

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Thursday, 8 February 2007

PRESENT: Councillor RMA Manning (Leader of the Council)
Councillor SM Edwards (Resources, Staffing, Information & Customer Services
Portfolio Holder / Deputy Leader of the Council)

Councillors: Mrs DSK Spink MBE Housing Portfolio Holder
Dr DR Bard Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder
JA Hockney Conservation, Sustainability and Community Planning
Portfolio Holder
MP Howell Environmental Health Portfolio Holder

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Holly Adams	Democratic Services Officer
Steve Hampson	Executive Director
Greg Harlock	Chief Executive
Simon McIntosh	Corporate Manager (Policy, Performance and Partnerships)
Keith Miles	Planning Policy Manager
Alison Talkington	Senior Planning Policy Officer
Gwynn Thomas	Principal Accountant (Housing)

Councillors R Hall, Mrs CAED Murfitt and NIC Wright were in attendance, by invitation.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs VG Ford and Mrs EM Heazell.

The Leader welcomed Councillor MP Howell to Cabinet.

Procedural Items

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The Leader was authorised to sign as correct records the minutes of the meetings held on 11 and 25 January 2007, subject to the following amendment:

Direct Labour Organisation Business Plan (Minute 5, 11 January 2007)
(final paragraph): "***At the request of Councillor Mrs EM Heazell***, Cabinet offered its congratulations to all officers ***of the DLO*** involved with the recent successes of the DLO."

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

Recommendation to Council and Decision made by Cabinet

3. CAPITAL AND REVENUE ESTIMATES, COUNCIL TAX AND PRUDENTIAL

INDICATORS 2007/08

The Resources, Staffing, Information & Customer Services Portfolio Holder outlined the report, which was the final stage in the process for setting the 2007/08 budget and council tax:

- the latest position of the Medium Term Financial Strategy included the latest adjustments for interest rates and identified savings;
- the capital programme had been prepared on the assumption that forthcoming legislation would allow all equity share capital receipts to be exempt from pooling;
- unless other sources of funding were agreed, there would be a 40% reduction in the capital programme from 2010/11 onwards, representing about £5-6 million per annum;
- individual portfolio revenue estimates had been affected significantly by a recent change in local authority accounting practice, but this would have no effect on council tax levels;
- the net General Fund expenditure would be lower than anticipated; and
- the projected target level of balances of £1.5 million would not be reached as quickly as originally thought, but this would be very dependent upon interest rates, identified Business Process Re-engineering savings being realised and implementation of improvements arising from the Corporate Governance Inspection.

A supplementary report from the Chief Executive outlined a further option for Council to consider as an alternative to the Medium Term Financial Strategy. In March 2006, the Local Government Minister had taken the view that local authority 2006/07 budgets were excessive if they showed an increase of more than 6% in their budget requirement compared with the previous year *and* if their council tax increased by more than 5% in the same period. On the basis of this view, an authority could exceed one of the capping criteria without being capped. The Chief Executive advised that this was not officers' recommended course of action, but that he had a responsibility to advise members of all available options. Cabinet considered this strategy to be "a risk too far", especially without knowing the 2007/08 capping criteria.

There was a prospect of meeting with the Local Government Minister to discuss the Council's financial position and, although it was clear that there was little chance to change the revenue support grant received, the Minister would be asked to confirm the 2007/08 capping criteria.

Cabinet **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** that:

- (a) the capital programme up to the year ending 31 March 2010 be approved as submitted, which includes the sum of £33.285 million to be spent on affordable housing for the years from 2007/08 to 2009/10;
- (b) the increase in staffing costs due to an approved saving no longer being achieved be reviewed in September 2007;
- (c) the revised revenue estimates for the year 2006/07 and the revenue estimates for 2007/08 be approved as submitted, incorporating the decision made at (b);
- (d) the District Council demand for general expenses for 2007/08 be £5.798 million;
- (e) that Council set the amount of Council Tax for each of the relevant categories of dwelling in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 on the basis of a District Council Tax for general expenses on a Band D property of £102.26 plus the relevant amounts required by the precepts of Parish Councils, Cambridgeshire County Council and the Cambridgeshire Police and Fire Authorities, details of those precepts and their effect to be circulated with the formal resolution required at the Council meeting; and

- (f) the prudential indicators in Part 3 of the report be approved.

