

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Wednesday, 5 February 2020 at 9.30 a.m.

Present: Councillor Bridget Smith (Leader of Council)
Councillor Dr. Aidan Van de Weyer (Deputy Leader of Council (Statutory) -
Strategic Planning and Transport)

Councillors:	Neil Gough	Deputy Leader (non statutory) - Transformation and Projects
	Bill Handley	Lead Cabinet Member for Community Resilience
	Dr. Tumi Hawkins	Lead Cabinet member for Planning Policy and Delivery
	Hazel Smith	Lead Cabinet member for Housing

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Susan Gardner Craig	Head of HR and Corporate Services
Stephen Kelly	Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development
Peter Maddock	Head of Finance
Rory McKenna	Deputy Head of Legal Practice/Monitoring Officer
Ian Senior	Democratic Services Officer
Liz Watts	Chief Executive

Councillors Anna Bradnam, Jose Hales, Geoff Harvey, Brian Milnes and
Heather Williams were in attendance, by invitation.

1. Apologies for Absence

Councillor John Williams (Lead Cabinet Member for Finance) and Councillor Grenville Chamberlain (Chairman, Scrutiny and Overview Committee) sent Apologies for Absence.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

Cabinet authorised the Leader to sign, as a correct record, the public version of the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2020 subject to a correction being made in Minute 13 (Response to Anglian Water): the word 'consultan' in the second paragraph should be 'consultation'.

4. Announcements

There were no announcements.

5. Public Questions

Cabinet received the following written from Mr. Daniel Fult behalf of the Fews Lane Consortium:

“As the Cabinet will likely be aware, the Council is already facing two claims for judicial review over allegedly unlawful planning decisions. The Cabinet should also be aware that two further claims, on separate and distinct grounds of illegality, will also be issued in the coming weeks if the Council continues to refuse to acknowledge that any errors have been made.

As local planning authority, the Council can continue to issue illegal planning permissions if it wishes to do so. However, as the Council’s elected political leadership, I would like to respectfully suggest that issuing further illegal planning permissions only to have them publicly quashed by the High Court after years of litigation may not be a politically expedient method of the Council discharging its statutory functions as the local planing authority.

Officers’ strategy for dealing with the issues raised by the Consortium is obviously not working. Will the Cabinet please consider, in closed session if necessary, whether officers require more oversight from the council’s elected leadership in order to work towards successfully resolving the issues raised by the Consortium?”

Mr. Fulton emphasised that he would rather resolve matters amicably by working with officers than having to resort to the courts.

The Leader said that lead Members and officers would take Mr. Fulton’s comments into account when addressing the issues raised.

6. Issues arising from the Scrutiny and Overview Committee

Cabinet received and noted a report summarising the discussions that had taken place at the Scrutiny and Overview Committee meeting held on 21 January 2020.

The report related to

- 2020-2025 Business Plan
- Property investment
- Review of Reserves and Provisions
- Capital Strategy
- Capital Investment Programme
- Treasury Management Strategy
- Summary General FundRevenue Budget 2020-21

7. Greening of South Cambridgeshire Hall

Cabinet considered a report on an Investment Grade Proposal for a rang of measures designed to reduce emissions from the South Cambridgeshire Hall office building, generate savings on energy bills and establish a long-term revenue stream for South

Cambridgeshire District Council.

The Corporate Programme Manager attended the meeting with a small team made up of Council officers and commercial partners. The Leader expressed her thanks for the work undertaken but did not invite any verbal clarification of the report.

Cabinet

- (a) reviewed the Investment Grade Proposal (IGP) key points contained within the report, and the IGP Executive Summary document at Appendix A;
- (b) approved the full business case detailed within the report and Appendix A; and
- (c) approved the progression of the project to the implementation phase.

8. **2020-25 Business Plan**

Cabinet considered a report inviting its review of the the Business Plan to ensure that priorities 'above and beyond business as usual' could be delivered for local people.

The report had been supported by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee.

In response to clarification sought by non-executive Members, the Leader gave an assurance that the Business Plan had as one of its guiding principles the importance of identifying the nature of support for local businesses, including pubs and farms, and voluntary organisations such as the mobile wardens scheme.

Cabinet

- (a) **Recommended** that Full Council approve the proposed 2020-25 Business Plan action grid at Appendix A to the report; and
- (b) **Authorised** the Chief Executive to make any minor wording changes required to final drafts, in consultation with the Deputy Leader.

9. **Capital Strategy**

Cabinet considered a report summarising the annual review of the Capital Strategy, and also a refreshed version of that Strategy.

Following a short debate, Cabinet **recommended** to Full Council (i) the updated Capital Strategy attached at Appendix A to the report which sets the policy framework for the development, management and monitoring of capital investment, and (ii) Prudential Indicators.

