

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee held on
Tuesday, 20 July 2021 at 5.20 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Grenville Chamberlain – Chair
Councillor Judith Rippeth – Vice-Chair

Councillors:	Anna Bradnam	Dr. Martin Cahn
	Nigel Cathcart	Sarah Cheung Johnson
	Graham Cone	Dr. Claire Daunton
	Peter Fane	Sally Ann Hart
	Geoff Harvey	Steve Hunt
	Dr. Aidan Van de Weyer	Dr. Richard Williams

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:
Anne Ainsworth (Chief Operating Officer), Rachel Jackson (Principal
Licensing Officer), Ian Senior (Scrutiny and Governance Adviser) and Liz
Watts (Chief Executive)

Cllr Bridget Smith and Cllr Brian Milnes were in attendance remotely, by invitation.

1. Chair's announcements

The Chair made several brief housekeeping announcements.

2. Apologies

There were no apologies.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Committee authorised the Chair to sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2021, subject to the following

Attendance list

Councillor Steve Hunt attended the meeting in person rather than remotely.

Minute 6 - Private Sector Housing Policy

In the third paragraph, the word 'licencing' should be 'licensing'.

Minute 7 – Quarter 4 Performance

In the seventh paragraph, 'Dr;' should be 'Dr.'

5. Public Questions

There were no public questions.

6. Draft Re-set and Recovery Plan

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee received a developing draft of the Re-set and Recovery Plan outlining the key areas the Council would prioritise during the period 2021-23 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Plan focused on practical recovery and sought to identify a small number of critical activities or changes to ways of working, that might help South Cambridgeshire communities and businesses recover.

The Plan was intended to complement the activities and priorities contained in the Business Plan 2021-22 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. Therefore, it set out deliberately not to duplicate activities already being undertaken by virtue of those documents or to aspire simply to business as usual.

Councillor Dr. Claire Daunton asked Councillor Bridget Smith (Leader of the Council) about the allocation of resources and the anticipated methods of delivering the Plan. In response the Leader said that, while South Cambridgeshire District Council was well placed to deal itself with elements of the Plan, there existed opportunities to develop joint-working initiatives with partner organisations and to preserve and enhance the invaluable support from volunteer groups demonstrated during the pandemic.

Highlighting the fact that the Plan was still at a very early stage, the Leader assured Councillor Steve Hunt that future work on it would include the prioritisation of actions and consideration of its relationship with the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

Councillor Nigel Cathcart observed how the pandemic had forced people to change their working practices and means of seeking leisure. He said that, in many cases, this had had a profound impact on people's confidence and wellbeing. The Leader acknowledged this point but added that the Plan must draw on the positives arising during the previous 15 months as well as guiding a return to pre-pandemic commercial, cultural, and educational ways of life. The Council would do all in its power, for example, to influence the delivery of an appropriate mix of housing tenures.

Picking up on cultural strategy, Councillor Dr. Martin Cahn observed that South Cambridgeshire District Council had backed away from the direct provision of arts, sport, and leisure provision. While she recognised the challenge, the Leader assured Councillor Cahn that it was not impossible to embed new services. She emphasised that the Plan was still at a very early stage of development.

Councillor Anna Bradnam welcomed the Plan's focus on young people. Councillor Dr, Martin Cahn highlighted a specific case where input was needed: the pandemic had necessitated an increased emphasis on remote and distance learning and, if such teaching methods became commonplace in the future, a way would be needed of replicating some of the non-study aspects of, say, a university.

In response to a comment from Councillor Judith Rippeth, the Leader assured the Committee that the final Re-set and Recovery Plan would address, as one of its main themes, the question of mental health that had been a significant feature during the pandemic.

Summing up, the Chair identified the following subject areas as key, namely

- identification of short term and longer-term objectives for the Re-set and Recovery Plan;

- joint working with partner organisations, many of whom would hold data that would be crucial in helping South Cambridgeshire District Council to quantify some of the issues faced;
- the retention, support, and development of those volunteer groups throughout the District that had been so essential during the pandemic; and
- the creation of a cultural strategy

7. Street Trading Controls - Adoption of Schedule 4 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 and Designation of Consent Streets

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee reviewed the draft of a report that would be seeking the Cabinet's agreement to the adoption of Schedule 4 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 for the whole of the South Cambridgeshire district, and its agreement to advertise an intention that all streets in the District should be designated consent streets (with the exception of the A11 and A14).

For Councillor Dr. Claire Daunton the principal issues to be considered were those of food safety, security, safeguarding and wellbeing.

The Lead Cabinet Member for Environment and Licensing acknowledged Councillor Steve Hunt's concern that the proposed policy might put some traders out of business, but said South Cambridgeshire District Council had to have a degree of control and influence over street trading.

Councillor Geoff Harvey said that the proposed licensing framework must relate to the situation in neighbouring local authority areas to ensure a degree of consistency. This would be particularly important in those parishes closest to those areas, such as parishes adjoining Cambridge. Councillor Sarah Cheung Johnson agreed that every effort should be made to align, as far as possible, the administration and costs associated with the proposed policy with those of neighbouring local authorities.

Councillor Dr. Richard Williams commented that just because you can regulate something does not necessarily mean you should do so. He wondered whether there was any evidence of unsafe street trading practices within the District. In view of the Covid-19 pandemic, and South Cambridgeshire District Council's plans for helping businesses to recover from its effects, Councillor Williams questioned the timing of such a policy, which could impose significant financial pressures on some street traders. He wondered what the impact would be on charity and community events. The Lead Cabinet Member for Environment and Licensing assured the Committee that any changes made to the current policy would be made in the context of equity and fairness. Councillor Dr. Richard Williams reminded the Lead Cabinet Member that the issue of food hygiene fell within a different regime. The Lead Cabinet Member acknowledged that point but said that, without a register of who and where street traders in South Cambridgeshire were, it was difficult to enforce food hygiene in a fair and comprehensive manner.

8. Work Programme

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee received and noted its updated work programme for 2021-2022.

9. To Note the Dates of Future Meetings

Members noted that the next two Scrutiny and Overview Committee meetings would be at 5.20pm on Tuesday 14 September 2021 and Tuesday 21 September 2021.

The Meeting ended at 7.40 p.m.