Cabinet AGREED:

- (g) to approve the list of precautionary items at Appendix D to the report to be used under delegated powers already given to the Resources, Staffing, Information & Customer Services Portfolio Holder and the Chief Executive; and
- (h) that the option at Appendix C1 to the report, allowing for additional expenditure / less savings than planned, met by a higher council tax, not be incorporated into the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

**Recommendations to
Council**

4. HOSTEL CHARGES, HOUSING RENTS AND SERVICE CHARGES

The Housing Portfolio Holder introduced the proposed 2007/08 figures, which had been increased in line with government requirements. The Council had tried to keep the amounts as low as possible.

Cabinet RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL that:

- (a) from the first week in April 2007, rents be increased by an average of 5%, based on an inflationary increase of 4.1%, plus or minus a maximum of £0.65 towards the phasing in of rent restructuring;
- (b) permission be granted to Hereward Housing to increase hostel rents by £11.06 per week, in addition to 4.1% for inflation, from April 2007; and
- (c) charges for services and facilities be increased as outlined in the following table:

Service or Facility	Current Charge	Proposed Charge	Increase	
	p.w. £	p.w. £	%	£
Sheltered Housing Charges				
Tenants				
- support element				
- those in residence prior to 01/04/03	11.04	12.37	12.0	1.33
- other tenants	14.13	14.48	2.5	0.35
- communal facilities	6.04	6.29	4.1	0.25
Equity Shareholders				
- schemes with communal facilities				
- those in residence prior to 01/04/03	20.58	22.16	7.7	1.58
- other shareholders	23.67	24.27	2.5	0.60
- schemes without communal facilities				
- those in residence prior to 01/04/03	14.54	15.87	9.3	1.33
- other shareholders	17.63	17.98	2.0	0.35
Alarm System Service Charges*				
Individual Alarms	3.28	3.36	2.5	0.08
- Those not in receipt of benefit				
- where the Council supplies the alarm	3.61	3.70	2.5	0.09
- where the user supplies the alarm	2.92	2.99	2.5	0.07
- Those in receipt of benefit				
- where the Council supplies the alarm	2.30	2.70	17.4	0.40

- where the user supplies the alarm	1.63	2.00	22.7	0.37
Group Alarms	3.28	3.36	2.5	0.08
* plus VAT where appropriate				
Garage Rents				
Garages rented to a Council tenant or leaseholder	6.11	6.36	4.1	0.25
N.B. In excess of two garages will be subject to VAT				
Other Garages (subject to VAT)	8.43	8.78	4.1	0.35

5. JOINT PLANNING SERVICES ARRANGEMENT

The Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder explained that details of the proposals for a joint approach to major development in the Cambridge area already had been circulated to Cabinet and Opposition members and the press and emphasised that these arrangements did not reflect a lack of competence on behalf of any of the authorities, but were common elsewhere in the country where there were two-tier authorities or cross-boundary developments.

Under the joint arrangements, the City Council would not play a role on the Northstowe Delivery Board and the District Council would attend as observers only for any delivery boards concerned with sites wholly within the City boundaries. Cross-boundary sites such as Cambridge East and North West Cambridge would be dealt with in their entirety, rather than considering individual phases of each development separately. The Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder commended the arrangements, which retained democratic control over the planning process and should unlock additional funding for the growth agenda. He added that the Minister had endorsed a rolling fund to help finance major projects at an earlier time in the development programme than otherwise would have been achieved by waiting for s106 funds.

