

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Wednesday, 3 February 2021 at 10.00 a.m.

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

Councillors:	Neil Gough	Deputy Leader (non-statutory) - Transformation and Projects
	Bill Handley	Lead Cabinet Member for Community Resilience
	Dr. Tumi Hawkins	Lead Cabinet member for Planning Policy and Delivery
	Peter McDonald	Lead Cabinet Member for Business Recovery
	Brian Milnes	Lead Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Licensing
	Hazel Smith	Lead Cabinet member for Housing

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Farzana Ahmed	Chief Accountant
Peter Campbell	Head of Housing
Dobson	Democratic Services Manager
Julie Fletcher	Head of Housing Strategy
Peter Maddock	Head of Finance
Jonathan Malton	Cabinet Support Officer
Liam Martin	AV Support Officer
Rory McKenna	Deputy Head of Legal Practice/Monitoring Officer
Trevor Nicoll	Head of Environment and Waste
Liz Watts	Chief Executive

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

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillor John Williams, Lead Cabinet Member for Finance, and Councillor Judith Rippeth, Vice Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Announcements

Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Council, announced the flag outside South Cambridgeshire Hall would be flown at half-mast to honour the passing of

Captain Sir Tom Moore.

4. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Cabinet **authorised** the Leader to sign, as a correct record, the public version of the Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 18 January 2021.

5. **Public Questions**

There were no public questions received ahead of the meeting.

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

Cabinet **received and noted** a report from Councillor Grenville Chamberlain, Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, and Councillor Judith Rippeth, Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, informing it about the discussions at, and recommendations from the Committee's meeting held on 19 January 2021.

The report related to:

- General Fund Budget 2021/2022
- Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/2022
- Treasuring Management Strategy
- Capital Strategy

7. **Actions Taken under the Chief Executive's Delegated Powers**

Cabinet **received and noted** a report relating to the actions taken under the Chief Executive's Delegated Powers:

- National Lockdown Business Support Policy Addendum, decision taken on Wednesday, 20th January 2021.

8. **Doubling Nature Strategy**

The Leader of the Council introduced the Doubling Nature Strategy, which set out in high-level terms the Council's approach to doubling nature in South Cambridgeshire; a vision initially agreed by the Council in July 2019. The Leader outlined how the Council would use its widening spheres of influence, on its own estate, through policies and through wider influence in partnerships and communities to achieve more wildlife-rich habitats, increased tree canopy cover and better accessibility to green spaces.

Councillor Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning and Policy, was pleased to support the strategy, noting how it complemented the work of the Greater Cambridge Planning Service in mapping out opportunities for increasing and enhancing nature, including through the call for green sites as part of the Local Plan process. Councillor Dr. Aidan Van de Weyer, the Deputy Leader of the Council supported the strategy, welcoming the coordination of the various

ways in which the Council could improve nature across the district. Councillor Brian Milnes, Lead Cabinet Member for Environment and Licencing, thanked Officers for their work, and noted how the Three Free Trees scheme had helped encourage tree-planting across the district.

Councillor Hazel Smith, Lead Cabinet member for Housing, noted the Tenant Participation Group was being replaced with the Housing Engagement Board and requested that the strategy be updated to reflect this change. The Leader of the Council agreed the strategy would be amended.

Councillor Heather Williams supported the wider project. The Chair of the Council welcomed the strategy. He made suggestions regarding the amount of colour, and the images used within the report. The Leader of the Council clarified there was no intention to print copies of the strategy. Councillor Dr. Claire Daunton hoped there would be a wide readership, especially among Parish Councils. The Leader confirmed the report would be widely distributed after publication.

After a further short discussion, the Leader closed the debate and thanked Officers for their work, and Cabinet:

Adopted the draft Doubling Nature Strategy at Appendix A, subject to minor amendments by the Lead Officer in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

9. **Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy Annexes**

Councillor Hazel Smith, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy Annexes, informing the Members this report could ensure the Council could provide policy direction in terms of applications coming forward for Build to Rent schemes and the clustering and distribution of affordable housing. She requested an amendment to the decisions, to delegate authority to the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing for minor amendments.

