

**COUNCILLORS' BULLETIN
19 JANUARY 2005**

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Cambridgeshire
District Council**

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**COMMITTEE MEETINGS FROM:
24 January 2005 to 28 January 2005**

Mon 24 Jan	10 am	South Cambridgeshire Crime & Disorder Partnership	Swansley Room
	2 pm	Housing Portfolio Holder	Housing and Environmental Services Office
Tue 25 Jan			
Wed 26 Jan	10 am	Conservation Advisory Group	Swansley Room
	2 pm	Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder Meeting	Swansley Room
Thu 27 Jan	12.30	Pre-Council Political Group Briefings: Conservatives Independents Liberal Democrats	Swansley Room Monkfield Room Mezzanine
	2 pm	Council	Council Chamber
Fri 28 Jan	10.30 am	Bedzed Meeting	Swansley Room
	12 pm	Lunchtime Seminar – How Sustainable Are You? What Does It Really Mean? (see below)	Council Chamber
	12.30 pm	SCDC Briefing and Lunch (for South Cambridgeshire Environment & Transport Area Joint Committee)	Swansley Room
	1 pm	Climate Change Group	Mezzanine
	2.30 pm	South Cambridgeshire Environment & Transport Area Joint Committee	Council Chamber

Mezzanine – meeting room on second floor (overlooking Council Chamber)

Monkfield Room – meeting room on first floor

Swansley Room – meeting room on ground floor

LUNCHTIME SEMINAR: HOW SUSTAINABLE ARE YOU? AND WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN?

12pm, Friday 28 January, Council Chamber

Everything we do - from shopping and eating to holiday's - impacts on the environment. Are you curious about how the money you spend affects our world? This interactive seminar will help you look at sustainable choices, which affect your life and positively impact on the world.

Speakers: Mark Smith and Claire Bright, Permaculture Association Members

To reserve your seat, and to ensure that we have enough food, please e-mail reception@scambs.gov.uk.

TRAINING SESSION: MEMBER / OFFICER RELATIONS 21 MARCH 2005

Members are invited to a training session on Monday 21st March 2005 at 2 pm on Member / Officer relations. The training will be led by Mark Heath, Head of Legal Services for Southampton City Council. If you are interested in attending, please contact Democratic Services on 01954 713016 or e-mail democratic.services@scambs.gov.uk.

CALL IN ARRANGEMENTS

The Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee or any five other Councillors may call in any executive decision recorded in this bulletin for review. The Democratic Services Manager must be notified of any call in by **Wednesday 26 January 2005 at 5 pm**. All decisions not called in by this date may be implemented on **Thursday 27 January 2005**.

Any member considering calling in a decision made by Cabinet is requested to contact the Democratic Services Section to determine whether any relevant amendments have been incorporated.

The call in procedure is set out in full in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution, 'Scrutiny and Overview Committee Procedure Rules', paragraph 12.

DECISIONS MADE BY THE HOUSING PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Subject	Decision	Reasons
Housing Allocation Appeals and Management Transfers	Agreed the following requests for management transfers:	
	E/04/019	Mrs P requires a transfer to stay at temporary accommodation
	S/04/031	Mrs B requires a transfer to a smaller property to enable redevelopment
	E/04/018	Family require a transfer to stay at temporary accommodation
	W/04/017	Ms P requires a transfer to larger accommodation
	(No reference number)	Mr & Mrs G require a transfer to larger sheltered accommodation

DECISION MADE BY THE INFORMATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICES AND RESOURCES AND STAFFING PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Subject	Decision	Reasons
Upgrade to SCDC Web Environment	To upgrade the website to a new CMS solution as offered by Tagish, the current supplier.	This option has the advantage of simply building on what we have already achieved.

DECISION MADE BY THE RESOURCES AND STAFFING PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Subject	Decision	Reasons
Procurement of Recruitment Agency for Advertising	To approve the Consortium approach for the procurement of an advertising agency for advertising.	In accordance with Contract Standing Orders.

DECISIONS MADE BY OFFICERS AND REPORTED FOR INFORMATION**Conservation Manager**

Applicant	Decision and Reasons
Cambridge Green Belt Project	Approved a grant of £450 for the undertaking of 2 hedge-laying courses. This grant is to be awarded from the Wildlife Enhancement Scheme and represents a 100% grant in order to allow the course to be offered to 20 people from local groups to encourage positive management of their own sites.

COUNTY COUNCIL: MINUTES

Date: **Tuesday 21st December 2004**
Time: 10.30 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.
Place: **Shire Hall, Cambridge**
Present: Councillor: R Driver (Chairman)

Councillors: C M Ballard, C C Barker, R S G Barnwell, I C Bates, T J Bear, B S Bhalla, J Broadway, C Carter, R L Clarke, P J Downes, J A P Eddy, M Farrar, H J Fitch, J L Gluza, A Hansard, B Hardy, G F Harper, V A Hearne-Casapieri, G J Heathcock, W G M Hensley, J L Huppert, S F Johnstone, J D Jones, A C Kent, I C Kidman, S J E King, M L Leeke, V H Lucas, A R Mair, R B Martlew, A K Melton, A S Milton, M K Ogden, L J Oliver, A G Orgee, D R Pegram, J A Powley, P A E Read, A A Reid, J E Reynolds, C E Shaw, P W Silby, R C Speechley, A B Stenner, P L Stroude, J M Tuck, J K Walters, D White, L J Wilson and F H Yeulett

Apologies: Councillors P D Bailey, A J Bowen, J E Coston, S A Giles, P D Gooden, L W McGuire, S B Normington and R Wilkinson

244. MINUTES: 19th OCTOBER 2004

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 19th October 2004 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

245. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

People

The Chairman:

- Welcomed to the meeting Councillor David White, who had been elected to represent the Castle electoral division at the by-election on 10th December 2004
- Congratulated Councillor Richard Barnwell on his appointment as a Deputy Lieutenant for the County
- Led members in congratulating Nikki Piper, a Trading Standards officer, who had been voted the Guardian Newspaper Public Servant of the Year
- Reported the departure of Simon Smith, Head of Economic and Community Development, Mark O'Sullivan, Assistant Director (Resources) in Environment and Transport and Martin Williams, Head of Human Resources, and wished all three well for the future.

