

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Tuesday, 22 March 2022 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor Bridget Smith (Leader of Council)
Councillor Neil Gough (Deputy Leader - Strategic Planning & Transport
and Transformation & Projects)

Councillors:	John Batchelor	Lead Cabinet Member for Housing
	Bill Handley	Lead Cabinet Member for Community Resilience, Health and Wellbeing
	Dr. Tumi Hawkins	Lead Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and Delivery
	Brian Milnes	Lead Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Licensing

Officers in attendance in the Council Chamber for all or part of the meeting:

Aaron Clarke	Democratic Services Officer
Rebecca Dobson	Democratic Services Manager
Peter Maddock	Head of Finance
Rory McKenna	Monitoring Officer
Liz Watts	Chief Executive

Officers in attendance virtually for all or part of the meeting:

Gareth Bell	Communications and Communities Service Manager
Adele Gritten	Head of Economic Development and Commercial Investments
Jonathan Malton	Cabinet Support Officer
Jeff Membery	Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services
Duncan Vessey	Head of Ermine Street Housing
Kate Yerbury	Policy & Performance Officer

Councillors Anna Bradnam, Dr. Claire Daunton, Sue Ellington, Peter McDonald (Lead Cabinet Member for Business Recovery and Skills) and Dr. Richard Williams were in attendance remotely.

1. **Announcements**

There were no announcements.

2. **Apologies for Absence**

Councillors John Williams, Grenville Chamberlain and Judith Rippeth sent Apologies for Absence.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

4. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Cabinet **authorised** the Leader to sign, as a correct record, the Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 7 February 2022.

5. **Public Questions**

Two questions were received ahead of the meeting.

a) From Mr. Daniel Fulton

Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Council, noted that Mr. Fulton was not in attendance and said a written response would be supplied.

b) From Dr. Douglas de Lacey

The Leader invited Dr. Douglas de Lacey to ask his question:

My concern is primarily, but not exclusively, with the performance of the Contact Centre (page 31 of Council's agenda). As I often commented when with you, there may be little problem if we miss the target for all of our callers by only a few seconds, though the target itself entails a very long wait of 90 seconds. But there could be a real problem if missing the target means that some callers are left on hold interminably. And when the *average* is 500 seconds -- over 8 minutes! -- as it seems to have been in May 2021, it's hardly surprising that an awful lot of calls are dropped; though there is nothing here to tell us how many that is. Before I resigned from the Council, I was assured that new software would ensure that proper statistical analysis would be provided on KPIs, including geeky things like means and standard deviations. Now nearly a year on we are still presented with the almost meaningless graphs we always had. I do not criticise your overworked officers, but I don't see how you can properly understand the situation absent real data. When will full details be presented in the KPI reports?

Councillor Neil Gough, the Deputy Leader responded:

The basic average call wait time is down to just 32 seconds in December 2021.

The new telephony system does give the Council the ability to monitor wait times with additional granularity to analyse the situation. We have for example looked at the simple relationship between calls received per day and average wait times, the call centre can cope with a rate of calls in the range of 600-700 per day but then beyond that call times increase dramatically as the rate of calls being added exceeds those being dealt with. These insights are more helpful than monthly data whether that is of average call times or even standard deviations that obscure very different experiences over different days.

A new system has been implemented to address the frustration of the long wait.

The call back service is the most significant of these that has been operating since November.

The call back kicks in at five minutes and stops the long tailback that you are concerned about. Even in December, there were 118 call backs requested when the wait time was only 32 seconds.

The Council will publish from April the following data: the percentage of calls that wait for more than five minutes; and what percentage of those calls request a call back service. This will highlight the long wait issue and the effectiveness of our callback service in serving those residents.

The Leader invited Dr. de Lacey to ask a supplementary question.

Dr. Douglas de Lacey was supportive of the progress being made by the contact centre but raised concern of the lack of figures in the performance report in addition to the percentages.

The Deputy Leader thanked Dr. de Lacey for the suggestion, and said he would discuss this with the Head of Transformation, HR and Corporate Services to ensure this would be implemented.

6. Issues arising from the Scrutiny and Overview Committee

Cabinet noted the Scrutiny and Overview report summarising the meeting held on Thursday, 3 March 2022 relating to the following agenda item:

- Q3 Performance Report
- Annual Equality Scheme Update and Progress Report
- Interim Position Statement – First Homes
- Ermine Street Housing – Review of the Business Plan

7. Q3 Performance Report

Cabinet received the Quarter Three Performance. Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Council, introduced the report, and thanked Officers for their continued work at the tail end of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Councillor Brian Milnes, Lead Cabinet Member for Environmental Services and Licencing, praised the efforts of the Waste Services team during the past two years, and noted the positive feedback received from residents.

The Leader of the Council thanked Officers for their work and Cabinet:

- a) **Noted** the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) results and comments at Appendix A and progress against Business Plan actions at Appendix B
- b) **Noted** the reduction in target in relation to Land Charges Search Response Days, as part of a phased return to pre-Covid target level by the new financial year, as detailed within the comments section at SX025 at Appendix A.

8. Annual Equality Scheme Update and Progress Report

The Cabinet received the Annual Equality Scheme Update. Councillor Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and Delivery, and the Council's Equalities and Diversity Champion, introduced the report, valuing the strength provided by a diverse workforce. The Lead Cabinet Member also commented on the Council's role in housing eight Afghan families seeking refuge.

After a short discussion, Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Council, closed the item, thanked Officers, and Cabinet:

- a) **Approved** adoption of the revised Equality Scheme at Appendix A.
- b) **Reviewed** the Equality Scheme action plan progress report at Appendix B, detailing progress against actions set in the 2020-21 iteration of the Equality Scheme.