Cabinet, having due consideration for sections 19 (Discharge of functions of and by another local authority) and 20 (Joint exercise of functions) of the Local Government Act 2000, **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** that:

- (a) the joint working arrangements set out in Appendices 1-3 of the report, including the creation of the Joint Strategic growth Implementation Committee, Northstowe Development Control Committee and Fringe Sites Development Control Committee, be approved subject to agreement of detailed operational arrangements and adequate financial resources being made available by the Minister;
- (b) subject to the relevant provisions being made, the following appointments to the joint committees be made,:
 - (i) Joint Strategic Growth Implementation Committee – 3 Councillors, including the PDF
 - (ii) Northstowe Development Control Committee – 6 Councillors, in accordance with the rules of political balance; and
 - (iii) Fringe Sites Development Control Committee – 6 Councillors, in accordance with the rules of political balance;
- (c) subject to the relevant provisions being made, that the planning powers listed in Annex 1 to Appendix 1e of the report, be delegated to the joint development control committees, with the Constitution being amended accordingly, subject to a detailed scheme of delegation to Officers being prepared for subsequent approval by Council; and

- (d) the Chief Executive be authorised to make any further minor or consequential amendments to the scheme as may be from time to time required.

6. LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME DISCRETIONARY COMPENSATION REGULATIONS 2006

The Resources, Staffing, Information & Customer Services Portfolio Holder explained that the Council had to amend its existing policy in light of new age equality legislation.

Cabinet **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** that the following revised discretionary compensation policy be adopted:

- (a) General Policy
- (i) The revised policy should seek to minimise any adverse impact on the terms and conditions of employment for Council employees.
 - (ii) The Council should continue not to seek to use the LGPS augmentation provisions due to the costs and complexities this would entail.
 - (iii) The revised policy should be applied consistently to all, regardless of age.
 - (iv) The revised policy should be reviewed after six months of operation in order to manage any potential risks and issues arising.
- (b) Transitional protection
- (i) The Council should continue to use the discretions it currently applies under the 2000 regulations to award Compensatory Added Years (CAY) for any protected employees made redundant / subject to Premature Retirement in the Interest of the Efficient Exercise of the Authority's Functions (PRIEEAF) before 1 April 2007
- (c) Redundancy policy
- (i) Redundancy should remain calculated on actual week's pay, rather than statutory redundancy provisions.
 - (ii) All local government service, even if broken, should continue to count for the purposes of redundancy payment calculations; however, no period of employment should count twice, i.e., where the employee concerned has previously received compensation, only the remaining, un-compensated, service should be counted;
 - (iii) The revised redundancy policy for all employees should be to award an overall lump sum of 1 1/2 times the redundancy payment to employees with two or more years' continuous employment within local government (or a public sector company recognised by Modification Order), regardless of their membership of the LGPS, with effect from 1 April 2007. (Note: The overall lump sum so awarded would include the statutory redundancy payment due.)
- (d) PRIEEAF policy
- (i) The revised PRIEEAF policy for the Council should be a flexible approach to award a lump sum of up to 104 weeks' pay.

Decisions made by Cabinet

7. COTTENHAM: DUAL USE SPORTS FACILITIES

Mr Tony Cooper, Head Teacher of Cottenham Village College, Mr Geoff Redhead, Sports Centre Management, Mr Les Rouse, Site Manager and Mr Chris Smith, Sports Centre Manager, were in attendance for this item.

Cottenham Village College was the first approved Dual Use Sports Facility in South Cambridgeshire and had been very successful, used by the village and surrounding communities. The current application for funding was part of a joint bid to provide two main additions to the existing facility: a floodlit artificial training pitch for football, hockey and rugby, and extensions to the changing rooms. Officers commended the project, which developed from the needs of the community and would meet the requirements of local sports clubs.

