recycling of equipment that was surplus to requirements. Councillor Howell explained that the majority of the equipment was bespoke and could therefore not be re-used, with many installations requiring brand new equipment. Cabinet noted, however, that the new procurement contract for the service did include clauses regarding the recycling of equipment, where possible.

Cabinet:

- (a) **APPROVED** the renewal of the shared services agreement for the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency for three years to cover the period 2016/17 to 2018/19.
- (b) **APPROVED** in principle, the extension of the service to cover East Cambridgeshire District Council from April 2016, subject to approval by East Cambridgeshire District Council to join the partnership within the next six months.
- (c) **AGREED** that the extension of the service to cover East Cambridgeshire District Council from April 2016 should be reconsidered by Cabinet if a decision by East Cambridgeshire District Council to join the partnership is made after the next six months.

7. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Consideration was given to a report which provided Cabinet with project planning documentation for the replacement of the financial management system in collaboration with Cambridge City Council and a proposal for South Cambridgeshire District Council's involvement in the project.

Councillor Simon Edwards, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing, presented the report and introduced Caroline Ryba to the meeting who had recently been appointed as the Council's Head of Finance as part of a shared post with the City Council.

Councillor Edwards corrected the 'estimated project costs' section of the Appendix, replacing £4,000 per annum of revenue costs with £47,000 of revenue costs that would become available to contribute to the costs of the new system. He proposed a change to the recommendation included within the report to remove reference to a request for supplementary revenue and reported that this would no longer be required. Approval was now being sought for a supplementary budget of up to £190,000 capital, of which there was surplus available for one-off capital projects such as this proposal for a new financial management system.

Councillor Edwards explained that the current system was inefficient and that a new financial management system would improve performance in terms of making quicker payments to service users and suppliers. He added that the introduction of the same new system that the City Council intended to use would support the potential for a shared financial service between the two authorities in due course, so it made sense to procure the system for both Councils as a joint project at this stage. It was emphasised that any proposal for a shared financial service would have to be supported by a business case and follow the usual decision-making processes of any prospective partner authorities.

A question was asked as to why there was such a large range in the pricing for the new system, noted as being between £100,000 and £190,000 in the report. Ms Ryba reported that these estimated costings were the result of soft market testing, taking into account a range of products that were available and potentially met the two Councils' needs. The cost of the system was indicative at this stage, based solely on the City Council procuring a system on its own rather than with another authority, so it was anticipated that some discount could be expected for volume. The specific requirements and specification would be worked up in accordance with the usual procurement procedures, together with cost and quality.

In answer to a comment that this proposal was premature, it was noted that the process to procure and select this new system would be a long one, with this report and approval for capital funding being the very start of the project. The procurement and selection stage of the process was expected to take three to four months, with implementation taking approximately six to nine months or perhaps as long as a year given that more than one Council may potentially be involved. Members agreed that an update report on this project should be submitted to Cabinet in approximately six months.

Cabinet:

- (a) **ENDORSED** the involvement of this Council in the Financial Management System collaboration project.

- (b) **RECOMMENDED** to Council, for approval, a supplementary budget of up to £190,000 (capital).
- (c) **DELEGATED** the final agreement of these supplementary budgets to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing, the Executive Director (Corporate Services) and the Head of Finance.
- (d) **AGREED** that an update report would be considered by Cabinet in approximately six months.

8. **POSITION STATEMENT 2015/16: FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND RISK**

Cabinet considered a report which provided a statement on the Council's position with regard to its General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and capital budgets, corporate objectives, performance indicators and strategic risks.

Councillor Simon Edwards, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing, presented the financial aspects of the report and emphasised that it represented a very early indication of the Council's financial position, being the first quarter of 2015/16. He highlighted slight overspends in the report of 0.31% for the General Fund and 0.08% for the Housing Revenue Account. The General Fund variance was mainly due to the balance of savings not yet having been identified, whereas the Housing Revenue Account variance related to apportionment departmental account variations. Councillor Edwards reported an increased variance of £120,000 in additional income as a result of development control pre-application fees, which he said reflected the current high workload of the Council's planning team, and added that trade waste income had also increased.