9. Parental Leave Policy for Councillors

Cabinet received the Parental Leave Policy for Councillors. Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Council, introduced the report, commenting the role of local Members, and the importance to take parental leave.

Councillor Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and Delivery, said she was also supportive of the policy, and hoped this would encourage Members of all backgrounds.

Councillor Dr Claire Daunton expressed thanks to the Officers for their work on the report.

Councillor Anna Bradnam asked if Members' allowances would continue while on parental leave. The Leader responded that this policy would bring the Members' Parental Leave closer to that of Officers of the Council.

After a short discussion, Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Council, closed the item, thanked Officers, and Cabinet:

Recommend to Council the adoption of this policy.

10. 2021/2022 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring (Quarter 3)

Cabinet received the 2021/2022 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring report for Quarter Three. Councillor Neil Gough, the Deputy Leader, introduced the report, noting the impact of the crisis in Ukraine.

After a brief discussion, Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Council, thanked Officers, and Cabinet:

- a) **Noted** the forecast 2021/22 revenue position against the approved

revenue budget shown in Appendix B, the projected major variances with reasons for these variances at Appendices C1 and C2 and the action being taken to address the underlying issues.

- b) **Noted** the latest Capital Programme 2021/22 position [and variances, if any] as shown in Appendix D.

11. **Small Land Sales**

Cabinet received the Small Land Sales policy. Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report, and the potential purchase or lease requested by individuals for small areas of land held within the Housing Revenue Account.

Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Council, closed the item after a short discussion and Cabinet:

- a) **Approved** the draft Policy on small land transactions (HRA), attached at Appendix A, to be considered by the Housing Engagement Board.
- b) **Authorised** delegated authority to the Lead Member for Housing to approve the final Policy subject to minor amendments, if any, arising from the Housing Engagement Board.

12. **Renewal of Home Improvement Agency Service Level Agreement**

Cabinet received the Renewal of the Home Improvement Agency Service Level Agreement. Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report, and commented on the importance of this shared service for vulnerable residents within the district.

After a brief discussion, Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Council, closed the item and Cabinet:

Approved the renewal of the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency shared service level agreement for a further three years up to 31 March 2025 (Appendix A) and the continuation of the current funding arrangements with the County Council.

13. **Interim Position Statement - First Homes**

Cabinet received the Council's Interim Position Statement for First Homes. Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report, and the intent of getting residents onto the property ladder.

Councillor Dr. Tumi Hawkins, Lead Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and Delivery, noted the importance of providing affordable homes with South Cambridgeshire.

After a short discussion, Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Council, closed the discussion, and Cabinet:

- a) **Approved** the Greater Cambridge First Homes Interim Position Statement.
- b) **Delegated** authority be given to the Lead Member for Housing to approve any subsequent minor amendments and editing changes that do not materially affect the content of the Interim Position Statement.

14. **Fixed Term Tenancies**

Cabinet received the Fixed Term Tenancies report. Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report, and the decision to discontinuing the use of fixed term tenancies for Council Housing Tenants and to replace these with lifetime tenancies for new and existing tenants.

Councillor Anna Bradnam asked whether lifetime tenancies would cease if the tenant died, and other family members were living in the property. The Service Manager for Housing Strategy responded that this would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Councillor Dr. Richard Williams followed on from the previous question, and asked about automatic success rights, and if re-housing was required, would it be in the same area. The Service Manager for Housing Strategy responded that this would be dependent on the circumstances for each tenant.

After a short discussion, Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Council, thanked Officers across the Housing department and Cabinet:

Approved the proposal to end the use of fixed term tenancies for its own housing tenants and replaces these with lifetime tenancies for both existing and new tenants. The Council's approach to introductory tenancies will remain unchanged. Introductory tenancies are for a period of 12 months but can be extended for a further 18 months if the tenancy has not been conducted in a satisfactory manner.

15. **Ermine Street Housing - Review of the Business Plan**

Cabinet received the Ermine Street Housing Business Plan. Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report, providing the annual review of the business plan and the continued expansion. The Lead Cabinet Member thanked Officers across the Ermine Street Housing team for their work over the past twelve months and noted the use of housing stock to house Ukrainians seeking refuge if required.

After a short discussion, Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Council, closed the item, and Cabinet:

Approved, in their capacity as shareholder, the Ermine Street Business Plan for the period 2021/2022 to 2030/2031.

16. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

Cabinet **agreed** by affirmation that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of items number 20 and 21 in accordance with the provisions of Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) (exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act). Paragraph 3 refers to information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

17. Minutes from the Previous Meeting - Exempt

Cabinet **authorised** the Leader to sign, as a correct record, the exempt Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 7 February 2022.

18. Issues arising from the Scrutiny and Overview Committee - Exempt

Cabinet **noted** the Scrutiny and Overview report summarising the meeting held on Thursday, 3 March 2022 relating to the following agenda item:

- Ermine Street Housing – Review of the Business Plan
- Commercial Asset Disposal

19. Commercial Asset Disposal

Cabinet received the exempt report for the Commercial Asset Disposal. Councillor Neil Gough, the Deputy Leader and Lead Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport and Lead Cabinet Member for Transformation and Projects introduced the report.

After a short discussion, Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Council, thanked Officers and Cabinet:

Approved the Commercial Asset Disposal as specified in paragraph 5 of the exempt report

20. Northstowe Acquisition to Deliver Interim Community Facilities

Cabinet received the exempt report for the acquisition to deliver interim community facilities in Northstowe. Councillor Neil Gough, the Deputy Leader and Lead Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transport and Lead Cabinet Member for Transformation and Projects introduced the report.

After a short discussion, Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Council, thanked Officers and Cabinet:

Approved the property acquisition as specified in paragraph 8 of the exempt report.

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