Members supported the project, which demonstrated the benefit of partnership working as the contribution from SCDC would be enhanced by funding from Cambridgeshire County Council, Cottenham Parish Council, the Football Foundation and the Village College. Mr Cooper explained that, should there be any queries why this project should receive funding when Milton Country Park was at risk of closure, the project was good value for money and the Village College was more than just a sports facility: it benefited the community by giving residents access to high-quality leisure, recreational and educational facilities, including space for local meetings and a swimming pool.

Mr Cooper further explained that:

- Cottenham Football Club was one of the largest in Cambridgeshire, with four adult and thirteen junior teams as well as girls' football;
- A large number of other teams in the surrounding catchment villages had expressed an interest in the new training pitch, as had a local corporate football team;
- The Village College facilities were used every Monday evening by a special needs club and there was an on-site behavioural unit which students could use instead of having to travel to Cambridge;
- The local Traveller population used the facilities and the Village College provided a mobile bus for special needs education and adult learning in the Travelling community;
- The facilities were well-placed for use during the 2012 Olympics, particularly the triathlon, and would be promoted as a venue for young people to use to improve their performance.

A statement of support from Councillor Mrs VG Ford was read, noting that funding for this project had been earmarked and in budgets since 2002 and that Sport England had found that the Council received excellent value for money through its dual use sports programme.

Cabinet **AGREED** to award a grant of £265,000 to Cottenham Village College Dual Use Sports Facility Project, representing 37% of the total cost of the project.

Cabinet thanked Messrs Cooper, Redhead, Rouse and Smith for their presentation and commended them on their business plan.

8. EAST OF ENGLAND PLAN - REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY (RSS) MODIFICATIONS

The Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder outlined the proposed responses, which had been considered by the Planning Policy Advisory Group, and drew attention to several of the modifications:

- the Cambridge Green Belt was not to be reviewed as part of the current process;
- the Council's Local Development Framework had confirmed that there would be a maximum of 8,000 dwellings at Northstowe, but the supporting text in the RSS referred to a settlement of 'initially' 8-10,000;

- if Cambridge were not to be planned as a compact city there could be implications for South Cambridgeshire as City growth began to encroach upon the necklace villages and if so, the District Council would need to make a political decision where to accommodate the additional annual growth beyond 2021 at the level proposed in the RSS if Cambridge City were considered full;
- the East of England Regional Authority had passed a motion for 35% affordable housing in new developments, which could have implications for South Cambridgeshire where higher levels of affordable housing would be provided than in neighbouring districts; and
- the Council would need to push for more infrastructure if the second runway at Stansted Airport went ahead.

Councillor JA Hockney welcomed the inclusions emphasising reduction of climate change emissions and a policy statement on renewable energy, but cautioned that the benefits of these would be offset by increased air travel through expansion at Stansted Airport.

The Planning Policy Manager explained that the likelihood of the Council's comments being incorporated depended upon the extent to which they were in agreement with national government policy, which was very focussed upon delivering development in the growth areas.

Cabinet **AGREED** the following responses to the proposed changes to the draft revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy for submission to the Secretary of State:

The Proposed Changes to the Draft Revision of the Regional Spatial Strategy

This is consistent with the challenging levels of development for which South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City are already planning. Further development on the edge of Cambridge cannot be accommodated without calling into question the fundamental purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt to protect the character and setting of the historic city or to prevent villages in the vicinity of Cambridge merging with the City or with one another.

Green Belt

The Council welcomes the fact that the Cambridge Green Belt will not be reviewed through this RSS but is concerned at the suggestion that it may be examined in the future as part of the RSS review. The potential for revising the boundaries of the green belt around Cambridge without undermining the purposes of the Cambridge Green Belt was comprehensively explored during the preparation of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan. The evidence is that opportunities for further revisions to deliver regionally strategic levels of development post 2021 are unlikely to be found without harming the character and setting of Cambridge or resulting in coalescence with nearby villages. . Whilst this does not form part of this review of the RSS the District Council advises caution on the assumption that growth can continue at the same rate post 2021 in or close to Cambridge.