Councillor Peter Topping, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Customer Services, presented the performance and risk sections of the report and was pleased to see that the performance of the Customer Contact Centre was improving, particularly the way in which the Council had been flexible through other service areas to ensure that the Contact Centre could effectively respond to demand. In terms of risk, he stated that the Strategic Risk Register had been amended to reflect the announcements made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer as part of his budget speech, especially around welfare reform and the Housing Revenue Account business plan.

Cabinet noted the significant achievements referred to in paragraph 9 of the report, making specific reference to the following:

- obtaining the Gold Award on the Investors in People standard;
- the Joint Development Control Committee resolving to grant planning permission for 3,500 homes and associated infrastructure at Northstowe as part of phase two.

Discussion ensued on Bed and Breakfast accommodation costs, which was highlighted as a significant risk in light of the Chancellor's budget announcements and the impact this would have on the Council in terms of providing housing or other accommodation for people who were homeless or in great need. Councillor Mark Howell, Portfolio Holder for Housing, shared Members' concerns in this respect and reported that the Council was seeking to manage the situation, but reminded Cabinet that approximately 60% of the authority's Council houses were already allocated to people who were classified as homeless or in great need. Cabinet agreed to amend the Strategic Risk Register to increase the impact of the risk associated with Bed and Breakfast accommodation. Clarification was sought as to why significant projects such as shared services and the

Greater Cambridge City Deal had been identified as creating additional financial pressure, when they were supposed to either deliver efficiency savings or were fully funded. It was noted that this statement was more about resources and recognition that the organisation was under pressure in terms of the level of activity required from officers already employed by the Council to support these key projects.

Discussion also ensued on the following aspects of the financial and performance reports, with further details relating to each issue set out in the appendices to the report:

- illegal traveller encampments or developments and the countywide needs assessment;
- a decision by the Housing Portfolio Holder to approve £500,000 within the capital programme for additional work from commuted sums;
- staff sickness;
- staff turnover.

Cabinet:

- (a) **NOTED** the Council's provisional financial outturn position, together with the performance and risk matters and contextual information set out in the report and Appendices A to C.
- (b) **ENDORSED** the suite of Key Performance Indicators, previously agreed at the Executive Management Board in consultation with Portfolio Holders, set out at Appendix B of the report.
- (c) **APPROVED** the Strategic Risk Register and Matrix set out in Appendices D to E of the report and the allocation of risks to Members, as well as officers, as risk owners, subject to the impact of risk STR25 entitled 'increase in numbers in Bed and Breakfast accommodation' being increased to 5.

Standing Items

9. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

No issues from the Scrutiny and Overview Committee were reported.

10. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE PARTNERSHIPS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Councillor Ben Shelton, Chairman of the Partnerships Review Committee, informed Cabinet that the meeting of the Committee on 22 September 2015 would consider the issue of bus services, with representatives from Stagecoach and Cambridgeshire County Council scheduled to attend.

11. UPDATES FROM CABINET MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Tim Wotherspoon, Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Transportation, reported that he had recently attended the inaugural meeting of the West Anglia Task Force. The Task Force had been established to look at ways to improve train connections between London Liverpool Street and Stansted Airport, as well as provide faster and more frequent train services and better access to Stansted Airport.

12. REPORTS FROM CABINET MEMBERS ATTENDING PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

No reports were received from Cabinet Members attending Parish Council meetings.

13. REPORTS FROM MEMBER CHAMPIONS

Councillor Ben Shelton, Champion for Crime and Disorder, reported that he would be attending the confirmation of the new Chief Constable of Cambridgeshire Constabulary on 16 September 2015.

The Meeting ended at 7.17 p.m.