Awards and achievements

The Chairman led members in congratulating:

- All staff for their contribution to the Council's recent 'excellent' rating from the Audit Commission, awarded following the Comprehensive Performance Assessment carried out during the autumn
- Social Services for the retention of its two-star rating from the Commission for Social Care Inspection
- Environment and Transport for the receipt of the Most Innovative Local Authority of the Year award at the first annual Highways Magazine Excellence awards
- The Highways and Engineering Division for its third Charter Mark award, making it

- the longest continuously Charter Marked highways service in the country
- The Libraries and Information Service for the 'battle honour' awarded for its efforts to promote the BBC's People's War project
- The Fields Early Years Centre in Cambridge, which had become one of only 109 officially designated children's centres in the country
- All staff involved in the County Council's Asset Management Plan and the joint County and District Councils' Affordable Housing Strategy, both of which had been shortlisted for Beacon status
- The Environment and Transport Directorate for receiving Investors in People accreditation.

246. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following members declared personal interests under Paragraph 8 of the Code of Conduct:

- Councillor J L Huppert in relation to item 4 on the Cabinet report of 26th October 2004 (Proposed Infrastructure Improvements Associated with Cambridge Northern Fringe East) and item 9 on the Cabinet report of 7th December 2004 (Response to Consultations on Preferred Options for South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework and Cambridge City Local Plan Re-Deposit), as a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge
- Councillor S F Johnstone in relation to item 9 on the Cabinet report of 7th December 2004 (Response to Consultations on Preferred Options for South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework and Cambridge City Local Plan Re-Deposit), as a Non-Executive Director of Addenbrooke's NHS Trust
- Councillor S J E King in relation to item 3 on the Cabinet report of 7th December 2004 (Funding of Mental Health Services: Report from the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee), as Chairman of the Bowthorpe Centre, a provider of mental health services in Wisbech.

247. REPORT OF THE COUNTY RETURNING OFFICER

The Head of Democratic, Legal and Registration Services reported the resignation of Councillor S V Brinton. The by-election for the resulting vacancy in the Castle electoral division had been held on 10th December 2004 and John David White, known as David White, the Liberal Democrat candidate, had been elected.

248. PROVISIONAL REVENUE SUPPORT GRANT SETTLEMENT 2005/06

Members received two reports on the Council's provisional Revenue Support Grant settlement for 2005/06, one from the Director of Resources and one setting out the views expressed by Cabinet at its meeting on 14th December 2004.

Councillor J L Huppert thanked officers for their work in responding to the provisional settlement. He emphasised the importance of thanking all those who had supported the Council in its campaign for a better settlement, including schools, partners and members of the public. He urged that stronger representations be made to Government on the need for longer-term funding, to enable more effective future planning. He noted that the Cabinet's response to Government referred to the review of funding mechanisms, including methods of tax collection, and reminded members of the Liberal Democrat Group's support for local income tax.

Councillor I C Kidman proposed that the Council's response to the provisional settlement should be framed more positively, acknowledging that the settlement was

Cambridgeshire's highest ever and the highest County settlement nationally, and welcoming the abolition of the grant ceiling and the recognition of Cambridgeshire's spending needs. He expressed some concern at the Cabinet's seeking of assurances that the levels of funding would be at least maintained in future years, as it was not possible to bind future Governments. He advised that the Labour group would not be putting forward an alternative budget for 2005/06, but would be seeking to comment constructively on the Administration's proposals. The Labour group would be particularly concerned to ensure adequate investment in the Education, Libraries and Heritage budget, including support to schools to raise standards at Key Stages 3 to 5 and funding for museums, sports services and clothing vouchers.

Councillor A C Kent noted that although the Government's announcement of the Council's provisional RSG settlement had been delayed until 2nd December 2004, the deadline for the Council to notify the Department for Education and Skills of its Schools budget had not been set back from 31st December 2004. She noted that the Director would be writing to the DfES and asked how member input to the process would be achieved.

Councillor C E Shaw welcomed the Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP) settlement, which had included £5 million for the Fordham bypass. £65 million for the guided bus had not been included in the settlement, but was being held in reserve until the outcome of the public inquiry was known. Regionally, £700 million had been made available for road improvements. With regard to the improvements to the A14, he noted that there appeared to have been problems in communications with the Highways Agency. It was now expected that public consultation would begin in the spring of 2005 and that slippage to the overall programme would be slight.

Councillor J M Tuck expressed concern that whilst the increase in funding for highways appeared to be good, this was still significantly below the rate of inflation for highways costs. She emphasised the importance of ensuring that footways were maintained effectively as well as roads.

Councillor J M Tuck also asked for an update on Cabinet's discussion of the recommendations from the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee concerning funding for mental health.

Councillor C M Ballard welcomed the additional funding, which would enable the Council to maintain its eligibility criteria for Social Services to older people at 'substantial', although it would still not be possible to lower the criteria.

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, Councillor S F Johnstone, emphasised the importance of considering the Council's LTP settlement in the context of the infrastructure deficit for the Cambridgeshire sub-region, which had previously been costed at £1 billion.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services, Councillor J A Powley, commented that the settlement was not as generous as it first appeared and that there would continue to be pressure on services. In Social Services, the Council would be spending at £26 million over Formula Spending Share (FSS), all of which would have to be funded from the Council Tax. He noted that there was no intention to increase the eligibility criteria for older people's social services, but that a reduction to the next lowest category would cost £13-14 million and was not affordable.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor J K Walters, noted that he had thanked partners and the public for their campaigning assistance in his recent letter to the Cambridge Evening News. He welcomed the increase in grant, but noted that Cambridgeshire

would continue to be affected by the loss of the £20 million held back through the application of the ceiling in the two previous years. Cambridgeshire's provisional grant for 2005/06 was still £2.2 million below FSS, as although the ceiling had been abolished, floors continued to be applied. He noted that the Council had a statutory duty to submit its Schools budget to the DfES by 31st December 2004. The Council would be submitting a provisional Schools budget by this date, which would be formally confirmed by Cabinet on 7th January 2005. Cabinet would also set cash limits at this meeting. On transport issues, he noted that there were limitations to the LTP settlement, including the removal of funding for the dualling of the A428, and expressed concern about the delay to the A14 improvements.

