

REPORT TO: Cabinet 4 September 2019

LEAD CABINET MEMBER: Cllr Neil Gough Deputy Leader and Lead Cabinet Member for Customer Services and Business Improvement

Cllr Bill Handley Lead Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Licensing

Cllr Hazel Smith Lead Cabinet Member for Housing

LEAD OFFICER: As indicated in respect of each motion below.

Motions referred from Council

Executive Summary

1. To consider four motions referred to Cabinet from Council, at its meeting held on 18 July 2019.
2. This is not a key decision.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that Cabinet reviews the motions referred from Council in the light of the information provided in this report and:-
 - (a) determines whether to progress the proposals in the motions; and
 - (b) provides guidance to officers on the level of priority to be given to any proposals which it wishes to progress.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. To enable Cabinet to determine the appropriate course of action to take in respect of each motion referred to it from Council, at its meeting on 18 July 2019, in the light of the information now presented by officers, and whether to request a full report on any of the proposals in the submitted motions.

Details

5. The Council, at its meeting held on 18 July 2019, received a number of notices of motion submitted by Members of the Council. Four of the motions were identified as the responsibility of the Cabinet and as having unquantified resource or policy implications. The motions were accordingly referred by Council to Cabinet for review and consideration in accordance with Council Standing Order 13(d).

6. This report seeks to briefly summarise the high-level implications of the motions and invites Cabinet to determine what further action it wishes to be taken, including any requests for a full report to be prepared in respect of any of the motions.
7. Four motions were referred to Cabinet as follows:-

(a) Motion from Councillor Sarah Cheung Johnson

“Council notes that domestic abuse against women is still too prevalent in our society. Men are also victims of domestic abuse, but the statistics show women are overwhelmingly the victims. 2015 figures show two women a week are killed by a current or former partner and 6 out of 7 victims of Domestic Violence are women. This council commits to providing support to ongoing efforts by staff and councillors to take a stand against violence and to take the pledge never to commit, condone or remain silent about men's violence against women.

This Council notes that the White Ribbon Campaign is part of a global movement to end men's violence against women, and the Council commits to becoming a White Ribbon Accredited Authority so that it can ensure it has the necessary policies and procedures in place to reduce male violence against women in workplaces and public interaction.

Council understands that raising awareness plays a huge part in changing the cultural and social norms which are recognised as being highly influential in shaping individual behaviour, including the use of violence and Council will continue to work closely with local agencies and organisations involved in tackling violence against women to extend knowledge and understanding of the issues amongst South Cambridgeshire's population.”

Background and officer comments (Lead officer – Heather Wood):

The Council does not tolerate any abuse, regardless of whether it is committed against women, men or children. A Council wide Domestic Abuse policy is already in place which aims to support employees who are experiencing domestic abuse. In addition, frontline staff in particular roles have a high level of knowledge in relation to recognising abuse and supporting victims to understand their options and remain safe. These staff are often located within the Housing service and work with tenants and members of the public who require support in relation to their housing.

Despite the lack of tolerance towards abuse, the Council does not have any formal accreditation to recognise its position and provide a framework for improving services and raising awareness amongst staff and the wider community. The Housing Service have committed to the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Make a Stand Pledge which commits the Council to undertaking 4 actions to end domestic violence. Although significant progress has been made towards the pledge, there is currently not the capacity within the existing staff team to complete the final actions or to work towards the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation that some councils, including Cambridge City, have achieved, or are working towards.

In the event that the Council chooses to pursue a formal route of accreditation, White Ribbon is an accreditation process that covers the entire organisation rather than

simply focussing on a specific service area such as Housing. However, it should be noted that White Ribbon accreditation is focused primarily on ending male based violence towards women and it is important that other forms of abuse are not ignored. If a decision is taken to proceed with White Ribbon accreditation, it is also important that the level of ongoing and sustained commitment from the Council is recognised and appropriately resourced.

