

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Thursday, 9 March 2006

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 RF Bryant, NN Cathcart, Mrs A Elsby, R Hall, JA Hockney, Mrs CA Hunt,
Mrs HF Kember, DC McCraith, Mrs CAED Murfitt, CR Nightingale, Dr JPR Orme,
Dr SEK van de Ven and Dr JR Williamson were in attendance, by invitation.

Procedural Items

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Leader was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2006 as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

Disabled Facilities Grants: Child Adaptations Policy (Minute 9)

“Concern was expressed at the potential for an increase in applications for child adaptations as greater numbers of pre-term babies were surviving ~~in infancy~~ *infancy birth but having a disability...*”

9-Month (April to December) Corporate Performance Indicators (Minute 12)

“that the 49% target for single car users was ~~too high~~ ambitious...”

“Cabinet **AGREED**...

“(a) ...that there was nothing which could ~~not~~ be done...”

“(c) that it might be ~~impossible~~ to...”

Cabinet **RECEIVED** the minutes of the 20 February 2006 meeting of the Transformation Project and noted that Mrs Spink had sent apologies.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following personal interests were declared:

Dr DR Bard As a governor of Sawston Village College (Minute 6 –
Bassingbourn Dual Use Sports Facility Project)
JD Batchelor As a governor of Linton Village College (Minute 6 –
Bassingbourn Dual Use Sports Facility Project) and an elected
Cambridgeshire County Councillor (Minute 8 – Children &

RF Bryant	Young People's Plan) As a former governor of Bassingbourn Village College, prior to his election as a District Councillor (Minute 6 – Bassingbourn Dual Use Sports Facility Project).
NN Cathcart	As a member of the Bassingbourn Dual Use Management Committee, although he noted that that body had not met for nine years (Minute 6 – Bassingbourn Dual Use Sports Facility Project)
Mrs JM Healey	As a governor of Linton Village College (Minute 6 – Bassingbourn Dual Use Sports Facility Project)
SGM Kindersley	As a governor of Gamlingay Village College (Minute 6 – Bassingbourn Dual Use Sports Facility Project) and an elected Cambridgeshire County Councillor (Minute 8 – Children & Young People's Plan)
Mrs CAED Murfitt	As the mother of former students of Bassingbourn Village College (Minute 6 – Bassingbourn Dual Use Sports Facility Project)
Mrs DSK Spink	As a governor of Gamlingay Village College (Minute 6 – Bassingbourn Dual Use Sports Facility Project)

**Recommendations to
Council**

3. INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder introduced the report and explained that the Council had to set its Investment Strategy annually. The proposed Strategy was unchanged from the previous year, except that the maximum limits for investment levels had been reduced due to the falling amounts of capital receipts.

Cabinet **RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL** that the Investment Strategy 2006/07 be approved.

4. ALARM SYSTEM SERVICE CHARGES

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) had indicated its preference for authorities to move towards a situation where Housing Revenue Account (HRA) services were paid for fully by the user, rather than subsidised by tenants in general. In February 2005 Council agreed to phase out over four years the reduced alarm system service charge for those in receipt of benefit. On 27 October 2005, as part of the General Fund savings exercise, Council agreed that, from 2006-07, all users would be asked to pay the full charge. When Council considered the housing rents and service charges on 23 February 2006, a decision on the setting of an alarm system service for owner occupiers and tenants not on a sheltered housing scheme pending additional options being considered. The Chief Executive confirmed that, although Council had made a decision on this issue within the past six months, Cabinet could recommend alternative arrangements and the full Council could revoke its previous decision.

The Housing Portfolio Holder explained that the estimates had been prepared using the 2.5% inflationary increase used throughout the Council's estimates, bringing the full charge to £3.61 per week and abolishing the reduced charge from 1 April 2006, but other Members expressed their disappointment, calculating that the increased costs to a household on benefit would amount to nearly £66 per year, which was significant to

those on reduced or fixed incomes. The Housing Portfolio Holder noted that she had expressed similar reservations in October and was pleased to see support for those in receipt of benefit, but asked Members to keep in mind when considering the estimates next year that the government was pushing for the abolition of reduced charges, and that any reduced charges were subsidised by other Council tenants.