249. COUNCIL CONSTITUTION – FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

The following amendments to the addendum to the Code of Conduct on Guidance on Confidentiality, contained in the Council's Constitution, were proposed by the Chairman, Councillor R Driver, seconded by Councillor P W Silby, and agreed unanimously:

- i) The initial sentence to refer to paragraphs i) to v)
- ii) The following additional paragraph to be added to the end of the document:

'v) Information to which the public have the right of access under the Access to Information Act 2000 and which is not deemed to be exempt information.'

Members noted that formal regulations relating to the Freedom of Information Act had not yet been received from Government. Once these had been received, recommendations for further changes to the Constitution would need to be brought to the Council.

250. REPORTS OF THE CABINET – 26th OCTOBER AND 7th DECEMBER 2004

The Leader of the Council, Councillor J K Walters, moved receipt of the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 26th October 2004.

Key decisions for information

- 1) Supporting People Strategy

Councillor I C Bates asked the Cabinet Member for Social Services, Councillor J A Powley, about the Supporting People budget allocation for Cambridgeshire for 2005/06 to 2007/08 and its implications for Cambridgeshire. The Cabinet Member for Social Services reported that Cambridgeshire's allocation was £13.3 million, with reductions in funding both for schemes and for administration. The reductions would have implications both for the County Council as Social Services authority and District Councils as housing authorities. A joint member working group would be reviewing the implications and determining which supported housing projects would have to be delayed or not proceed. The Cabinet Member and Councillor C M Ballard expressed serious concern at the effect of the reductions, which ran contrary to Government and Council policy of supporting people to live at home whenever possible.

- 2) Cambridgeshire Horizons Ltd – Infrastructure Partnership Delivery Vehicle

Councillor I C Bates asked the Lead Member for Strategic Planning, Councillor J E Reynolds, who was also the Council's representative on Cambridgeshire Horizons Ltd, what steps would be taken to address the delay to consultation on improvements to the A14 and the exclusion from Cambridgeshire's LTP settlement of funding for the dualling of the A428 and the southern Ely bypass.

The Lead Member for Strategic Planning reported that the County Council, Cambridgeshire Horizons and its partners would continue to campaign for investment in infrastructure for Cambridgeshire, including improvements to the A14 at the earliest possible date. The Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, Councillor S F Johnstone, commented that the Highways Agency was now addressing earlier communication problems and would be meeting with lead members shortly. She shared members' concern at the delay to the A14 and the exclusion of funding for key schemes from the Council's LTP settlement. The Lead Member for Economic and Community Development, Councillor A K Melton, expressed particular concern at the delay to the development of the Ely southern bypass, as this route was key to promoting economic prosperity in the Fens.

Other matters

- 3) Draft Corporate Plan for Consultation
- 4) Proposed Infrastructure Improvements Associated With Cambridge Northern Fringe East

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, Councillor S F Johnstone, welcomed the Growth Area Delivery Grant being made available to develop this junction.

- 5) Disabled Facilities Grants – Cambridgeshire Response to Central Government Review

Councillor G J Heathcock asked the Cabinet Member for Social Services, Councillor J A Powley, whether the Government had responded to Cambridgeshire's representations. He asked to be advised of the likely numbers of people who would be affected by the review of Disabled Facility Grants, which helped some of the most vulnerable members of the community to live at home. Councillor I C Bates asked for the Government's response, when received, to be copied to all members.

Councillor J A Powley agreed ask the Director of Social Services to send a written response. He noted that cuts to these grants were counter-productive to the preventative work of both the County and the District Councils. He paid tribute to the District Councils for their financial contributions to make up the cuts, at a time when they themselves were under financial pressure.

- 6) Monitoring of Recommendations of Joint Review of Social Services

Councillor C M Ballard expressed concern that the Council was continuing to fail to meet a number of key recommendations arising from the Joint Review, including those relating to waiting times for older people's and disabled adults' assessments and between assessment and delivery of services, waiting times for occupational therapy, especially in the lowest priority category, and support for carers, now a statutory duty under the Carers Act.

Responding, the Cabinet Member for Social Services, Councillor J A Powley,

noted that the situation was improving despite the Council's financial constraints. He emphasised that Social Services had recently retained its two-star rating from the Commission for Social Care Inspection, contributed to the Council's 'excellent' Comprehensive Performance Assessment rating, and been awarded Investors in People accreditation. The Directorate would continue to seek improvements.

- 7) National Performance Framework and Food Law Enforcement Service Delivery Plans for Trading Standards
- 8) Corporate Self-Assessment

Councillor J L Huppert congratulated all staff for their contribution towards the Council's 'excellent' Comprehensive Performance Assessment rating. He emphasised, however, the importance of public perception and of the quality of services received, and noted that there were still a number of services to which improvements could be made.

Councillor J L Gluza also thanked all staff who had contributed to the Council's 'excellent' rating. However, he emphasised that there continued to be a need to improve the Council's services, particularly to vulnerable adults and the elderly. He noted that the Social Services Directorate's two-star rating from the Commission for Social Care Inspection had been on the basis of serving 'most' adults well, and emphasised that the Council should strive to serve all adults well.

- 9) Reference from Education, Libraries and Heritage Scrutiny Committee: Primary Educational Provision in Cambourne

Councillor P J Downes welcomed the Cabinet's support for the Education, Libraries and Heritage Scrutiny Committee's recommendations and asked when they would be implemented. Responding, the Lead Member for Education Resources, Councillor F H Yeulett, reported that work was being carried out and that the recommendations would be implemented as soon as possible.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor J K Walters, moved receipt of the report of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 7th December 2004.

Key decisions for information

- 1) Accident Remedies and Traffic Management Programme: Medium-Sized Schemes

Commenting on the St Neots High Street accident remedial scheme, Councillor R L Clarke noted that traffic calming schemes were effective only if enforced. He asked the Council to write to the Chief Constable to seek police support for this, particularly on special occasions when traffic was exceptionally heavy.

- 2) Primary Educational Provision in Cambourne

Other matters

- 3) Funding of Mental Health Services: Report from the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee

Councillor G J Heathcock noted that Cambridgeshire's funding of mental health services continued to be below the national average. He sought assurance

from the Cabinet Member for Social Services, Councillor J A Powley, that investment in mental health services was being treated as a priority and emphasised the importance of adequate investment also by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Mental Health NHS Partnership Trust and Cambridgeshire's Primary Care Trusts.

