SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on
Thursday, 21 March 2019 at 5.20 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Grenville Chamberlain – Chairman
Councillor Brian Milnes – Vice-Chairman

Councillors:

Ruth Betson	Anna Bradnam
Dr. Martin Cahn	Sarah Cheung Johnson
Graham Cone	Dr. Claire Daunton
Dr. Douglas de Lacey	Bill Handley
Steve Hunt	Peter McDonald
Judith Rippeth	

Councillors Philippa Hart, Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Hazel Smith, Aidan Van de Weyer and John Williams were in attendance, by invitation.

Officers:

Victoria Wallace	Democratic Services Officer
Stephen Kelly	Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development
Tom Lewis	Legal Shared Service
Ian Hackett	Service Delivery Manager, 3C ICT
Mike Hill	Interim Chief Executive
Antoinette Jackson	Chief Executive, Cambridge City Council
Bob Palmer	Interim Executive Director
Jonathan Tully	Internal Audit Shared Service
Rebecca Weymouth-Wood	Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service
Heather Jones	3C Building Control
Jo Lancaster	Chief Executive, Huntingdonshire District Council
Oliver Morley	Corporate Director, Huntingdonshire District Council
Heather Wood	Head of Housing Advice and Options

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gavin Clayton.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2019 were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

4. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No public questions had been received.

5. SCRUTINY ICT WORKING GROUP UPDATE

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee received an update from the committee's Vice Chairman on the work of the Scrutiny ICT Working Group. He provided an overview of the group's concerns, which were:

- There had been a lack of testing and resilience of the newly transferred ICT equipment.
- There was a lack of 3C ICT documentation and no central store of information.
- A number of documents were still works in progress.
- There was no exit plan should a decision be taken by any of the partners to exit the service.
- There was no asset register.
- It was difficult to find out what the structure of the service was.
- There seemed to be a lack of transparency in relation to the governance of the service, with no minutes or agendas of board meetings available.

Huntingdonshire District Council's Corporate Director and the Chief Executives of Huntingdonshire District, Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District Councils were in attendance for this item. They provided an overview of the founding principles of the service, which was to collectively pool efforts to develop a robust platform from which to deliver an ICT service. The committee was informed that:

- Due to turnover of staff that had been involved in the setting up of the shared service, some corporate memory had been lost.
- Each authority should have its own repository of information rather than there being a central store of documentation.
- There was no exit plan as at the time of set up of the service, the vision was that it would be an enduring relationship. An exit plan had been planned within one year but had not been actioned.
- The programme officer function had originally been based at Cambourne, but had moved to Huntingdonshire.
- South Cambridgeshire District Council had an Intelligent Client, who monitored performance and acted as the bridge between the organisation and 3C ICT.
- The current governance structure was explained. Governance had changed and evolved and the Chief Executives had been exploring whether a different governance structure was needed for this service. It was acknowledged that the governance was not as strong as it could be. Options for shared scrutiny would also be looked at.
- There was a fine line between what was 3C ICT's responsibility and what was the responsibility of the individual authorities.
- Minutes had been taken of 3C board meetings.
- Whilst it was recognised that governance could be better, 3C ICT had worked for South Cambridgeshire District Council at a strategic level. Any recommendations for how things could be done better would be welcomed.
- Improvement of the Intelligent Client capacity was being looked at.
- There was a partnership agreement.
- When the service was set up it had been decided not to do so as a separate legal entity, as the service needed to be fit for expansion before this could be considered.

In response to queries from the committee, members were informed that:

- Director level meetings took place at least once quarterly and often took place once a month. South Cambridgeshire District Council had always been represented at these meetings. Minutes of these meetings had not always been taken however when they had been, they had been shared with the three partner authorities. All formal governance meetings had been formally minuted. It was pointed out that

these were not publically constituted meetings and therefore the minutes and agendas were not available in the public domain.
- Regarding the ICT outage, the committee was informed that this had been caused by two once in ten year events which had occurred in quick succession.
- The relationship between 3C ICT and the three councils was a partnership rather than a client/provider relationship.

Committee members suggested that:
- The service's Terms of Reference should be reviewed.
- Facilitation of collective scrutiny of the ICT shared service be explored. In response to this the committee was advised by officers that the appropriate level of scrutiny should be considered and that the service should not be over scrutinised; the level of scrutiny should be in line with that of the other shared services.
- The formal reporting mechanism to the partner councils needed to be improved.
- The role of Lead Cabinet Members and Portfolio Holders needed to be looked at.
- Learning needed to be taken from the other shared services, which were working well.
- There should be a shared document repository.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee thanked the Chief Executives and Corporate Director for attending the meeting and supported them looking further at the governance of the 3C ICT service.