Councillor Dr DR Bard proposed, seconded by Councillor Mrs DP Roberts, that Cabinet recommend to Council Option 4: increasing all charges by 2.5% for inflation and continuing with the reduced charge, with the resultant £11,570 approximate deficit against the General Fund being met by savings found through the closure of the Cambridge Office and the move to four-yearly District Council elections. Members were advised that it was premature to anticipate support for electoral change.

The Finance and Resources Director proposed Option 5: increasing charges for inflation, maintaining the reduced rate for all existing participants, but that any new tenants from 1 April 2006 pay the full charge regardless of receipt of benefit. Although not an aggressive approach, it would demonstrate the Authority's desire to implement the Government's recommendation to phase out subsidised charges. Unease was expressed as Option 5 could be seen as discriminatory against newer tenants.

Cabinet was minded to adopt Option 4 and, subsequent to the decision being made to close the Cambridge Office (Minute 13 refers), **RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL** that from 1 April 2006:

- (a) The reduced charge be maintained; and
- (b) All alarm system service charges be increased by 2.5% for inflation, bringing the full charge to £3.61 per week (where the Council supplies the alarm) and £2.92 per week (where the user supplies the alarm), and the reduced charge to £2.30 per week (where the Council supplies the alarm) and £1.63 per week (where the user supplies the alarm).

**Recommendation to
Council and Decision
made by Cabinet**

5. PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY

The Housing and Environmental Services Director's report provided an update on the implementation of the Council's Protection of Vulnerable Adults (POVA) Policy and recommended further actions. Cabinet was urged to lead by example and ask all District Councillors to be Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checked. It was confirmed that all Cambridgeshire County Councillors were CRB checked.

Members requested that POVA Councillor training sessions be scheduled in the early evening, perhaps following a full Council meeting, to enable working Members to attend.

On the proposal of Councillor JD Batchelor, seconded by Councillor Mrs DP Roberts, Cabinet **RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL** that all District Councillors be Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checked, with advice to be sought whether this should be standard or enhanced checking.

Cabinet **AGREED** that

- (a) Further training for priority staff and briefings for other staff and elected Members

- be arranged, the resources for which be allocated from departmental and corporate training budgets respectively from 2006/07; and
- (b) CRB checks continue to be undertaken for all new priority staff and reviewed every three years; and
 - (c) Consent is sought from all "priority" postholders for CRB checks to be undertaken in 2006/07 if they have not previously been checked under current procedures.

Cabinet **NOTED** the implementation progress of the Council's Protection of Vulnerable Adults policy.

Decisions made by Cabinet

6. BASSINGBOURN DUAL USE SPORTS FACILITY PROJECT

Cabinet welcomed Mr Scott Hudson, Principal of Bassingbourn Village College, Ms Barbara Isherwood, Community Education Manager, and Ms Pat Piggott, Youth Worker, who gave a presentation on the proposed sports facility, highlighting the benefits such a facility would bring to Bassingbourn and the surrounding villages, and demonstrating the local need for the project and the work already done on financial planning and to establish a management structure.

The Community Development Portfolio Holder commended the project, reminding Members of the very successful facilities provided at other Village Colleges in the District through the Dual Use scheme, and recommended that the grant be increased from £300,000 to £350,000 to enable the facility to have a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA). The Cultural Services Manager circulated details on the Dual Use Budget, noting that the figures quoted for Impington, Cottenham and Gamlingay Village Colleges were still under discussion, and confirming that there was sufficient provision in the budget for the increased grant.

Clarification was given that:

- (a) The sports facility project was part of a larger project within the Village College, which included improved car parking arrangements behind the school;
- (b) The facility would be located between the music classroom and the pavilion;
- (c) The improved facilities could help reduce incidences of anti-social behaviour;
- (d) The final facility would have a kitchen / refreshment area and a classroom for coaching education;
- (e) The grant was conditional upon receipt of an acceptable Business Plan;
- (f) The Village College had approached other organisations, such as the Football Organisation, as well as Parish Councils within the catchment area for funding;
- (g) A local facility was more sustainable than one in Cambridge City or Hertfordshire; and
- (h) Lighting issues would be addressed as part of the detailed planning application and the Council's Design Officer would be asked for input.