Councillor C M Ballard commented that the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee's report to Cabinet had focussed on the County Council's input into mental health services. He emphasised the importance of taking into account all partners' funding and noted that Cambridge City PCT's expenditure on mental health services was significantly above the national average, whilst other Cambridgeshire PCTs' was below. He noted that Cambridge City PCT's higher expenditure was thought to be due to historical patterns of provision of mental health services. This was placing significant pressure on other parts of the PCT's budget.

Responding, the Cabinet Member for Social Services, Councillor J A Powley, agreed that mental health services were the responsibility of a range of partners, including the Mental Health Trust, the PCTs and voluntary sector organisations as well as the County Council. He noted that the Mental Health Trust and PCTs were also in difficult financial positions, facing significant overspends. He emphasised that the County Council had increased its percentage funding of mental health services in recent years; further developments would need to be taken forward through integrated services delivered jointly with partners.

4) Effects of Climate Change on County Council Functions

Councillor P J Downes welcomed the member led review of the effects of climate change and the County Council's response to it. He asked what steps would be taken to ensure that the Council set an appropriate example as a major employer and provider of services, as well as protecting itself against the effects of climate change. He and Councillor H J Fitch emphasised the need to ensure that implementation of the review's recommendations was monitored effectively under the new Council. Councillor S J E King, Chairman of the review team, thanked all of those who had participated in the review.

Councillor A A Reid urged the Council to press for emissions standards for buses. He noted that the gas-fuelled shuttle bus used in Cambridge City would shortly have to be replaced and welcomed the proposal to replace it with a hybrid electric vehicle. He suggested that the city centre rising bollard scheme could be used to enforce the use of low-emission vehicles. He also suggested that further consideration should be given to the encouragement of low-emission private cars, noting that, for example, these were exempt from congestion charging in central London.

Councillor J Broadway urged the use of energy-efficient technology in new buildings, including schools, and noted that with whole-life costing this need not be prohibitively expensive. She suggested that there was also scope to seek sponsorship from private-sector companies, enabling them to showcase their products on flagship buildings.

Responding, the Lead Member for Environment, Councillor L J Oliver, welcomed the thoroughness of the member led review and the engagement of the review team members. She noted that the Environment Service Development Group would continue to lead on liaison with other employers in the County to plan ahead for climate change.

- 5) The Bichard Inquiry
- 6) Fourth Implementing Electronic Government Statement (IEG4)

Councillor T J Bear asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor J K Walters, whether the Council would be adopting Government guidance to delete e-mails after three months, so that they were not accessible under the Freedom of Information Act. The Leader of the Council responded that the introduction of such a policy would require substantial consideration.

- 7) Cambridgeshire Community Foundation Named Fund: Appointment of Member Panel and Terms of Reference

- 8) Cambridgeshire Local Access Forum

- 9) Response to Consultations on Preferred Options for South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework and Cambridge City Local Plan Re-Deposit

Councillor C E Shaw expressed the Labour Group's concern at the proposed Cambridge East project. He noted that no new location had yet been identified for Marshall, and that, even if it were, the project would overdevelop this part of Cambridge, resulting in severe transport problems, especially given that Newmarket Road was already congested.

Councillor J L Huppert commented that Marshall wanted to move and were actively looking for a new site. He expressed concern that the move was being hampered by Government restrictions on alternative locations. He expressed the view that this was an appropriate site for development and that effective transport solutions could be developed.

Councillor J L Gluza expressed his opposition to the suggestion of an access road to development in east Cambridge running across Coldhams Common. He suggested that Marshall wished to relocate only because there were too many obstacles to business development at its current site. He expressed concern that Marshall was an important employer in the Cambridge area and that any relocation could result in the loss of jobs for local people.

Councillor R B Martlew noted the intention to expand Northstowe from an initial 6,000 to 10,000 dwellings and asked how this might be achieved, given that the site boundaries for two of the options proposed would not appear to allow for expansion above 8,000.

Speaking as the local member for Willingham, Councillor S F Johnstone commented on the need to minimise the impact of the development at Northstowe on neighbouring villages. She noted that the only boundary option for the development meeting the Structure Plan requirements was option (a), which would see it limited by the B1050 and the disused railway line. She expressed concern at the impact that the development at Northstowe would have on traffic through Willingham and urged that a bypass be built for Willingham.

Responding, the Lead Member for Strategic Planning, Councillor J E Reynolds, noted that all members had had the opportunity to debate Structure Plan issues through open meeting of the Strategic Planning Service Development Group. He emphasised that the Council would continue to work with Marshall and its partners to find a long-term solution for the east of Cambridge and Marshall's

ongoing role in the Cambridge sub-region's economy.

10) Budget Monitoring 2004/05

Councillors M L Leeke, R B Martlew and J L Gluza asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor J K Walters, about the overspend in Social Services in 2004/05. Councillor J L Gluza noted that the Council was already spending significantly over FSS on Social Services. He urged the Council to seek to raise its FSS by promoting the take-up of welfare benefits, which was one of the indices used to calculate levels of deprivation and need.

The Leader of the Council noted that a recovery plan had been agreed with the Learning Disability Partnership and that the Partnership was now expected to break even at the end of the year. He recognised that the Council was spending significantly over FSS on Social Services and that this was having to be funded from the Council Tax. He noted that following the recent member led review of welfare benefits, the Council would be working with voluntary sector partners to encourage take-up in the County.

11) Delegations from Cabinet to Cabinet Members and Officers

251. WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Members noted that three written questions had been submitted under Council Procedure Rule 9:

- Councillor J L Huppert had asked the Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor J K Walters, about Shire Hall redecoration costs. The response set out the costs incurred.
- Councillor J L Huppert had asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, Councillor S F Johnstone, about bus services in East Chesterton. The response emphasised that the recent changes to services were the result of commercial decisions taken by Stagecoach, but noted that the Council was continuing to work with Stagecoach to ensure that services were as effective as possible.
- Councillor R L Clarke had asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, Councillor S F Johnstone, and the Lead Member for Strategic Planning, Councillor J E Reynolds, about planning and transport issues affecting Mill Lane, Little Paxton. The response explained that there were no proposals to include a scheme in the Local Transport Plan to raise the level of Mill Lane.

Copies of the questions and responses are available from Democratic Services.