10. **Capital Programme 2020/2021 to 2024/2025**

Cabinet considered a report on the Council's Capital Programme for financial years 2020-2021 to 2024-2025.

Cabinet **recommended** to Full Council the revised Capital Programme outlined at Appendix A.

11. **Localised Council Tax Support Scheme: 2020/2021**

Cabinet considered a report reviewing the Localised Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme that applied for 2019-2020 and seeking agreement to the LCTS scheme for

2020-2021.

Following a short debate, Cabinet **recommended** to Full Council

- (a) the adoption of Option 1, comprising the LCTS Income Bands scheme currently in operation, with an uprating of calculation figures in line with the Consumer Price Index;
- (b) the delegation of future annual inflation adjustments to scheme limits to the Head of Finance in liaison with the Lead Member for Finance.

12. Treasury Management Strategy

Cabinet considered a report summarising the annual review of the Treasury Management Strategy and recommending a refreshed version of the Strategy for adoption by the Council.

Cabinet noted comments from the Scrutiny and Overview Committee relating to fluctuating interest rates and the need to ensure that the Council had a strategy covering property investment. On this latter point, the Leader suggested that the matter might best be addressed at a future meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee or at an all-Member briefing.

After further debate, Cabinet

- (a) **Recommended** to Council the updated Treasury Management Strategy attached at Appendix A to the report which sets the policy framework for the Council's treasury management activity, including (i) the Treasury Management Policy Statement, (ii) Minimum Revenue Provision Policy and (ii) Treasury Indicators; and
- (b) **Supported** the continuation of the interest rate of 3.85% on advances made to Ermine Street Housing during 2020/2021 and the issue of a formal loan agreement to South Cambs Limited to reflect the capital allocations identified in the Council's approved capital programme.

13. Review of Reserves & Provisions

Cabinet considered a report reviewing the Council's Revenue Reserves and Provisions as part of the 2020-2021 budget setting process.

Cabinet recommended to Full Council:

- (a) That the Reserves as summarised at paragraph 13 of the report be released and transferred to the General Reserve on 31 March 2020.
- (b) That the Reserves proposed for replenishment or combination, and the outstanding balances at 31 March 2020 proposed for release, as detailed in Appendix A to the report, be approved.
- (c) That the proposed new Reserves, as summarised at paragraph 16 of the report, be approved.
- (d) That the movement in Reserves in 2019/2020 as set out in Appendix A, and the estimated balance of Reserves of £41.763 million, be noted.

14. Proposed Fees and Charges: 2020/2021

Cabinet considered a report on the annual review and determination of the non-regulated fees and charge to be set by the Council for the provision of services from April 2020 (unless otherwise stated), where the law allows a charge to be made.

Cabinet

- (a) **Approved** the fees and charges as detailed in Appendix B of the report to take effect from 1 April 2020 (unless otherwise stated) or the earliest feasible date thereafter;
- (b) **Noted** the proposed variations to fees and charges in comparison to the prevailing inflation rate detailed in the report;
- (c) **Delegated** to Heads of Service, following consultation with Lead Cabinet Members, authority to vary charges or introduce new charges during the course of the year where it is considered essential to do so in order to maintain income levels, improve the service offer to users and/or where opportunities arise to increase income.

15. Summary General Fund Revenue Budget 2020/2021

Cabinet considered a report summarising the General Fund Revenue Budget for 2020-2021.

Cabinet

- (a) **took into account** the detailed budgets presented at Appendix B (white pages), and summarised at Appendix A (blue page), with an estimated General Fund Gross Operating Expenditure for 2020/2021 of £65.899 million, estimated Gross Operating Income of £41.617 million and estimated General Fund Net Operating Expenditure of £24.282 million;
- (b) **Acknowledged** the key factors which have led to the proposed General Fund Revenue Budget, with service pressures summarised at Appendix C (green pages) and offsetting efficiency savings/policy options summarised at Appendix D (yellow pages);
- (c) **Acknowledged** that the 2020/2021 General Fund Revenue Budget gross expenditure is covered by forecast income sources (assuming no change in Government grant) and, therefore, any addition(s) to expenditure that are made by the Cabinet or Council will need to identify matching savings and/or additional income if the proposed level of Council Tax is not to change;
- (d) **Approved** the 2020/2021 General Fund Revenue Budget taking into account the statement by the Chief Finance Officer on the risks and robustness of the estimates as required under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 (reproduced at Appendix F);
- (e) **Set** the Council Tax Requirement for 2020/2021 at £9,562,361;
- (f) **Approved** an increase in the District element of the Council Tax of £5 per annum, giving an average Band D Council Tax of £150.31, plus the

relevant amounts required by the precepts of the Parish Councils, Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Police & Crime Commissioner and the Cambridgeshire Fire Authority;