Advice has been sought from White Ribbon who have advised that the annual cost would be £300. However, there will be an additional and less visible cost in terms of staff time. White Ribbon are clear that an organisation cannot just pay lip service to accreditation and must work towards an agreed action plan over 3 years. As a comparator, Cambridge City Council were re-accredited in January 2019. Responsibility for accreditation rests with the Partnership Support Officer in the Community Safety Team, who has two days a week allocated specifically to domestic abuse work. This includes the White Ribbon Campaign, training and currently work towards Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation. In addition to ensuring policies and procedures are reviewed, specific pieces of work need to be identified actively to address abuse. At Cambridge City, this includes working with sports clubs and music venues and organising conferences. East Cambridgeshire have also recently been accredited and part of their commitment includes ongoing work with local businesses to raise awareness and help prevent abuse.

In addition, an organisation has to provide four ambassadors who are proactive in the work to end domestic abuse. The lead needs to be a senior manager committed to the cause. It is understood that both East Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City Councils have at least one councillor as an ambassador which includes male representation.

(b) Motion from Councillor Alex Malyon

“This Council has already noted with great concern the issues associated with single use plastics and the global problem of plastic pollution. Currently 320 million new items of plastic are made every year, with this set to double by 2034. Every day approximately 8 million pieces of plastic pollution find their way into our oceans. There may now be around 5.25 trillion macro and microplastic pieces floating in the open ocean, weighing up to 269,000 tonnes.

The Plastic Free Communities initiative provides a toolkit for communities to work to tackle this issue on a local level. Communities can work towards Plastic Free Community status by raising awareness of the need to reduce single use plastic use through community events. They work with local businesses and other community influencers such as churches or schools, to reduce dependence on single use plastics and encourage the use of alternatives. Nationally there are 561 communities who have achieved or are working towards this certification including a local community group in Cottenham.

A resolution passed by this Council in July 2018 committed to exploring ways in which we can significantly reduce the sale, provision and use of avoidable single-use plastics. In doing so we acknowledged the important role that this Council had to play in influencing others to do likewise.

This Council and its individual members therefore commit to supporting, encouraging and promoting the work of community groups and parishes who wish to join this growing network of UK Plastic Free Communities.”

Background and officer comments (Lead officer: Rebecca Weymouth-Wood):

The Plastic Free Communities (PFC) initiative provides a toolkit for communities to work to tackle this issue on a local level. Communities can work towards Plastic Free Community status by raising awareness of the need to reduce the usage of single use plastic through community events. They work with local businesses and other community influencers, such as churches or schools, to reduce dependence on single use plastics and encourage the use of alternatives.

For a community wishing to sign up to the PFC scheme, securing support from the local council is essential. It is one of 5 objectives a group “leader” must meet.

A statement of support from South Cambridgeshire District Council would immediately meet this objective for anyone wishing to establish a plastic free community.

If the Council wishes actively to encourage more commitment to the scheme, officer resource would need to be allocated to communicate and promote the PFC scheme to parishes and groups within the district and encourage sign up.

The Council could:

- Explain what the scheme is about and how to sign up;
- Advise that a statement of support is available from the Council to those wishing to sign up; and
- Use “Sustainable Cottenham” as a leading example of how communities can get on board.

Further information about the Plastic Free Communities initiative can be found on the following website:-

<https://www.sas.org.uk/>

(c) Motion from Councillor Nick Wright

“In the last year councillors have been receiving inch thick planning agendas and cabinet agendas sometimes over 700 pages. This is not only damaging Councillors’ backs carrying them, but trees for paper supply; and causes unnecessary postage expenditure. The Conservative group proposes that SCDC Councillors’ documents become paperless unless individual members request otherwise.”

Background and officer comments (Lead officer: Andy Francis and Kathrin John):

Overview:

The proposal to move to paperless meetings clearly aligns with the Council’s “Being Green to our Core” objective by supporting a reduction of the Council’s carbon footprint. Going paperless would also mirror the Council’s aim to use technology to improve access to Council services for businesses and residents. Additional benefits could include enhancing access to data at any time; improving security and saving resources, both in time and financial. The cost of printing committee documentation in

2018/19 was in the region of £18,200, whilst postage costs were approximately £1,500.