252. ORAL QUESTIONS

Two oral questions were asked under Council Procedure Rule 9:

- Councillor R L Clarke asked the Lead Member for Strategic Planning, Councillor J E Reynolds, whether funds were available for a feasibility study for a foot and cycle bridge to Little Paxton. The Lead Member for Strategic Planning referred him to the Local Transport Plan, which noted that footways and cycleways would be assessed to establish how they could be improved to best advantage.
- Councillor A Hansard asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor J K Walters, about the cost of responding to Councillor J L Huppert's written question on Shire

Hall redecoration. The Leader of the Council provided this information and urged members to focus on the significance of the Council's achievement in receiving an 'excellent' Comprehensive Performance Assessment rating from the Audit Commission.

A full transcript of the questions and responses is available from the Democratic Services Division.

253. MOTIONS

Members noted that no motions had been submitted under Council Procedure Rule 10.

254. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES AND APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The following changes to Committee memberships and appointments to outside bodies were proposed by the Chairman, Councillor R Driver, seconded by Councillor P W Silby, and agreed unanimously:

- Councillor J Broadway no longer to be a substitute member of the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee and Social Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee
- Councillor D White to be a substitute member of the Education, Libraries and Heritage Scrutiny Committee.

Chairman:

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Thursday, 13 January 2005

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs DSK Spink MBE (Leader of Council)
Councillor RT Summerfield (Deputy Leader of Council and Finance & Resources
Portfolio Holder)

Councillors:	Dr DR Bard	Planning & Economic Development Portfolio Holder
	JD Batchelor	Information & Customer Services Portfolio Holder
	Mrs JM Healey	Conservation, Sustainability & Community Planning Portfolio Holder
	Mrs EM Hezell	Housing Portfolio Holder
	SGM Kindersley	Environmental Health Portfolio Holder
	Mrs DP Roberts	Community Development Portfolio Holder

Councillors RF Bryant, SM Edwards, Mrs A Elsby, R Hall, Mrs SA Hatton, Dr JA Heap,
Mrs HF Kember, MJ Mason, Mrs CAED Murfitt, Dr JPR Orme, A Riley, Mrs GJ Smith,
Dr SEK van de Ven, Mrs BE Waters and Dr JR Williamson were in attendance, by invitation.

Procedural Items

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The Leader was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 9th December
2004 as a correct record.

1 (a) Contact Centre Update (Minute 7)

In relation to the conditions for the transfer of Building Control appointments to the
Contact Centre, the Portfolio Holders for Information and Customer Services and
Planning and Economic Development had met with Building Control officers and agreed
that:

- Between 8 am and 10 am Building Control calls would be given the highest
priority, thus each call received on the Building Control Appointment Booking line
would jump automatically to the front of the call queue for the 15 SCDC call
agents;
- If any calls were waiting for 20 seconds the call would be transferred
automatically using the telephony system to the switchboard agents, these
agents having been trained in the Building Control Appointment Booking process
and who could therefore handle the call to completion;
- It was important that the Building Control Appointment Booking call process did
not impair the service being delivered by the Contact Centre for other SCDC
services; therefore, if after the 20 seconds transfer had taken place the
switchboard agents could not handle the call due to a peak demand being driven
by an alternative SCDC service requirement, the process would automatically
ensure that the Building Control Appointment Booking call was diverted to the
Building Control office at Cambourne.

Cabinet **AGREED** the handling process for calls on the Building Control Appointment
Booking line.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following interests were declared:

Councillor JD Batchelor	Linton Dual Use Sports Facility Scheme: Additional Grant (Item 7) – personal interest as a Governor of Linton Village College
Councillor Mrs GJ Smith	Linton Dual Use Sports Facility Scheme: Additional Grant (Item 7) – personal interest as a member of the Linton Sports Management Committee
Councillor Dr JR Williamson	Museum Grants (Item 9) – prejudicial interest as a Trustee of the Farmland Museum: would withdraw from the Council Chamber during discussion
Councillor SGM Kindersley	Discretionary Renovation Grants (Item 11) – prejudicial interest as a Trustee of an Almshouse: any applications made by the Almshouse under this scheme would be decided by another Portfolio Holder or by Cabinet

Recommendations to Council

3. CPA IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Cabinet in September 2004 had approved six priorities to form the basis of its CPA Improvement Plan. The Improvement Plan would give direction to the work of the Council over the next two to three years. The Chief Executive explained that, although the amount of detail in the report appeared to show the Council dispersing rather than focussing its efforts, the External Auditors and CPA Inspectors had asked for this detailed breakdown of the processes and milestones for previously agreed actions.

Councillor Mrs DP Roberts expressed concern at the appraisal of Council held land and property, feeling that it was premature before the Housing Stock Options Appraisal was completed. The Housing Portfolio Holder emphasised that the action was to identify land which could be disposed of to provide funding for affordable housing, not necessarily disposal for affordable housing. A complete appraisal of assets required a long lead-in time to ensure that the Council was properly advised of its holdings and could make an informed decision at the appropriate time.

It was clarified that:

- The RSS14 statement from the East of England Regional Assembly would not affect the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF), which was being developed in conformity with the existing County Structure Plan. If the LDF process slipped, the Council could be left without a planning framework beyond Local Plan No. 2 when considering applications and for defending against appeals;
- The original collective Cabinet responsibility had already been replaced by a collective responsibility protocol as recommended of the CPA Peer Group.

Cabinet, with one against, **RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL**

- (a) that the CPA Improvement Plan be approved; and
- (b) that, subject to the approval of the CPA Improvement Plan, the following next

steps be adopted:

- consultation with the Audit Commission Relationship Manager and External Audit;
- incorporation of the contents of the Plan in service plans and staff appraisals so that the actions of services and individuals in achieving the plan are identified and agreed;
- incorporation into the draft Performance Plan (by April 2005) and inclusion in the published Performance Plan (by June 2005); and
- quarterly monitoring of the Improvement Plan by Management Team and Cabinet from July 2005.

Decisions made by the Cabinet and reported for information

4. SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE PRIMARY CARE TRUST - LOCAL DELIVERY PLAN 2005-2008

The South Cambridgeshire Primary Care Trust (SCPCT) Local Delivery Plan 2005-2008 set out the PCT's plans and investment proposals for service delivery to implement the national NHS plan and local priorities. Ms Kusam Leal, Assistant Director of Planning and Performance, SCPCT, was present at the meeting to answer Members' questions and explained that although the Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire PCT management structures had recently merged, the two remained separate legal entities. The PCT aimed to use any additional resources arising from the plan to maintain current service provision and to address the deficit situation.

