

**COUNCILLORS' BULLETIN
26 OCTOBER 2005**

CONTENTS



**South
Cambridgeshire
District Council**

INFORMATION ITEMS

1. Committee Meetings
2. Public invited to have their say at Full County Council Meetings – press release
3. Northstowe Planning Applications - update
4. Call-in Arrangements

DECISIONS MADE BY OFFICERS AND REPORTED FOR INFORMATION

1. Conservation Manager:
Well House Meadow, Haslingfield Community Archaeological Project

MINUTES

1. Cabinet – Draft minutes of 13 October 2005.
Decisions taken:
 - Reductions Proposed to meet Capping

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FROM: 31 October to 4 November 2005				Contact
Mon 31 Oct	10 am	Site Visits		Janice Fisher
Tue 1 Nov				
Wed 2 Nov	10 am	Development and Conservation Control Committee	Council Chamber	Ian Senior
	2.30 pm	Windmill Estate Project Steering Group	Trinity Room, The Belfry, Cambourne.	Carol Tyrrell
Thu 3 Nov				
Fri 4 Nov	10 am	Licensing – Ickleton Lion, Ickleton	Mezzanine	Maggie Jennings
	10 am	Cambridge East Member Reference Group	Swansley Room	Carol Tyrrell

PUBLIC INVITED TO HAVE THEIR SAY AT FULL COUNTY COUNCIL MEETINGS

Councillors have agreed to allow the public to ask questions about services provided by the authority during full meetings of Cambridgeshire County Council.

A meeting of the County Council today (October 18) agreed to allow a 15 minute questions time where leading Councillors - the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members or Chairs of Scrutiny Committees - can be quizzed by members of the public who have given prior notice of their question.

County Council Leader Keith Walters, said: "It is important for Councillors to make informed decisions, and therefore only right and proper that members of the public should have the opportunity to make their voices heard at meetings of the full County Council."

Members of the public wishing to ask a question at the Council meeting will need to give at least two working days notice, spell out details of their question, name the person to be questioned and what if any organisation they represent.

Answers will be given in one of three forms. Either as a direct response of no more than two minutes from the relevant Councillor; if the information sought is available in a printed form, the questioner will be directed to the relevant publication; or where complex or complicated issues are raised a written answer will be given.

The protocol will come into play immediately.

For more information or to register a question, contact the Democratic Services Officer at the County Council, Michael Brown on (01223) 717213.

NORTHSTOWE PLANNING APPLICATIONS: UPDATE

Planning Applications

Members will recall that at the last Development and Conservation Control Committee it was agreed that an update on the Northstowe planning applications, together with a detailed briefing on subject topics involved in the application, would take place an hour before each DCCC in the Council Chamber. The first one of these will take place on 2nd November 2005 (9:00-10:00). It is intended that this first briefing will include –

1. An update on the applications.
 - (a) Consultation responses
 - (b) Neighbour responses
 - (c) Parish Councils' comments

(d) Topic groups (membership and Terms of Reference)
(Julie Ayre, Northstowe Project Manager)

2. Introduction to the officers dealing with the planning of Northstowe
(Julie Ayre, Northstowe Project Manager)
3. An overview of Personal and Prejudicial interests and Pre Determination and Bias. (Colin Tucker, Head of Legal Services)

The first briefing will clarify the important issue of members' involvement in the process, and provide a clear way forward which ultimately allows the decision making process to be carried out unhindered by challenges from outside bodies.

The following meetings will start an active dialogue for informing members of the progress of the application. Now that the official consultation period has expired (17 October, 2005) a significant amount of information is available about developing issues. It is intended that the meeting will start with a general update and continue by developing particular themes. December's theme is likely to deal with issues relation to highways. A representative from the Highways Agency and County Highways Department will be invited in order to answer member's questions. The form of each meeting is proposed to be:

1. Update on the applications' progress
 2. Introduction to Theme for that meeting
 3. The differences between the Local Development Framework and the planning application.
 4. What additional / amended information is being sought for the planning application, as a result of those differences.
 5. Good practice in that theme.
 6. Theme(s) for next briefing(s)
- (Available at these meetings will be the key consultation responses from the various agencies.)