There was widespread support for the project and local Members commended the proposals. Members with similar Dual Use schemes in their villages spoke highly of the positive impact the District Council's investment had on local communities.

Cabinet unanimously

AGREED to award a grant of £350,000 to Bassingbourn Village College towards a Dual Use sports facility project.

Cabinet thanked Mr Hudson, Ms Isherwood and Ms Piggott for their presentation, and wished them success with a project which would benefit not only the Bassingbourn local area but also the entire District.

7. IMPLEMENTING ELECTRONIC GOVERNMENT: IEG STATEMENT

The IEG Statement had been withdrawn from the agenda following indications from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) that a further updated version would be required.

8. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN

The Community Development Portfolio Holder presented the detailed requirements and implications for the District Council of the Cambridgeshire Children and Young People's Plan, the legal requirements of which had been presented to Cabinet in December 2005. She expressed her concern that the District Council could no longer have as great an input into the outcomes following the capping exercise, which had reduced the number of officers and finances available for youth provision, such as working with sports groups for young people, but promised that the Community Development staff would do their best within the current resources.

Councillor JA Hockney noted that the newly-established Community, Arts and Sport Advisory Group would oversee Youth Provision, and congratulated Community Development officers on their forward-looking and positive outlook, sentiments which were supported by the Cabinet and extended to all officers of the Council.

Cabinet **AGREED** to adopt the Children and Young People's Plan for Cambridgeshire.

9. LITTLE GRANSDEN: ADOPTION OF DESIGN GUIDANCE

Although the Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder had delegated powers both to designate new Conservation Areas and to revise the boundaries of existing Conservation Areas, Conservation Area Appraisals now included design guidance and management proposals and had to be agreed as Council policy to add weight to determinations by the Development and Conservation Control Committee. Councillor Mrs A Elsby, local Member for Little Gransden, reported that she was delighted with the design guidance and Cabinet

AGREED to adopt the Design Guidance set out in the Little Gransden Conservation Area Appraisal as Council Policy, subject to the incorporation of changes outlined in the appendix attached to the report.

10. FEN DITTON: ADOPTION OF DESIGN GUIDANCE

Cabinet

AGREED to adopt the Design Guidance set out in the Fen Ditton Conservation Area Appraisal as Council Policy, subject to incorporation of the changes outlined in the appendix attached to the report.

11. HORNINGSEA: ADOPTION OF DESIGN GUIDANCE

Cabinet

AGREED to adopt the Design Guidance set out in the Horningsea Conservation Area Appraisal as Council Policy, subject to incorporation of the changes outlined in the appendix attached to the report.

12. STANSTED AIRPORT: CONSULTATION ON SECOND RUNWAY

The British Airports Authority (BAA) had issued a consultation paper on Masterplan options for a second runway at Stansted Airport. The Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder explained that the proposal for two runways was contrary to the existing East of England plan and recommended that Cabinet support the East of England Regional Assembly's (EERA) view not to expand. The main issues for South Cambridgeshire were not noise-related, although there were villages for which this was noticeable, but concerned general development pressure and economic impact.

The District Council had made very strong representations against expansion through the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS14) process, but the Planning Policy Manager advised Members that the development pressures on the District would not ease if the expansion were refused: planners would site the additional housing elsewhere along the M11 corridor. He explained that his report had been written "without prejudice" and noted that the District Council might have to change its position in the future.

Concerns were expressed about the amount of additional road traffic generated in villages near Stansted and the government's recent movement on the issues of night flights as the number of flights increased. Expansion of the M11 to three lanes between Stansted and Cambridge was essential if a second runway were agreed.

Councillor Mrs DSK Spink asked the Leader and officers to chase BAA for promised regular meetings which had never taken place. The Leader explained that BAA had decided that South Cambridgeshire was too far away to be affected, a fact which he disputed.