Confirmation was sought and given:

- Members felt that although the SCPCT surpassed many national targets, the PCT should focus its effort and budget on those targets not being met;
- The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) was a key avenue through which the PCT worked with its partners and was a focus of the delivery plan;
- Targets were published earlier in the year and the final plan document would be ready by the end of January, including more specific measures, details and new targets identified by partners and stakeholders during this consultation. The government set the initial targets and responsibility fell to the PCT and local authorities to plan how to meet or improve upon them; and
- The PCT and SCDC worked in partnership in a number of areas such as Age Concern-managed mobile warden schemes, sheltered housing schemes, the Home Improvement Agency and the Fitness 4 Health programme. The PCT was asked to consider funding all mobile warden schemes, not just those managed by Age Concern.

Ms Leal agreed to report back to the Environmental Health Officer (Promotions and Campaigns) clarification of the "Access" commitment and the specific MRSA target.

Cabinet **ENDORSED** the South Cambridgeshire Primary Care Trust Local Delivery Plan and asked that the PCT note the Council's views.

Cabinet thanked Ms Leal for her presentation.

5. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY: OUTCOME OF BIDS TO SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Cabinet at its meeting of 17 November 2004 had asked officers to prepare short justifications and firmer costs for expenditure proposals over £10,000 for 2005/06. Management Team had reviewed all proposals and forwarded twenty-two for

consideration of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee on 16 December 2004. The Committee had recommended that all bids be approved except for the Affordable Housing – Appraisal of Council Housing Assets, Community Access Points Co-ordinator and the National Graduate Programme; but that the Northstowe Governance could be deferred.

Corrections and clarifications were made to the following bids:

- Community Facilities Construction Expert: risen to £48,000 from the previously reported £35,000;
- Vending Machines: cost in 2005/06 was £12,400;
- Following confirmation that the associated funding was eligible for Government grant, the National Graduate Programme bid had been reduced from £15,000 to £8,000 and was therefore transferred to the list of bids under £10,000;
- The Disabled Facilities Grants and ICT Desktop Upgrade were both capital expenditure.

Appraisal of Council Housing Assets

Successful projects for the re-use of land had resulted from previous surveys. The appraisal was a separate issue from disposal of Council land at nil cost for affordable housing. Although previous assessments had been undertaken, the scope of the new appraisal would be different and would include investigating potential building plots suitable for sale on the open market. The GIS system could be used to assist in identifying land. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee had felt it best not to add the appraisal to the existing workload of Building Control staff as current priorities limited available resources and it was important to conclude the appraisal within a reasonable time.

Planning On-Line Enquiries / On-Line Submission of Applications

It was reasonable to expect that the Planning Delivery Grant would support these bids, but the expenditure had to be approved nonetheless. Both were revenue expenditure as they were a further development of existing software

Community Access Points Co-ordinator

There was a high level of computer expertise in the general population, but the aim of the Co-ordinator would be to recruit and support volunteers to train those residents who were unlikely to have home internet access or computer skills. Cambridgeshire County Council had already purchased computers for twelve new access points around the District and there was concern that delaying or refusing the bid could jeopardise the scheme and result in opportunities and money wasted. Parish Councils were very supportive of the project, especially with the increase of the number of Council services available via the internet.

Cabinet **AGREED**

- (a) **New Spending Proposals Greater than £10,000 with costs in 2005/06:** to approve the following proposals for inclusion in the draft estimates:
- Affordable Housing – Appraisal of Council Housing Assets
 - Affordable Housing – Northstowe Housing Project Manager
 - Benefits Improvements
 - Community Access Point Co-ordinator
 - Community Facilities Construction Expert
 - Conservation – Trees and Landscape Officer
 - Disabled Facilities Grants
 - Refuse and Recycling Officer
 - Waste and Recycling Costs
 - Re-tendering of the Dry Recyclables Contract
 - Programmed Maintenance to Plant

- Variations to Cleaning Contract
 - Vending Machines
 - ICT Desktop Upgrade
 - ICT E-Government Requirements
 - ICT – GIS: Positional Accuracy Improvements
 - JDI Development Project
 - Planning – On-Line Enquiries
 - Planning – On-Line Submission of Applications
 - Cambridgeshire Horizons (Infrastructure Partnership)
- (b) To delay consideration of the bid for Northstowe Governance until the 2006/07 Council year;
- (c) **Spending Proposals up to £10,000 with cost implications in 2005/06:** to approve the proposals in Appendix 3 of the report for inclusion in the estimates
- (d) To include the National Graduate Programme in the list of spending proposals up to £10,000 with cost implications in 2005/06, for inclusion in the estimates;
- (e) **Spending Proposals starting in 2006/07 onwards:** to approve the inclusion of the proposals in Appendix 3 of the report in the Medium Term Financial Strategy on the basis that they would be reviewed and justified in next year's budget process before they could proceed.

6. CAMBRIDGESHIRE SUPPORTING PEOPLE STRATEGY

Cabinet was asked to endorse the revised version of the Cambridgeshire Supporting People Strategy, which had to be submitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) by 31st March 2005. The Housing Portfolio Holder noted that after a great deal of work had been done on the strategy, the ODPM announced a reduction in the Cambridgeshire Supporting People funding allocation. Further reductions would make it very difficult to fund existing and new schemes and the Supporting People Joint Member Group had resolved to lobby the ODPM against the proposed cuts. The Member Group was also concerned about the forthcoming needs-based allocation formula to be introduced in April 2005, as all people covered by the strategy were vulnerable and must be supported.

The Housing Strategy Manager explained that the Strategy showed only existing projects and that the Council did not currently have any specific schemes for young people at risk, but that provision would be expanded if funding became available.

Cabinet **AGREED** to endorse the Supporting People Strategy 2005-2010.

7. LINTON DUAL USE SPORTS FACILITY SCHEME: ADDITIONAL GRANT

In June 2003 Cabinet had awarded £300,000 towards the Linton Dual Use Sports Project. A shortfall of £160,000 had been identified, of which £150,000 had been committed by Cambridgeshire County Council and Linton Village College. The Council was asked to contribute the remaining £10,000.

Cabinet **AGREED** to award an additional grant of £10,000 towards the dual use sports centre at Linton Village College, bringing the total grant to £310,000.

8. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The report of the Best Value Review of Affordable Housing had been approved by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and demonstrated a range of ways in which the Council could increase its affordable housing supply. The Housing Portfolio Holder drew Members' attention to the experience and ingenuity required to achieve the challenges identified in the review. The following corrections were made to the review:

- Paragraph 49: Proposals for Airey properties in Longstanton and Girton had also

been approved, while the Teversham proposals were on hold due to a lack of local support;

- Paragraph 49: the Airey schemes totalled £2,975,000; and
- Extract from draft Scrutiny and Overview Committee Minutes of 16 December 2004: the “Housing Portfolio Holder had explained that...registered social landlords had to sell ~~land~~ new built dwellings at the market rate”.

Confirmations were sought and given:

- Shared ownership amounted to around 23% on Airey sites, a reasonable percentage to apply elsewhere;
- A separate register was maintained for shared ownership houses, demand for which was growing;
- Housing schemes varied considerably and the Council considered the experience, management capacity and available capital of potential partner Housing Associations when proposing shared ownership schemes;
- Disposal of Council land at market value could be used to fund exception sites elsewhere, although it was acknowledged that all sites were different and that the Council needed an innovative and flexible approach to funding;
- Government requirements for provision of Key Worker and equity share properties overlooked the need to provide housing for residents who could only afford weekly rents and it was thus important to ensure that rented accommodation, with a variety of tenures, remained available;
- Approval of commercial development on exception sites invalidated the definition of exception sites and would result in removal from the Green Belt: a direct release of Green Belt land would be preferable if no other alternatives were available.

Cabinet **AGREED**

- (a) That the following objectives for affordable housing be adopted:
 - To achieve the completion of a minimum of 300 affordable dwellings (of appropriate tenures) per year in South Cambridgeshire over the next five years to meet local need, this target to continue to include an element from rural exception sites or developments on the Council's own land;
 - To make an appropriate contribution to the County-wide target for affordable homes built without government subsidy under the LPSA; and
 - To ensure that the affordable housing completed meets the Council's objectives of quality village life and sustainability;
- (b) That in principle the Council make additional resources available for affordable housing by making land available at no cost **and / or** approving the use of capital receipts, the amount to be made available reflecting other demands on capital receipts, the Council's priorities and the wide-ranging impact of affordable housing, such as on economic vitality, recruitment to public services, sustainable travel and quality of village life;
- (c) That, if capital receipts are made available for affordable housing, the priority for use of these resources be to support local village schemes;
- (d) To support the principle of maximising flexibility to enable affordable housing schemes to be financed and, to this effect, to support delegated authority being given to the Housing and Environmental Services Director and Development Services Director to approve making land / property available at nil cost for affordable housing schemes, using the following mechanisms:
 - Accepting a higher level of shared ownership on appropriate affordable housing sites in order to cross-subsidise social rented housing;
 - Accepting that some housing on affordable sites may need to be sold at full market value in order to cross-subsidise rented housing;
 - Accepting a lower percentage of built units on s106 sites; and
 - Accepting a financial contribution in lieu of on-site provision of affordable

housing on s106 sites

the above mechanisms to be subject to:

- The approval of the Portfolio Holders for Housing and Planning and Economic Development and appropriate local member(s);
 - An annual limit of £1 million for land / property made available at nil cost, without reference to Cabinet, in accordance with the Constitution; and
 - Compliance with current planning policies and the available General Consent for disposal of land to Registered Social Landlords under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 1988;
- (e) To confirm the bids relating to Affordable Housing, as agreed as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (Minute 5 refers);
- (f) To request the Chief Executive and Development Services Director to arrange a briefing for all Members on affordable housing and its importance;
- (g) To support the inclusion of policies in the Local Development Framework which will provide support for affordable housing and flexibility to maximise affordable housing;
- (h) To support a commitment to work with other authorities in the sub-region including the production of standards s106 agreements and a common approach to Supplementary Planning Documents; and
- (i) To approve the performance indicators and targets as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report.

9. MUSEUM GRANTS

Historically, the Council had considered grant support to local museums before the next year's budgets had been agreed, but with the budget pressures now facing the Council, Cabinet

DEFERRED consideration of this item until the 2005/06 budgets had been agreed.

Councillor Dr JR Williamson left the Chamber for this item.

10. DESIGNATION OF AN "HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT CHAMPION" AND A "DESIGN CHAMPION"

The Minister for Housing and Planning and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) had written to all local authorities to urge them to formally appoint a "champion" for the historic environment, preferably at Cabinet level. Appointment of a "Design Champion" was also sought to deliver design quality in the Planning Policy framework and throughout all the Council's policy. The Conservation Advisory Group had recommended that the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder be appointed "Historic Environment Champion".

Cabinet considered the appointment of non-executive members to the positions, but, noting that the roles of "Historic Environment Champion" and "Design Champion" already formed a significant part of the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning and Planning and Economic Development Portfolios respectively, and that the Conservation Advisory Group already performed a vital role, **AGREED**

- (a) to formally recognise and promote the "Historic Environment Champion" role as a part of the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder's brief, so that opportunities presented by the enhanced partnership working with the ODPM and English Heritage can be fully realised; and
- (b) to formally recognise and promote the "Design Champion" role as a part of the Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder's brief, to retain the focus on delivering quality developments within the very pressured timetable being set for the District's growth.

11. DISCRETIONARY RENOVATION GRANTS

Cabinet was asked to consider an amendment to the current discretionary Renovation Loan policy to enable Charitable Landlords to apply for Renovation Loans.

Cabinet **AGREED**

- (a) to amend Council policy to allow Renovation Loan applications from Charitable Trusts to bring their properties up to current fitness standards and in the future to comply with the new Health and Safety Rating system;
- (b) that any applications of up to 50% of the costs to be taken by the Environmental Health Portfolio Holder on a case-by-case basis and to include the option to carry out the works in stages, if necessary, over more than one financial year.

12. APPOINTMENTS TO HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE ADVISORY GROUP

Cabinet on 9 December 2004 had agreed to establish a Housing for Older People Advisory Group, with membership not exceeding nine elected members plus the Housing Portfolio Holder, the group to be politically proportionate. Nominations had been received from the group leaders, although it was noted that Councillor MP Howell, as Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, while constitutionally allowed to serve on the Advisory Group, would not be able to scrutinise any issues arising from the Group.