It has been suggested that in order to allow a better transfer of information these meetings should subsequently take place in the Swansley Room at 9:00am prior to each Development and Conservation Control Committee. This will be discussed at the first meeting, although it will depend to some extent upon the number of members wishing to attend. In order to make best use of the time available for each briefing members will be asked to keep to the theme as agreed. Other matters can always be discussed with officers outside the briefing.

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 2 November 2005 at 5 pm**. All decisions not called in by this date may be implemented on **Thursday 3 November 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 OFFICERS AND REPORTED FOR INFORMATION

Conservation Manager

Applicant	Decision and Reasons
Well House Meadow, Haslingfield Community Archaeological Project	To award as grant sum of up to £500 to support the cost of the necessary archaeological investigation of the Well house site prior to the reconstruction of the bakehouse on the site. The funding to be made available from the budget for 'Community Archaeological Projects' within the Heritage Initiative Fund under the Conservation budget for 2005/06. This will contribute to the package of funding supporting the on-going archaeological investigation of the Well house Meadow, as a part of the wider Bakehouse Restoration scheme being undertaken by the Haslingfield Village Society.

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

PRESENT: Councillor SGM Kindersley (Leader of Council)
Councillor RT Summerfield (Deputy Leader of Council and Resources & Staffing
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 Heazell	Housing Portfolio Holder
	Mrs DP Roberts	Community Development Portfolio Holder
	Mrs DSK Spink MBE	Environmental Health Portfolio Holder

Councillors RE Barrett, RF Bryant, NN Cathcart, Mrs PS Corney, Mrs A Elsby, R Hall, Dr SA Harangozo, Mrs SA Hatton, MP Howell, Mrs CA Hunt, Mrs HF Kember, RMA Manning, RB Martlew, MJ Mason, DC McCraith, CR Nightingale, EJ Pateman, J Shepperson, JH Stewart, Dr SEK van de Ven, DALG Wherrell, Dr JR Williamson and NIC Wright were in attendance, by invitation.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs CAED Murfitt.

At the start of the meeting, the Leader expressed thanks to housing staff and to Laurence Green, Safety Officer, for their work in connection with the unexploded bomb alerts at Longstanton and Oakington.

Mr Richard Townley then presented a petition, "Save the Arts", on behalf of the Arts Network. The petition contained 500 signatures and, together with individual letters, asked the Council to reconsider the drastic nature of the proposed cuts in the arts budget. Mr Townley spoke of the invaluable nature of grants to local organisations, often being crucial to a project proceeding. The District Council was currently seen as being in the forefront of this type of help and was urged not to see the arts as an easy option for cuts. Arts projects could alleviate disadvantage and improve the quality of life for the most vulnerable, including those suffering from mental illness for whom arts projects could be therapeutic. Mr Townley concluded by suggesting that reductions of the scale proposed would make it difficult to restart projects or organisations when things improved.

The Leader thanked Mr Townley for his words and formally received the petition.

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Leader was authorised to sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2005 as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

Minute 10 – Rampton Conservation Area Appraisal

Replace " to approve the boundary changes to the Rampton Conservation Area proposed in the Conservation area Appraisal and to adopt..." with "*to approve the designation of a Conservation Area at Rampton and to adopt...*"

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

JD Batchelor	As the chairman of Linton Action for Youth
Dr DR Bard	As a member of the Sawston Sports user body and a former fund raiser for OWL
Mrs DSK Spink	As a member of the board of Wysing Arts
MP Howell	As an employee of the Papworth Trust
Dr JR Williamson and NN Cathcart	As trustees of the Farmland Museum
JH Stewart	As president of the Cambridgeshire Association for the Visually Handicapped

3. REDUCTIONS PROPOSED TO MEET CAPPING

The Chief Executive introduced the reductions in budgets proposed to meet the capping requirement of £2.6m and the service implications, emphasising that, although the capping target could be met, there were further reductions to be found to meet both the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Gershon efficiency savings requirements. The Council was already starting from a base as a low spender.

Amendments to the report were noted:

PARAGRAPH 8, TABLE 1

Add for saving from IT/Other Recharges etc under proposals for 05/06, -£90,000#, with a consequent amendment to the total for 05/06 to read £1,651,458.

PARAGRAPH 20

It was now thought that around 25 General Fund jobs would be lost, 14 through natural wastage.

PARAGRAPH 26

Implicit in the recommendations was an instruction to Management Team to implement the proposals and consequent redundancies and that the embargo on filling vacancies should be lifted where they were vital.

