

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Monday, 19 October 2020 at 10.00 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
	Peter McDonald	Lead Cabinet Member for Business Recovery
	Brian Milnes	Lead Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Licensing
	Hazel Smith	Lead Cabinet member for Housing
	John Williams	Lead Cabinet member for Finance

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Anne Ainsworth	Chief Operating Officer
Jonathan Dixon	Planning Policy Manager
Andrew Jennings	Project Manager - Shared Planning Service
Stephen Kelly	Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development
Peter Maddock	Head of Finance
Rory McKenna	Deputy Head of Legal Practice/Monitoring Officer
Jeff Membery	Head of Transformation
Ian Senior	Democratic Services Officer
Liz Watts	Chief Executive

Councillors Anna Bradnam, Grenville Chamberlain, Dr. Claire Daunton, Sue Ellington, Geoff Harvey, Dr. Douglas de Lacey, Judith Rippeth, Bunty Waters, Heather Williams and Dr. Richard Williams were in attendance, by invitation.

1. **Leader's Announcements**

There were no apologies for absence.

2. **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Peter McDonald, Lead Cabinet Member for Business Recovery and Skills declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the Investment Partnerships Board.

4 (a) **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 Wednesday, 2 September 2020, subject to the following:

- Councillor Douglas de Lacey requested the inclusion of Councillor Richard Williams' doctorate, and to amend Minute 8, replacing "(the Chair of the Council) was pleased with the detail within each indicator, although hoped there would be comments with all indicators" with "was pleased with the promise of greater detail within the indicators, but was surprised there was no comment on the improvement in the Contact Centre".
- Redraft Minute 10 to read "this was about an underspend in some of the council's services which was identified but there was a small overspend in finance and corporate services related to additional resources, and in facilities to help with Covid-19 related issues. We have also supported the community and businesses through the crisis, and it is not clear yet if the government grant will cover the costs to the General Fund."

Councillor Neil Gough sent apologies for absence at the meeting held on 2 September 2020 and abstained from voting to affirm the minutes thereof.

4 (b) Written answers relating to Minute 9 of the minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2020

Cabinet **noted** the written response relating to Minute 9 of the previous meeting.

Councillor Heather Williams asked how savings of £156,000 In Health and Wellbeing had been achieved (paragraph 5).

Written answer: The £156,000 underspend was made up as follows:

- £86,000 on various expenditure items. This has often been underspent and around £50,000 of this was removed from the budget in 2020/21.
- £47,000 additional income, this was unbudgeted income from NHS England for the Sports coordinator. This project was expected to end in June 2019 but was extended for another year. This income is to cover the staff costs and additional costs relating to the Let's Get Moving campaign.
- £19,000 salary underspend due to vacancies.
- £4,000 that was in the original budget was subject to virement and spent on the Northstowe Healthy New Town budget

Councillor Heather Williams asked about redundancy out of budget, and how many redundancies had South Cambridgeshire District Council made during the last 12 months.

Written answer: There had been three redundancies during the year 2019-20. Where possible, redundancy was funded from salary underspends, and this was the case during 2019-20.

Councillor Heather Williams referred to paragraph 17 of the report (Investment Budget 2020-2021), and asked how much of the budget was remaining for budget purposes, as at 2 September 2020.

Written answer: The budget set in February 2020 for the investment strategy had been £96 million in 2020-21. Spending as at 2 September 2020 was £7.76 million primarily on 296 Cambridge Science Park but also with some expenditure relating to 270 Science Park. There was therefore £88.24 million remaining as at 2 September 2020. Since then, a further £12.3 million had been spent relating to the Vitrum Building. The capital allocation will need to be re-profiled as part of the budget process as it is unlikely that all of this will be spent in 2020-21.

5. Public Questions

There were two public questions received ahead of the meeting.

(a) From Mrs. Jane Williams

“At any time during this calendar year, have any funds been transferred from the Collection Fund to any other account of the district council or have any funds from the Collection Fund been used for any expenditure by or on behalf of the district council?”

Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Finance responded:

“Each financial year an amount is transferred from the Collection Fund to the General Fund that is equal to the value of the District Council Precept and the total of all Parish Council Precepts. This amount is fixed when the budget for that year is set in February of the preceding financial year. The amount of the District Precept is used to fund District Council Expenditure and the amount transferred in relation to Parish Councils is used to pay Parish Precepts.”

Mrs. Jane Williams was invited to ask a supplementary question:

“Is there anything in the public domain that would say whether or not at any time during this calendar year have any funds being transferred other than the ones that Councillor (John) Williams has referred to, as it is not possible to see these accounts”

Councillor John Williams responded:

“No, I think I need to explain what the collection fund is. We are the Billing Authority, which means we have a task of sending the bill to the Council Tax Payer on behalf of all those who has set precepts, so the Council Tax Payer receives one bill, then we receive all that money into what we call a collection fund, and then we take out of that collection fund what we have precepted, and we take out of that collection what the Parish Councils have precepted, so that we can pay them their money, so there is no other reason why we would take money out of that collection fund because what left in it is there for other precepting authorities, (such as) the County Council, the Fire and Police. So I do hope that explains the workings of the collection fund, we take out of the collection fund what we have asked our Council tax payer to pay for South Cambs services in their Council tax. Similarly, we take out what the Parish Councils have asked of their parishioners to pay for their services.”