Cabinet **AGREED**

- (a) to make the following appointments to the Housing for Older People Advisory Group:

Conservative	Independent	Labour	Liberal Democrat
RE Barrett	<i>to be decided</i>	NN Cathcart	Mrs A Elsby
Mrs JA Muncey	<i>to be decided</i>		Mrs HF Kember
<i>to be decided</i>			Dr JR Williamson
- (b) to delegate responsibility to the Housing Portfolio Holder to appoint the remaining Members from Group nominations.

Information Items

13. OVER SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEME - OVERSPEND

Cabinet **NOTED** that a final account in respect of additional works carried out as part of the Over Sheltered Housing Scheme had been agreed with the appointed contractor with an overspend of 6.4%. All overspends above 5% had to be reported to Cabinet.

14. QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT AND PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS

The Finance and Resources Director apologised for the late report on actual income and expenditure against budget, explaining that the Cabinet meeting schedule made it impossible to complete the figures to the end of the previous month in time for the agenda publication. He noted that:

- The overall position was good, although it appeared likely that there would be an underspend on the General Fund by £463,000;
- Capital Receipts were predicted to be £1.7 million more than originally estimated because of the higher volume of Equity Share and Right To Buy properties having been sold;

- The comparisons did not include the £450,000 approved for direct action; and
- Variances in departmental salaries were calculated by Chief Officers reporting vacancies and budgets adjusted accordingly. For the purpose of the monitoring report, if the positions were not filled during the year, the underspends were split 75/25 between the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account with accurate apportionments being made as part of the final accounts procedures.

Although delegating responsibility for the quarterly monitoring reports to the Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder was considered, Members preferred to receive and discuss the information in public. This matter would be discussed at the forthcoming Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder meeting.

Cabinet **NOTED** the projected expenditure position and the monitoring of prudential indicators.

15. QUARTERLY REPORT ON LEGAL COSTS FOR TRAVELLER ISSUES

The quarterly update on expenditure to date in connection with legal costs on travellers issues was received and the Community Development Portfolio Holder reminded members that the precautionary budget, although in place, had not yet been fully utilised and that there were a number of sites in the District for which the legal process was finishing. The report detailed only legal costs, not services such as waste collection. The Head of Community Services would provide Members with clarification of the legal costs reported for the Cambs Travellers Initiative contribution.

Cabinet **NOTED** the report.

Standing Items

16. MATTERS REFERRED BY SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Nothing to report.

17. UPDATES FROM MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Nothing to report.

18. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 8 and 10 of Schedule 12A of the Act).

Confidential Items

19. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY - REDIRECTION OF RESOURCES

Cabinet on 17 November 2004 had considered the Medium Term Financial Strategy and was now asked to give further consideration to the redirection of resources in order to provide increased capacity to meet spending pressures in 2006/07 onwards. The CPA had identified the need to have a Financial Strategy in place and the Chief Executive

explained that hard decisions were necessary to address underlying spending pressures. Although there was a projected underspend, three months remained in the current financial year and it was important to remain aware of the risk of capping which could result in a last minute forced cut in budgets.

The Chief Executive noted that:

- The financial position was reasonable for 2005/06 provided that the authority was not capped, but it became difficult from 2007/08 onwards;
- The Financial Strategy would be reviewed annually and adjusted accordingly;
- Financial pressures on the authority came from the level of growth and new responsibilities set by the government, such as the licensing powers;
- The Council had not historically strayed far from provision of its statutory duties, consequently there was little opportunity to limit discretionary services;
- Guidance on the Gershon efficiency savings requirements, although expected before Christmas 2004, had not yet been produced so its implications were unknown but would be reported to Cabinet and the Scrutiny and Overview Committee once available; however, these did not have the same purpose as the present report;
- Gershon did not separate statutory and discretionary services and the Council could review its total statutory service provision and the extent of that provision;
- A joint letter from the Leader and the Chief Executive had been sent to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) expressing the Council's position having a Council tax below the national average yet facing massive growth;
- The CPA required the Council to demonstrate that it was willing and able to direct resources to support its priorities, to reduce its budgets to keep spending within limits, and to incorporate the Gershon efficiency improvements – all to coincide with the largest agenda ever faced by the Council;
- The government was taking the view that Councils would make 2.5% savings year-on-year and there was a feeling that the government may cut its grant in light of savings having been identified;

Grave concern was expressed at any proposals which might affect the Council's objective of quality village life and Members favoured using the projected underspend to buy more time to find a more radical solution, most likely involving moving further to a front office / back office structure with the associated review of technology and working processes.

The Finance and Resources Director clarified that capital receipts could not be used to fund revenue expenditure, but that the projected General Fund revenue underspend could be used to delay by one year the proposed cuts and savings in 2005/06, although decisions made by the Cabinet during the meeting had already committed additional expenditure for the current year. He stressed the importance of reducing revenue expenditure to bring Council Tax to a level acceptable to the current government.

Cabinet **AGREED**

- (a) To expedite the back office / front office restructuring, subject to review of back office technology and productivity;
- (b) To use the projected underspends on the 2004/05 budget to delay by one year the proposed 2006/07 savings;
- (c) That the Finance and Resources Director prepare a draft Medium Term Financial Strategy for the next Cabinet meeting, based on decisions made at this meeting; and
- (d) To request that Management Team progress (b) and (c), including the appropriate consultations.

20. REVIEW OF DIRECT LABOUR ORGANISATION OPERATING COSTS

During discussion of this following item, Cabinet **RESOLVED** to continue the meeting beyond 4 hours as provided for in Council Standing Orders.

The Housing and Environmental Services Director introduced his progress report on findings to date from the review and took Cabinet through the report section by section in detail. He reported on action already taken and proposed and responded to questions from Cabinet. Following lengthy and detailed consideration Cabinet **AGREED**

- (a) that the Housing and Environmental Services Director's proposals for the Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) interim management arrangements be noted;
- (b) that a full assessment of the deliverability of the Direct Labour Organisation's tender for the responsive repairs contract be reported to Cabinet by April 2005, along with a DLO business plan that sets out how the organisation will recover its costs over the remaining term of the responsive repairs contract; and
- (c) that the Housing and Environmental Services Director, Chief Executive, Housing Portfolio Holder and Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder be delegated to authorise appropriate action in respect of personnel matters arising from this review.

The Meeting ended at 3.15 p.m.