6. SHARED SERVICES BUSINESS PLANS

The Interim Executive Director (Corporate Services) presented a report which sought the committee's comments on the 2019/20 Business Plans for the Shared Services. Heads of Service for each of the shared services were present to answer questions.

3C ICT Business Plan
The 3C ICT Business Plan was discussed:
- Members suggested the business plan lacked elements that would normally be included in a business plan.
- The committee was informed that single points of failure had been managed out by technology. The latest version of VM ware provided high levels of resilience. The remaining point of failure was staffing resource, which was challenging and being focussed on.
- The cause of the ICT outage and mitigations that had been put in place were explained.
- The committee suggested compensation from the suppliers be sought for the severing of the fibre cable which had contributed to the ICT outage, as the suppliers had not installed shield cable. The interim Chief Executive was asked to look into this.
- The committee was informed of the server arrangements; there were two separate servers that mirrored each other which were located at Shire Hall and Pathfinder House. There would be no cost incurred for moving the server from Shire Hall when the County Council moved to Alconbury from Shire Hall.
- Savings targets had not been achieved in years one and two during which there had been significant spend on interim staff and consultants, as it had been difficult to replace staff who had been lost through redundancy and retirement. It was requested that in future reports, the previous year's figures be included for the purpose of comparison. A 13% saving was anticipated for the current year and 15% for the following year.

- Due to the resilience that had been put in place, the data loss would only be for a couple of hours rather than days should another ICT outage occur.
- It was clarified that ICT service desk support would continue across all councils and a presence would remain at South Cambridgeshire Hall.
- Regarding IT security, the committee was informed that an IT security team was in place and systems were patched every month. New software would be put in place during the year to identify and predict vulnerability. It was recommended that this information be included in the business plan.
- It was suggested that the details of resilience testing should be included in the business plan.
- It was suggested that the council needed to review its ICT security policy internally.
- It was suggested that an external party should carry out testing and develop a security policy. The committee's Vice Chairman proposed and the committee supported that this be recommended to Cabinet. The committee requested that the interim Chief Executive raised this with the Chief Executives of the partner councils.
- The committee was informed that plans were in place and these were tested and reviewed regularly. The council had its own Business Continuity Plan and ICT Security Policy. 3C ICT had its own Disaster Recovery Plan.
- Concern was raised that information was being held separately by the three councils. Committee members felt that the minutes of 3C shared services board meetings should be shared with all of the partner councils.
- It was pointed out that all the other shared services business plans included concerns about ICT.

Legal Shared Service Business Plan
The committee was informed that:
- An overspend had occurred as there had been a need for greater consultant support to set the service up, which had incurred significant cost.
- The lower success rate of litigation at South Cambridgeshire District Council related to the type of cases the council dealt with compared to the partner authorities. Despite this the committee was informed that SCDC had a healthy success rate. It was clarified that these cases did not relate to the five year land supply.
- The service's customer was the internal department within the council which had instructed the legal shared service.
- Regarding the reference to loss of staff, the committee was informed that it was a difficult market in which to attract and retain staff due to the high cost of living and competing entities offering more competitive salaries, with which the council could not compete. The service was looking at other ways to attract staff within the service's constraints, such as by offering flexible working arrangements and other incentives.

Building Control Shared Service Business Plan
The committee was informed that:
- Competition in building control had brought benefits and the service had improved as a result.
- Local authority building control was not driven by profit and was rigorous, undertaking more checks than private building control may carry out.
- Developers could use cheaper private building control, but the risk of this was reputational damage.
- Plans had been backed by the government to introduce a New Homes Ombudsman to resolve new homes disputes.
- Local authority building control had no power to check that building control had been carried out properly by an independent provider.

Greater Cambridge Shared Waste Service Business Plan

- The inclusion of the local media as a key external stakeholder was queried. The committee was informed that the service relied on the local media to broadcast its messages to the public.
- The committee was informed that three bin crew members had been involved in a serious accident, the circumstances of which were being investigated by the Police. The committee asked that their best wishes for a speedy recovery be passed to those who had been involved in the accident.
- The committee was informed that there was a recruitment and retention plan which was not explicitly mentioned in the business plan, as much work had been done on this in the previous year.
- There was a rolling recruitment process in place for HGV drivers, which was proving to be beneficial.
- Street cleansing was included in the shared service for South Cambridgeshire.

Internal Audit Shared Service Business Plan

The relationship between internal and external audit was explained; internal audit provided assurance that risk management, internal controls and governance was working well, while external audit reviewed the statement of accounts and financial reports.

Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service Business Plan

- Concern was raised that residents may not know what was meant by Greater Cambridge. The committee was informed that work was being done regarding this.
- It was queried whether skills and experience of staff could be rewarded without having to become a manager. It was confirmed that these opportunities were being provided with the creation of higher qualified roles.
- The committee was informed that formal staff consultation had commenced and would continue until 26 April 2019.
- The committee was informed that a new structure was being created where staff could enter the service as a trainee and progress to principal planning officer level within that role. The aim of this was to enrich roles and increase the length of time for which staff remained in post.
- The council could not compete with private sector salaries. Due to this and the high cost of living in South Cambridgeshire, it was a difficult environment in which to recruit.
- An inconsistency in role titles had been recognised and was being addressed. This had highlighted a mismatch between expectation and reality once in post.
- Exit interviews had shown that there were many reasons for staff resigning from the service; these reasons rarely related to job title. More junior staff had been lost due to a lack of opportunity to progress within the organisation. Other staff had left for housing reasons. The Planning Portfolio Holder pointed out that some staff who had left, had later returned to the council.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee voted on whether to recommend that Cabinet approved the 3C ICT Business Plan; 11 members voted **AGAINST** recommending its approval by Cabinet, 1 member (Councillor Cone) voted in favour of recommending its approval by Cabinet and 1 member abstained (Councillor Bradnam).

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee was supportive of the other business plans and **RECOMMENDED** to Cabinet that it approved the business plans for the Planning, Waste, Building Control, Internal Audit and Legal Shared Services

The committee **AGREED** to recommend to Cabinet that an external party should be

commissioned to develop an ICT Security Policy, and asked the Chief Executive to raise this with the other Chief Executives.

7. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2018-2023

The Head of Housing Advice and Options presented the Council's Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023.

The committee was informed that:

- There were 249 live claims for Universal Credit in South Cambridgeshire, of which 79 were Council tenants. The Homelessness Team was dealing with 7 cases at risk of homelessness due to Universal Credit.
- The Council had invested in a complex caseworker in the Housing Advice Team.
- Translators were made available for clients when needed.
- The eligibility criteria in relation to nationality was separate to that for refugees. There was complex Home Office guidance regarding this.
- All housing decisions were issued in writing and were legally required to include information regarding the appeals process.
- The new homelessness legislation had introduced more opportunity for appeal and there was a statutory appeals process.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee **RECOMMENDED** that Cabinet approved the draft Homelessness Strategy 2018-23.

8. REQUEST TO ASSIST WITH THE RESETTLEMENT OF SYRIAN REFUGEES

The Head of Housing Advice and Options presented a report which set out a proposal to enter into a joint pledge to resettle three to five families via the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and the Resettlement of Vulnerable Children Scheme.

The Home Office would need to approve any proposal put forward by the Council. The Council's own housing stock would be looked through and partners would be contacted regarding their available housing stock. Officers would work with Cambridge City Council colleagues to find suitable locations for the resettlement of these families, which were not isolated, were accessible for support workers and from which Cambridge city was accessible. Cambourne, Sawston and Waterbeach were areas of interest as these were large villages with transport links to Cambridge. The Lead Cabinet Member for Housing would be looking at any locations put forward.

The committee was informed that this proposal had not been put forward previously due to concern that the Council would not be able to meet its existing housing need. The political will had since changed.

The committee queried why the resettlement of only three to five families was being proposed. It was explained that this was the number the Local Strategic Migration Partnership (LSMP) approached the council for. Cambridge City Council was keen to look at resettling five families as this made the employment of a support worker viable. The Home Office required offers of accommodation to be submitted in December 2019 and it was not known if proposing the resettlement of five families was achievable within this timescale.

South Cambridgeshire District Council would source the accommodation and Cambridge City Council would provide the support to the resettled families.

The committee was informed that if there was an impact on the waiting time for those already waiting for housing, this would be negligible. It was not envisaged that the waiting time for those in high level need would increase.

Councillors Betson and Cone expressed concern about the potential impact of these proposals on the Council meeting its existing housing need. Councillor Betson abstained as there was no criteria or weighting to judge where families would be placed.

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee voted on the recommendations. 11 members voted in favour of the recommendations, one member voted against (Councillor Cone) and there was one abstention (Councillor Betson). The Scrutiny and Overview Committee therefore **AGREED** to recommend that Cabinet approved the adoption of a joint pledge to resettle between three and five refugee families.

9. VISION AND AMBITION FOR SCRUTINY

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

10. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman informed the committee that Cambourne Town Council had written to him requesting that urgent attention be given to illegal traveller encampments. Councillor Chamberlain would discuss this and the potential for setting up a task and finish group to look at this issue, with the interim Chief Executive and relevant Lead Cabinet Member. It was pointed out by Councillor Bradnam, who was a member of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, that the powers the Police had in relation to illegal traveller encampments were not as straightforward as the public thought and may not meet with public expectation. The interim Chief Executive would respond to Cambourne Town Council.

11. MONITORING THE EXECUTIVE

There were no updates.

12. TO NOTE THE DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee noted that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday 16th April 2019 at 5.20pm.

The Meeting ended at 9.00 p.m.