The Chief Executive emphasised that the co-operation of Members and Officers in their approach to finding reductions should be commended. This was echoed by the Leader, and individual portfolio holders commended the officers working with them. It was noted that the report on the sheltered housing service was to be presented to Cabinet at the next meeting since this meeting was dedicated to capping issues.

A number of Members expressed concern about the ability of the Council to produce a balanced budget in five years on the basis of the savings now envisaged and urged consideration of proposals to address this, including, if necessary, further redundancies at an early stage. The Chief Executive reminded Members that for many years the yearly Financial Strategy had projected three years ahead and that projecting five years involved many unknowns which should not unduly influence the shorter term.

Nevertheless, it was necessary to move in the right direction. On the proposal of Councillor Mrs DSK Spink, seconded by Councillor Mrs DP Roberts, Cabinet

AGREED that, subject to the agreement of the Chairman, a special Council meeting be called to consider the financial options for the next five years.

The proposals were then considered by portfolio, each portfolio holder drawing attention to specific items and answering questions.

Issues arising were:

RESOURCES AND STAFFING

Legal, No. 4 – it was confirmed that the Council's external solicitors would be retained for high level advice on travellers' issues.

Legal, No. 5 – a scheme of charging for legal advice to parish councils would be by a subscription system. Currently, legal officers should not be giving legal advice to parish councils but would give an informal indication of likely outcome. Some concern was expressed about the ability of smaller parishes to pay for advice, but the Leader thought that some discretion would be permissible.

Office Services, No. 9 – the introduction of charges for the vending machines had been suggested by staff. If this were accepted, the drinks machine in the Members' lounge would go.

Revenues, No 6 – a change in the discretionary rate relief policy would come to Council for approval, but the aim would be to preserve relief for local organisations by concentrating cut backs on larger national organisations.

Revenues, No. 10 – new posts would be funded by reductions elsewhere in the section. The posts would be advertised and any staff being made redundant could apply.

INFORMATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

ICT, Nos. 6 and 15 – the purpose of the fixed term posts was to help transfer work to the Contact Centre, but the proposed permanent posts would assist in the change to the structure of the Council.

Legal and Democratic Services – queries were raised about the potential for savings in meetings, which had been raised at the Scrutiny and Overview Committee. The Portfolio Holder stated that all portfolio holders were to make their own arrangements for servicing their meetings but that there had been little response on the future of other meetings and there was still a problem to be addressed. A plea was made that meetings should not be cut back to such an extent that non-executive Members had little involvement.

Legal and Democratic Services, No. 4 – the Environmental Health Portfolio Holder asked that the likely work arising from the new Gambling Act should be investigated before this fixed term post was deleted.

Communications – South Cambs Magazine was nearing break-even and was enormously successful with residents and advertisers. Substantial savings had been made.

Councillor Batchelor pointed out that the savings target for the portfolio had been exceeded by about £43,000, almost all the savings being in recharges which would reflect in other budgets. The cuts were damaging but maintained the core.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

NO. 4 – IT WAS CONSIDERED THAT CURRENT LAWS AND THE PRESENCE OF AN ENFORCEMENT OFFICER SHOULD COUNTERACT ANY RISK OF INCREASED DUMPING RESULTING FROM THE REMOVAL OF FREE BULKY COLLECTIONS. IT WAS BELIEVED THAT INCOME OF SOME £7,800 WOULD BE GAINED BY REMOVING THE EXEMPTIONS.

NOS. 6, 7 AND 8 – ONE OF THE OBJECTS OF INCREASED CHARGES WAS TO CUT DOWN ON RUBBISH.

No. 22 – the possible effect on development control and the Local Development Framework of the removal of a budget for consultants on awarded watercourses was noted.

No. 24 – the Council was very competitive in its charges for pest control and it was felt there was scope for increases. If the proposals were accepted, there would be an immediate introduction of a call-out charge of £26 and a charge of £35 for rats and mice treatments, increasing to £45 next year. A 30% reduction in requests had been assumed.

No. 25 – the Portfolio Holder gave an assurance that footway lighting would not be turned off this winter and reported that discussions with the County Council were underway.

Recycling Community Payments – the Portfolio Holder took note of the situation in Swavesey where the Parochial Church Council provided land for and maintained the static recycling bins with the assistance of the recycling credits.