Councillor Claire Daunton and Councillor Heather Williams asked if this proposal would affect the clustering of properties. The Head of Housing responded that this would avoid the concentration of certain tenures but would provide further clarity within the policy to make it clearer that clusters would be dispersed appropriately across the whole development. The Chair of the Council requested amendments to the graph below paragraph 18 of the report, along with a missing sentence at the end of paragraph 24 in appendix A. The Head of Housing confirmed the graph would be updated and ensured the missing sentence would be amended as required.

After a further short debate, Cabinet:

- a) **Approved** the draft policies relating to Build to Rent, Clustering and Distribution of Affordable Housing and Affordable Rents as an annexe to the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy.
- b) Following approval, to delegate authority to the Lead Member for Housing

to approve the final policies subject to minor amendments, if any, arising from public consultation

10. **General Fund Budget 2021/2022**

Cabinet considered the General Fund Revenue Budget for 2021-2022. The Leader of the Council introduced the report, noting the amendment from the previous Scrutiny and Overview meeting, budgeting a two-year post for a Welfare and Visiting Advisor to support and enhance the work of the Housing Benefits team and ensuring the Council Tax bill for residents would continue to be in the lowest 25 per cent of all district council taxes.

After further discussion, the Cabinet:

Recommended that Council:

- a) Take into account the detailed budgets presented at Appendix B (white pages), and summarised at Appendix A (blue page), with an estimated General Fund Gross Operating Expenditure for 2021/2022 of £71.633 million, estimated Gross Operating Income of £49.145 million and estimated General Fund Net Operating Expenditure of £22.488 million;
- b) Acknowledge the key factors which have led to the proposed General Fund Revenue Budget, with service pressures summarised at Appendix C and offsetting efficiency savings/policy options summarised at Appendix D;
- c) Acknowledge that the 2021/2022 General Fund Revenue Budget gross expenditure is covered by forecast income sources (assuming no change in Government grant) and, therefore, any addition(s) to expenditure that are made by the Cabinet or Council will need to be met from the General Fund Balance;
- d) Approve the 2021/2022 General Fund Revenue Budget taking into account the statement by the Chief Finance Officer on the risks and robustness of the estimates as required under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 (reproduced at Appendix F);
- e) Set the Council Tax Requirement for 2021/2022 at £9,994,789;
- f) Approve an increase in the District element of the Council Tax of £5 per annum, giving an average Band D Council Tax of £155.31, plus the relevant amounts required by the precepts of the Parish Councils, Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Police & Crime Commissioner and the Cambridgeshire Fire Authority;
- g) Authorise the Head of Finance, on the basis of the proposals set out in the report, to prepare the formal Council Tax Resolution for presentation to Council at its scheduled meeting on 23 February 2021;
- h) Approve the estimates of the amounts required to be made under the Non-domestic Rating (Rates Retention) Regulations 2013 as set out in paragraphs 34 to 37;
- i) Approve the acceptance of any grants made during 2021/2022 by the Government under Section 31 of the Local Government Act

- 2003 in respect of Business Rates;
- j) Approve the use of the additional income from the Business Rate Pool, estimated at £1,100,000 in 2021/2022, for transfer to the established Renewables Reserve for priority projects;
 - k) Subject to any changes to the recommendations above, recommend to Full Council:
 - (i) The 2021/2022 General Fund Revenue Budget based on known commitments at this time and planned levels of Service/functions resulting in a Budget Requirement of £21.719 million;
 - (ii) The District Council Precept on the Collection Fund (Council Tax Requirement) of £9.995 million in 2021/2022 (based on the Provisional Government Settlement) and a Band D Council Tax of £155.31.

11. Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/2022

Cabinet considered the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for 2021-2022. The Leader of the Council introduced the report, and noted the budget was initially set in the context of the 30-year business plan, with a continued drive to improve the customer service to the Council's tenants and grow its social housing stock.

Councillor Hazel Smith, the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, noted the service charges in Appendix D were not discussed at the Scrutiny and Overview Committee meeting on 19 January 2021. She thanked the officers of the Housing Team for their work in drafting the budget.

After a short debate, Cabinet **recommended** to Council to:

- a) Approve the HRA revenue budget for 2021/2022 as shown in the HRA Budget Summary as presented at Appendix A;
- b) Approve that council dwelling rents for all social rented properties be increased by the Consumer Prices Index plus 1% (1.5%), in line with legislative requirements introduced as part of the Welfare Reform and Work Act, with effect from 1st April 2021;
- c) Approve that affordable rents are reviewed in line with rent legislation, to ensure that rents charged are no more than 80% of market rent for 2021/2022. Local policy is to cap affordable rents at the lower level of Local Housing Allowance, which will result in rent variations in line with any changes notified to the authority in this level, effective from 1st April 2021;
- d) Approve inflationary increases of 0.6% in garage rents for 2021/2022.
- e) Approve the proposed service charges for HRA services and facilities provided to both tenants and leaseholders, as shown in Appendix D.
- f) Approve the required level of funding for new build investment between 2021/2022 and 2025/2026 to ensure that commitments can be met in respect of the investment of all right to buy receipts currently retained or anticipated to be received by the authority for this period. This expenditure

will take the form of HRA new build, with the 70% top up met by other HRA resources;

- g) Approve the HRA Medium Term Financial Strategy forecasts as shown in Appendix B;
- h) Approve the Housing Capital Programme as shown in Appendix C.

12. Capital Investment Programme

Cabinet considered the Capital Investment Programme for financial years 2021-2022 to 2025-2026. The Leader of the Council introduced the report, observing the revision of the programme due to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic and the changes to the rules of the Public Works Loan Board.

After further discussion, Cabinet:

Recommended to Council the revised Capital Programme outlined at Appendix A.

13. Treasury Management Strategy

Cabinet considered the annual review of the Treasury Management Strategy. The Leader of the Council introduced the report and recommended the refreshed Strategy for adoption by the Council, considering the changes around the borrowing rules for the Public Works Loan Board which came into effect from 26 November 2020.

Councillor Brian Milnes, Lead Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Licensing commented the Council was adding environmental, social and governance considerations to all future investments.

After further discussion, Cabinet:

Recommended to Council the updated Treasury Management Strategy attached at Appendix A to the report which sets the policy framework for the Council's treasury management activity, including the Treasury Management Policy Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy and Treasury Indicators.

14. Capital Strategy

Cabinet considered the Capital Strategy. The Leader of the Council introduced the report, reflecting the update to the guidelines of the Public Works Loan Board. Councillor Hazel Smith, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, recommended a minor amendment to the strategy, stating there was no longer any reduction in energy conservation in existing Council properties.

After further discussion, Cabinet:

Recommended to Full Council the updated Capital Strategy attached at Appendix A to the report which sets the policy framework for the development, management and monitoring of capital investment, and Prudential Indicators,

subject to minor amendments by the Head of Finance in consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member for Finance.

15. Local Council Tax Support

Cabinet considered the Localised Council Tax Support (LCTS). The Leader of the Council introduced the report, proposing the current scheme for 2020-2021 to be continued for 2021-2022. Cabinet noted that this was an annual review of the scheme to keep it in line with the Consumer Price Index.

After further discussion, Cabinet:

Recommended to Council, at its meeting on 23 February 2021 the adoption of Option 1, comprising the LCTS Income Bands scheme currently in operation, with an uprating of calculation figures in line with the Consumer Price Index.

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

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