Cabinet **AGREED** to respond to the British Airports Authority in the following terms:

- (a) South Cambridgeshire District Council supports the East of England Regional Assembly position that accepts the expansion of the airport up to the full capacity of its existing single runway (Policy ST5) but it does not support a second runway, which would create serious environmental damage to the surrounding area and contribute to global warming;
- (b) Without prejudice to that policy position and without prejudice to the Council being able to assess the overall impact of a fully worked up proposal to expand Stansted to a 2 runway airport, South Cambridgeshire District Council is concerned that the British Airports Authority has not provided sufficient information for the Council to assess the impact of additional aircraft movements over South Cambridgeshire, namely:
 - It is not possible to give a full opinion on the proposed options contained within the consultation document with regards to potential noise effects on South Cambs residents. The report is not detailed enough to make an adequate assessment.

- In order to make a proper assessment data is needed on predicted noise levels at South Cambs properties both at ground level and air noise. These figures would need to take into account stacking of aircraft which is likely to take place over South Cambs, not just take off and landings.
 - Noise contours should be provided for 54 dBA leq and 50 dBA leq in line with WHO recommendations. These noise contours should be mapped for the years preceding 2030 as well as just 2030
 - Information on the number of proposed night flights and day flights, including flight paths should also be provided.
 - As a general point there is no data on impacts of air pollution, the report should include: CO₂ emissions, NO₂, NO_x, SO₂, PM10, PM2.5 these should be referenced to Local Air Quality
- (c) However, on the basis of the evidence provided by the British Airports Authority, South Cambridgeshire District Council would have a strong preference for options operating in segregated mode which would have least environmental impact, including upon South Cambridgeshire, and would be more consistent with the Future of Air Transport White Paper requirement for stringent environmental limits than 2 runways operated in mixed mode.

13. CAMBRIDGE OFFICE

At its meeting of 9 June 2005, Cabinet had resolved that, due to the limited number of visitors, Cambridge City Council be asked to provide the Cambridge-based customer service facility, and that investigations be carried out into the possibility of removing the planning condition requiring the District Council to provide a Cambridge facility. It was confirmed that the planning condition had been satisfied in May 2004 and did not specify a length of time for the service to remain open. Cambridge City Council had kept a record of the number of customers visiting the office and over the period 18 July 2005 to 17 February 2006, the Cambridge Office saw an average of seven people per day.

The cashiering service provided by Cambridge City Council at Hobson House would be maintained, subject to review during 2006/07, and Members noted that residents could pay Council tax through local post offices.

Councillor JA Hockney proposed that any savings realised from closing the Cambridge Office, after covering any shortfalls in the General Fund from maintaining the alarm system service facility as agreed earlier by Cabinet, should be directed towards continued provision of footway lighting in the Parishes, explaining that residents of a sheltered housing scheme in Waterbeach were concerned about being mugged if their streets were unlit. The Leader reminded Councillor Hockney that such a proposal had to be made to full Council once six months had elapsed since the previous decision about footway lighting. The Finance and Resources Director explained that there was also a shortfall in the Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder, to which these savings could be applied, and other Portfolio Holders reported similar shortfalls in their budgets.

Cabinet **AGREED** that the District Council should cease to provide the “one stop shop” facility in Cambridge, with effect from 31 July 2006, and that this Council’s appreciation be expressed to Cambridge City Council for their assistance with the Cambridge Office facility.

14. GREATER CAMBRIDGESHIRE PARTNERSHIP

The Greater Cambridge Partnership had reformed as a Company Limited by Guarantee. The District Council had been one of the founding partners in 1998 and was now asked

whether it would join the more formal partnership.

Cabinet **AGREED**

- (a) To apply for membership of the Greater Cambridge Partnership;
- (b) To appoint the Leader as the Council's representative to the Company; and
- (c) To delegate authority to the Head of Legal Services to sign the Application for Membership and Deed of Adherence on behalf of the Council.

15. **TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS**

Cabinet **AGREED** to continue meeting on the second Thursday of each month for the municipal year 2006/07.