Legislation:

The Local Government (Electronic Communications) (England) Order 2015 provides that Members shall only receive summonses electronically where they consent to it being transmitted by this method and may at any time withdraw their consent. This means that if the Council wishes to move towards a paperless option, Members will need to consent to being sent papers electronically and may decline to receive papers in this way.

Paperless access:

The Council presently uses the Modern.Gov software to co-ordinate the compilation of agendas, publication of papers and web pages. An app is available for automatically downloading, viewing and annotating meeting papers, if the user has an appropriate device, this means they can underline, highlight or add comments to documents much in the same way as they would on a paper document.

The Mod.Gov app also allows publication of restricted papers securely so that they are accessible only to members of the meeting who are entitled to view the documents. The app is available for Apple, Android or Windows. There is an additional annual charge to the Council for enabling access to restricted papers via the app.

Council Anywhere:

As Members will know, the Council Anywhere project is currently under way – providing officers with new mobile devices and transforming the way they work. The new hardware, which includes Lenovo laptops running Windows and Office 365, along with Apple iPhones with integrated email synchronisation, open up opportunities to enable officers to work both flexibly and remotely, resulting in efficiency and closer integration with residents and their needs. One of the anticipated benefits of the Council Anywhere project is to reduce the amount of paper used by Council officers, contributing to a number of priorities in the current Business Plan. This project is being delivered across Cambridge City and Huntingdonshire District Councils as well as in South Cambridgeshire District Council over the coming months. Members are not presently within the scope of the project.

The Council currently operates an iPad loan purchase scheme whereby the cost of the device is deducted from a Member's monthly allowance if they chose to take up this option. If Cabinet wishes to progress with implementation of paperless meetings, access to reliable and suitable devices will be essential and therefore the option of supplying Council devices will need to be considered, although this will obviously have implications in terms of cost of providing hardware; training and ICT support.

It will also be important to consider practical points – such as, depending on the devices used, Wi-Fi capacity in meeting rooms and availability of power points for charging devices.

There will be staffing resource implications in delivering the paperless meetings proposal and it is anticipated that a project team would be required to take forward the proposal.

Culture and Leadership:

Introducing paperless meetings will require a cultural change and, if it is to succeed, will need “buy in” from both Members and officers. Some authorities have sought to implement paperless meetings with an instant move to paperless on a set date. Others have opted for a gradual, phased approach. Members might therefore wish to consider running a pilot, possibly involving Cabinet, prior to moving to any wider rollout. A number of authorities have also appointed “digital champions” to encourage and support Member colleagues.

(d) Motion from Councillor Gavin Clayton

“This Council condemns the recent spike in hate crime and in particular that of homophobic hate crime.

This Council notes the need for proactive policy development and recruitment of a specialist officer due to increased levels of hate crime as reported (in Parliamentary Briefing Paper Number 08537, 28 March 2019, Hate Crime Statistics, By Grahame Allen, Yago Zayed). It shows Police Reported hate crimes by monitored strands in England have increased by 123% since 2011. In particular: Race 98% Religion 415% sexual orientation 415% Disability 313% and biggest increase of all for people who identify as transgender 427%

Now is not the time to be without a specialist Equality and Diversity Officer and with increasingly uncertain political and economic times ahead this council will work with neighbouring councils to build upon the Equality Pledge to construct and implement a Single Equality Scheme which is proactive in providing training across public, private and third sector partners and to join the Encompass Safer Spaces scheme so that there is a visible reassurance for LGBTQ+ residents of South Cambridgeshire.”

Background and officer comments (Lead officer: Phil Bird and Susan Gardner-Craig)

Whilst the level of hate crime reported to the police, both locally and nationally, remains low, the increase over the last two years has been well documented¹. Nationally in recent years the levels of racially or religiously aggravated assault with and without injury have risen significantly, with 2018 seeing the highest recorded figures on record for both. The impact of hate crime varies but can be quite substantial, particularly where it is ongoing.