- (g) **Authorised** the Head of Finance, on the basis of the proposals set out in the report, to prepare the formal Council Tax Resolution for presentation to Council at its scheduled meeting on 20 February 2020;
- (h) **Approved** the estimates of the amounts required to be made under the Non-domestic Rating (Rates Retention) Regulations 2013 as set out in paragraphs 31 to 34;
- (i) Approved the acceptance of any grants made during 2019/2020 by the Government under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 in respect of Business Rates;
- (j) Approve the use of the additional income from the Business Rate Pool, estimated at £1,100,000 in 2020/2021, for transfer to the established Renewables Reserve for priority projects;
- (k) Subject to any changes to the recommendations above, recommend to Full Council:
 - (i) The 2020/2021 General Fund Revenue Budget based on known commitments at this time and planned levels of Service/functions resulting in a Budget Requirement of £24.329 million;
 - (ii) The District Council Precept on the Collection Fund (Council Tax Requirement) of £9.562 million in 2020/2021 (based on the Provisional Government Settlement) and a Band D Council Tax of £150.31.

16. **Housing Revenue Account Revenue & Capital Budget: 2020/2021**

Cabinet considered a report summarising the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Revenue and Capital Budget for 2020-2021.

The Lead Cabinet Member for Housing referred to a recent media report relating to the Decent Homes standard, She corrected some parts of the media report that were open to misinterpretation, and said that the Government's Decent Homes standard was, in any event, due for review, particularly in the context of energy efficiency.

Those present engaged in a short debate and encouraged residents to take advantage of future offers from the Council to upgrade their properties.

Cabinet

Housing Revenue Account (HRA): Revenue

- (a) Recommended that Full Council approve the HRA revenue budget for 2020/2021 as shown in the HRA Budget Summary as presented at Appendix A to the report;

HRA: Review of Rents and Charges

- (b) Approved that council dwelling rents for all social rented properties be increased by the Consumer Prices Index plus 1% (2.7%), in line with legislative requirements introduced as part of the Welfare Reform and Work Act, with effect from 1st April 2020;
- (c) Approved that affordable rents are reviewed in line with rent legislation, to ensure that rents charged are no more than 80% of market rent for 2020/2021. Local policy is to cap affordable rents at the lower level of Local Housing Allowance, which will result in rent variations in line with any changes notified to the authority in this level, effective from 1st April 2020;
- (d) Approved inflationary increases of 2% in garage rents for 2020/2021, in line with the base rate of inflation for the year assumed in the proposed HRA Budget.
- (e) Approved the proposed service charges for HRA services and facilities provided to both tenants and leaseholders, as shown in Appendix D.

HRA: Capital

- (f) Approved the required level of funding for new build investment between 2020/2021 and 2024/2025 to ensure that commitments can be met in respect of the investment of all right to buy receipts currently retained or anticipated to be received by the authority for this period. This expenditure will take the form of HRA new build, with the 70% top up met by other HRA resources;
- (g) Recommended that Full Council approve the HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy forecasts as shown in Appendix B;
- (h) Recommended that Full Council approve the Housing Capital Programme as shown in Appendix C.

17. Date of next meeting

Those present noted that the next scheduled meeting of Cabinet would be on Wednesday 4 March 2020 starting at 9.30am.

18. Exclusion of Press and Public

Cabinet **agreed** by affirmation that the Press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item numbers 19, 20 and 21 in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) (exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act). Paragraph 3 refers to information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

19. Minutes of previous meeting (Minute 13 - Confidential version)

Cabinet authorised the Leader to sign, as a correct record, the confidential version of Minute 13 (Response to Anglian Water) of the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2020 subject to a correction being made: the word 'consultan' in the second paragraph should be 'consultation'.

20. Ermine Street Housing Business Plan

Cabinet considered the Ermine Street Housing Business Plan.

Cabinet

- (a)** Received the confidential Ermine S Business Plan for the period 2019/2020 to 2027-2028 for information; and
- (b)** Requested that a further issues / options report be submitted to Cabinet in respect of the future direction and business objectives of Ermine Street Housing from 2021-2022.

21. Third Party Loan

Cabinet considered a report seeking approval for a third-party loan.

Dispensation had been granted for public speaking prior to exclusion of the Press and public..

Those present engaged in a short debate.

The Leader expressed pleasure in being able to promote a measure that would make a difference to the local community.

Cabinet **recommended to Full Council:**

- (a)** The approval of an investment of up to the sum stated in the confidential report by way of a 3rd party loan, on the basis of the terms referred to in the exempt report.
- (b)** The requirement for a legal agreement between South Cambridgeshire District Council and the third party as set out in the exempt report.

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