16. **GERSHON EFFICIENCY SAVINGS - PROGRESS REPORT**

Good progress was being made in implementing planned efficiencies in 2005/06 and identifying additional efficiencies in 2006/07 and 2007/08.

Councillor JA Hockney, noting that he had expressed concern previously about an increase in postage costs, queried whether the Council had considered using the services of a professional postal company. The Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder confirmed that the increase had been due to a one-off situation when the Local Development Framework documents had been posted and that the Development Services Department had investigated alternative delivery methods should similar situations arise. Due to limited resources, investigation of professional postal companies was not possible.

Cabinet **AGREED** to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, with the Leader and Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder, to finalise the Council's Annual Efficiency Statements (Forward Look for 2006/07 and Backward Look for 2005/06).

Cabinet **NOTED** the progress in realising efficiency savings.

16 (a) **Contact Centre and e-Government**

Councillor JA Hockney stated that Councillor JD Batchelor had said during a radio interview on 8 March that the Contact Centre was costing £400,000 annually, a figure different from that given to full Council in February, and that savings would be realised from e-government, but the estimates agreed by Council had shown the project costs from 2001-08 without identifying any savings. In response, Councillor Batchelor clarified that he had given the Contact Centre annual cost as £457,000, the same as reported at full Council, and that the Authority could not begin to realise savings from the project until integration of the complete set of e-government tools was complete, which included more than just the Contact Centre element. The Council had made substantial investment towards its e-government targets and he guaranteed that the Council would lose money if it stopped the project at this late date.

In response to Members' comments that Councillor Hockney had raised the same issue at many previous meetings, the Leader challenged Councillor Hockney to suggest an alternative plan. Councillor Hockney replied that a substantial amount of taxpayers' money had been invested in a project that had not yet demonstrated savings, nor was it clear when savings would be realised, and that it was his role as a non-executive Councillor to criticise the Executive. The Leader confirmed that full Council had agreed the amount of investment and that criticism of the Executive should be made via the

Scrutiny and Overview Committee, of which Councillor Hockney was a member, but that it had to be constructive: if Councillor Hockney disagreed with spending to improve front-line services to South Cambridgeshire residents, he should put forward an alternative proposal, otherwise his implication was that the entire project was a waste of time and money.

Councillor Hockney responded that he had seconded a proposal by Councillor Dr DR Bard at full Council for a Business Plan and researching of how other authorities provided similar services, demonstrating a positive approach in learning from other authorities. Councillor Batchelor felt that it was insulting to imply that a decision had been taken by full Council prior to investigation of other authorities and preparation of a Business Plan. Councillor Dr Bard stated that there had been a Business Plan prepared and the project had been on time and within budget when he had been Information and Customer Services Portfolio Holder, although he could not comment on the current situation.

Councillors who had visited the Contact Centre spoke highly of their trip and Councillor Dr van de Ven stated that she used its services regularly, especially after having sat with an agent and watched how quickly she had been able to accomplish everything asked of her. She had resolved to encourage her residents to use the Contact Centre in the first instance as the quickest way to access a professional in many Council services. Councillor Mrs Heazell reported having received many compliments on the Contact Centre and questioned why Councillor Hockney reported having received only complaints.

Councillor Mrs DP Roberts lamented a lack of patience and respect amongst Members and defended the right of all Councillors to question the Executive. Councillor Mrs DSK Spink agreed that Members were right to question costs, and supported the need to make a success of the Contact Centre without being extravagant. In response to Councillor Hockney's comments regarding footway lighting in Waterbeach (Minute 13 refers), she noted that if the Parish Council refused to take on responsibility for the lights, it would be discriminating against a group of residents.

Standing Items

17. MATTERS REFERRED BY SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

The 16 March 2006 meeting had been cancelled due to lack of business.

18. UPDATES FROM CABINET MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillors Mrs A Elsby and Mrs EM Heazell reported that the Leader would be sleeping rough at Biggleswade bus shelter on Saturday night to raise money for Gamlingay Skate Park and Children's Hospice, and encouraged everyone to sponsor him. Councillor Mrs Heazell presented the Leader with a sleeping bag.

**The Meeting ended at 11.50
a.m.**