The South Cambs Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership invested time during 2018/19 in conducting focus groups and running an online survey to investigate the levels of hate crime in the District. Further information can be found by following the link below (section 3 of the linked document refers):

<https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/SCAMBS-strategic-assessment-201819-Final-1.pdf>

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Councillor Clayton's motion refers to the pilot work being undertaken on the "Safer Spaces" initiative by The Encompass Network, a network for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning people. This pilot project aims to provide LGBTQ people in Cambridge and surrounding areas with places where they can feel safe, welcome and supported.

Cambridge City Council agreed, as part of its Single Equalities Scheme, adopted following the Environment and Communities Scrutiny Committee on 4 October 2018, to sign up to the Safer Spaces project and to work with the Encompass Network to identify areas in which the Council can approve. The City Council is one of six organisations signed up to the pilot project.

South Cambridgeshire District Council has signed up to the Equality Pledge which reads:

"We believe in the dignity of all people and their right to respect and equality of opportunity. We value the strength that comes with difference and the positive contribution that diversity brings to our community. Our aspiration is for South Cambridgeshire and the wider region to be safe, welcoming and inclusive".

Cabinet will see that Councillor Clayton's motion is calling for this Council to work with neighbouring authorities to build on the Equality Pledge by implementing a Single Equality Scheme and to work with neighbouring authorities to support the Safer Spaces project.

The Council is at present working with neighbouring authorities, namely Cambridge City and Central Bedfordshire Councils, regarding its continued compliance with the current Equalities Scheme with a view to publishing a new scheme by April 2020. A Policy Officer has recently been recruited and her employment commences in October. The Council is also advertising for two Graduate Policy Officers on one-year fixed term contracts. These posts will provide extra capacity within the Policy team. There is a question as to whether a full-time equalities officer role could be utilised fully, and a preference would be a Policy Officer with a focus on equalities but capacity to assist with other policies and strategies. However, any proposal to add a dedicated equality and diversity officer or Policy Officer would require additional budget and would need to be considered alongside other priorities in the budget setting process.

The Council did previously employ a full time equalities officer, but, under a restructure the role changed to that of a generic Policy Officer, and the work undertaken has incorporated equalities into the culture of the organisation, for example all strategies, policies and projects undertake a minimum equalities screening process followed by a full Impact Assessment if required.

Options

8. Cabinet could support the proposals in the motions or amend them as it sees fit; call for a full report on one or more of them or decide to take no further action on one or all of them.

Implications

9. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:-

Financial

10. As set out under each motion above. If Members wish to pursue some of the proposals outlined in the motion, for which no existing budget exists, for example, paperless meetings implementation, it will be necessary to bring forward the full financial implications in further reports to Cabinet.

Legal

11. The legislative position in relation to paperless meetings is set out in paragraph 7(c) above.

Staffing

12. All motions contain proposals which will require a level of staffing resource to deliver as indicated above.

Risks/Opportunities

13. There is a risk if all proposals are supported that other work will need to be re-prioritised in order to release the officer capacity required. The paperless meetings motion presents an opportunity to support the Council's aim to achieve carbon free status and to also secure cost and time savings in relation to printing and postage as indicated in paragraph 7 (c) above.

Equality and Diversity

14. The Council does not tolerate any abuse, regardless of whether it is committed against women, men or children. Adopting the White Ribbon accreditation will indicate the Council's commitment to ending male based violence towards women but it is important that other forms of abuse are not ignored.

In terms of paperless meetings the Council is working with its software suppliers to ensure that committee papers displayed on the Council's website meet new accessibility requirements.

The proposed review of the Single Equalities Policy will set out the Council's proposed objectives related to equality and diversity work.

Climate Change

15. The proposals in both the Plastic Free Communities and paperless meetings motions align with the Council's "Being Green to our Core" priority and contribute towards the proposal to deliver a zero-carbon future for South Cambridgeshire.

Consultation responses

16. None

Effect on Council Priority Areas

Being green to our core

17. See under “Climate Change” above.

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18. The paperless meeting proposals align with the Council’s aim to increase the use of technology to improve access to Council services for businesses and residents.

Background Papers

None

Appendices

None

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