Mrs. Jane Williams thanked Councillor John Williams for the responses.

(b) From Mr. Daniel Fulton

“The Council recently announced that it will be contributing £170 million over the next

four years towards new development partnerships with the Hill Group and Balfour Beatty. The council's announcement also stated that "identifying suitable land opportunities will be a core element of work by the partnerships" and that target sites are located within South Cambridgeshire."

Could the Leader of the Council please identify the parishes in which these target sites are located, and does the Leader of the Council foresee any potential conflicts of interest that could arise as a result of the Council's dual role as a profit-making land developer and its statutory duties for plan making and development management as the district's local planning authority?

The Leader of the Council responded:

"The Investment Partnerships are in the very early stages of development, with initial meetings between partners taking place this month. Any potential sites would be discussed by the Council's Investment Governing Board members before any further appraisal work is undertaken.

In terms of conflict of interest, the investment strategy is clear. Our aims are to: 'provide a robust and viable framework for the acquisition of commercial property investments and the pursuance of redevelopment and regeneration opportunities that contribute to Business Plan objectives and can deliver positive financial returns for the council'. The potential for any conflicts of interest to arise is one the council takes very seriously, and as a result, we have thought in great detail about the decision making and advisory approach to be taken with regards to the investment partnerships. We have also taken legal advice and considered best practise from elsewhere, where similar models have been introduced. Therefore, at this point, whilst we have taken steps to avoid any conflicts of interest arising we would always be vigilant in this regard and believe that those involved in the process are fully aware of their obligations and will seek further advice, if at any point they believe it is required."

Mr. Daniel Fulton was invited to ask a supplementary question:

"My concern is the Council is basically attempting to monetise it's regulatory function as the local planning authority, and I'd also be concerned if the Council is going to become a 'for profit land developer', it could also potentially leverage this to given a competitive advantage over other local developers who are not the local planning authority. Have these concerns been given any consideration at all?"

The Leader of the Council responded that those concerns had been given consideration but would provide a full written response.

6. **Issues arising from the Scrutiny and Overview Committee**

Cabinet **received and noted** a report from Councillor Grenville Chamberlain, Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, and Councillor Judith Rippeth, Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, informing it about the discussions at, and recommendations from the Committee's meeting held on 7 October 2020.

The report related to:

- **Compulsory Purchase Order Policy**

7. **Compulsory Purchase Order Policy**

Cabinet considered a report from the Head of Finance. Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Finance, detailing the reasoning behind the introduction of the policy, and thanked the Scrutiny and Overview Committee for their contributions to the published report, particularly the introduction of the exit strategy. Councillor Grenville Chamberlain, Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee believed the comments from the most recent meeting enabled an improved policy.

After a short discussion, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Bridget Smith closed the debate, and Cabinet:

Approved the Compulsory Purchase Order Policy as the basis for considering the use of compulsory purchase powers to acquire land or property interests for the purpose of carrying out development, redevelopment or improvement, where there is a compelling case in the public interest to do so, subject to further minor amendments resulting from the Scrutiny and Overview Committee review.

8. **Response to Government Consultation: Planning for the Future White Paper**

Cabinet considered a report from the Director of Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service. Councillor Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and Delivery, introduced the report noting the proposed joint response with Cambridge City Council. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Bridget Smith requested that the Lead Cabinet Member and Director of the Greater Cambridge Shared Planning service cross reference the response with the District Council network at the Local Government Association (LGA), and the East of England LGA. Councillor John Williams noted paragraph 22 of the draft response did not mention the impact on Section 106 funding for local Parish Councils. Councillor Hazel Smith, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing agreed with the previous comments, but also highlighted the absence of protected characteristics in paragraph 26, notably the lack of provision for the Traveller community.

Following a further discussion, Councillor Bridget Smith, the Leader of the Council, thanked Members for their comments, and Cabinet:

- a) **Noted** the initial response to the Government's White Paper (Planning for the future) consultation as set out in Appendix A to the report; and
- b) **Agreed** to delegate the wording of the final joint response and any individual response to the Director of Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service, in consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and Delivery.

9. **Pre-Application Fees Proposal**

Cabinet considered a report from the Director of Greater Cambridge Shared Planning Service. Councillor Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and Delivery, described the standardisation of the pre-application charging schemes at Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council. Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Finance highlighted the discretion to Charities, detailed in paragraph 15 of the report, and recommended it should be extended to Parish Councils.

Councillor Bridget Smith, the Leader of the Council, concluded by thanking Officers involved in this report, and Cabinet:

Recommended that the Lead Cabinet Member for Planning **agree** the proposals for South Cambridgeshire District Council to introduce the revised pre-application service offer and charging schedule set out in the report for the South Cambridgeshire District Council area from 2 November 2020.

10. Exclusion of Press and Public

Cabinet **agreed** by affirmation that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of item 11 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).

11. Minutes from the Previous Meeting - Confidential

Cabinet authorised the Leader to sign, as a correct record, the exempt version of Minute 13 (3C Shared Services Renewal Agreement), Minute 14 (Minutes of the Previous Meeting – Confidential), Minute 15 (South Cambs Limited Trading As Ermine Street Housing: Review Of Business Direction), Minute 16 (Commercial Property Investment) and Minute 17 (Property Acquisition) of the minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2020.

Councillor Neil Gough sent apologies for absence at the meeting held on 2 September 2020 and abstained from voting to affirm the minutes thereof.

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