HOUSING

Housing Strategic Services, No. 4 – arrangements for future parish housing needs surveys would have to be agreed with the Rural Housing Enabler, but it would be useful for parishes to be involved. The District Council would have to ensure that all surveys were carried out on a consistent basis. It was noted that there was still much work to do on this proposal and that it might be rejected by parish councils.

Housing Strategic Services, No. 5 – a plea was made for the appraisal of Council held land and property to be undertaken in-house if resources became available. This would have been the Portfolio Holder's preference, but it was still hoped that the proposal from a partner RSL would be to the Council's advantage.

Housing Strategic Services, No. 6 – the aim had been to avoid cutting grants completely to smaller organisations which helped people find homes.

Housing Services – the apparent discrepancy in savings figures was believed to result from recharges to the General Fund.

Housing Services, No. 2 – the Portfolio Holder confirmed that sheltered housing managers would not be evicted from their homes following the review of the service.

PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Development Control – the funding of some posts by Cambridgeshire Horizons was being sought. The aim had been to maintain the efficiency of the service so as not to lose Planning Delivery Grant.

Building Control – this service was hard hit, but the aim had been to preserve the statutory function. It was hoped to provide a joint service with Cambridge City Council.

CONSERVATION, SUSTAINABILITY AND COMMUNITY PLANNING

The Portfolio Holder stated that the cuts had been incredibly painful and that any further cuts would cripple the services.

Community Development

The Portfolio Holder stated her belief that the savings exercise had been conducted in a fairly cavalier way and that there was no real opportunity for Members other than Cabinet to have a real input. A 37% cut in Community Development budgets was an easy option and unfair, without the effect of the cuts on communities being really considered. She hoped the petition would be taken into account and urged that, even at

this stage, cuts could be shared more evenly. Councillor Mrs Roberts further warned against underspending.

The Leader expressed his great admiration for the way the Portfolio Holder and the officers had gone about finding cuts, managing to retain a core on which to build in the future if conditions changed. The department had been put in a terrible position by the Government and the effects on villages would be severe.

Other Members also expressed their extreme regret at cuts that would affect local communities and organisations, although some comfort was taken from the work the Council had done and the good will engendered.

No. 5 – it was confirmed that budget provision had never been made for an Arbury Park community development officer: Planning Delivery Grant was being used to fund the post, but was not long-term. The Community Development Officer originally appointed for Cambourne was now district-wide.

No. 12 – the savings in 2006/07 in arts partnership support grants should read £86,750. This was an enormous reduction in an area where the Council had been working for years to forge relationships. The aim was to protect services based in South Cambridgeshire

Councillor Dr SA Harangozo, as Chairman of the Arts Development Advisory Group, protested that he had not had any information about the proposals, and asked the Portfolio Holder if she would reconsider the distribution of the cuts over service areas as the arts were suffering a 60% reduction. Councillor Mrs Roberts undertook to explain the rationale after the meeting.

Nos. 21, 22, 23 – the possibility of finding another organisation to take over running Milton Country Park was being explored, but a dowry would be expected.

A suggestion was made that income could be raised by charging for car parking and a query raised about the extent to which funding was being sought from other partners. It was also suggested that savings in meetings could help to fund grants, and the Chief Executive advised that Members should think seriously about ways of maintaining democratic representation other than by the current number of meetings.

The Chairman of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee expressed his thanks to the other Portfolio Holders and officers for increasing their cuts, thereby reducing the burden on Community Development.

Councillor NN Cathcart undertook to use what influence he could with the Minister to persuade him of the vital importance of community development.

Attention was drawn to the relatively modest increase in Council Tax in cash terms and that the refund for a Band D property would be £47 for the year.

Cabinet supported the reductions proposals brought forward by portfolio holders and officers, noting that some minor adjustments might be necessary and some flexibility required, and

RECOMMEND that

- (a) The reductions proposals presented to Cabinet be approved as the basis for a revised budget for 2005/06 and the budget for 2006/07
- (b) Management Team be instructed to implement the proposals and any consequent redundancies;

- (c) The embargo on filling vacancies be lifted for essential posts
- (d) The policy in respect of any additional pension costs associated with early retirement be amended to allow these costs to be spread equally over 5 years, beginning with the year in which the liability is incurred.

**The Meeting ended at 12.40
p.m.**