Compact City

The Council objects to the deletion of the term 'compact' from the description of Cambridge in Policy CSR3.

Northstowe

Reference to Northstowe as a settlement of initially 8-10,000 houses should be deleted and its size confirmed in the revised wording to Policy CSR1.

In Policy CSR1 when Northstowe is mentioned the population size should be included

as follows '...at the new settlement of Northstowe, with a population size of up to 10,000, linked to the guided busway....'

Affordable housing

In Policy CSR1 there should be a new paragraph added after the second paragraph using the following wording....' In recognition of the pressures for housing arising in the Cambridge Sub-region at least 40% of new housing needs to be affordable. Employment development will also be expected to contribute towards affordable housing.'

Policy H3 should specifically recognise the problem of affordability in the Cambridge Sub-region and the following wording should be added to the end of the policy: '...In some areas of the region such as the Cambridge Sub-region there will need to be set higher targets for affordable homes'.

Employment

The Council welcomes the flexibility for the job growth figure for Cambridgeshire County to be allocated between each of the five Districts provided that the level of job growth in Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire continues to be governed by the 'selective management of growth' policy to encourage the growth of high technology research and development companies that need a location close to the historic city of Cambridge.

Stansted airport

In the context that it is government policy to promote a second runway at Stansted and the Secretary of State is required to agree the RSS, it is understandable that the RSS is proposed to be modified to remove references to opposition to a second runway. However, equally the Council can continue its opposition to the proposal of Stansted to have a second runway and welcomes the recognition that the airport developers will be expected to contribute to any surface access improvements necessary as a result of the expansion of the airport.

Cambridge Airport

The Council welcomes the inclusion of this mention of Cambridge Airport.

Housing

The RSS should be revised to recognise the existing step change in growth that the Cambridge Sub-region has taken and the words 'at least ' be removed from Policy H1 for Districts planning for annual growth in excess of 1,000 dwellings.

Travellers and Gypsies

The Council welcomes the inclusion of Policy H4. It is hoped that other districts progress the requirements of this policy and that the rapid progress of this Council is recognised by the Government and that this does not prove to be disadvantageous to this Council.

Transport

This policy is to be welcomed by the Council since many of the non-regional roads pass through villages in this District.

The Council welcomes the recognition that the Cambridge area will be subject to a further study but there needs to be a reassurance that this will be linked to further commitment to investment in infrastructure in the Cambridge Sub-region if further growth.

It is of great concern that schemes have been omitted from the tables in Appendix A that

are seen by this Council as being important to supporting the growth agenda.

The following schemes should be reinstated into Appendix A:

- (a) M11 dual 3 lane J9-14 – was previously listed as ‘part of an endorsed transport strategy – further appraisal needed’.
- (b) A428 dualling A1 to Caxton – was previously listed as ‘part of an endorsed transport strategy – further appraisal needed’.

New inclusions

The Council welcomes the inclusion of policies on water, carbon emissions and renewable energy but considers that improved sustainability at the dwelling level will need to be complemented with measures to promote the overall sustainability of the development as a whole. There also needs to be reduction in air travel in the long-term.

Early review

The Council is already meeting a very challenging agenda of growth and considers that if further growth is to be imposed on the Cambridge Sub-region it must be at a level directly related to local job growth, environmental, social and infrastructure capacity all of which will be stretched by the current RSS in that part of the Sub-Region close to Cambridge. Continued sustainable growth may only be possible if the remaining Districts in the Cambridge Sub-Region play a greater role in accommodating housing and employment growth after 2021.

9. CABINET MEETING SCHEDULE 2007/08

The Leader proposed that Cabinet meet during the afternoons for the first four meetings during 2007/08 and that Cabinet undertake a trial of holding evening meetings, to which it was hoped that more members of public would attend. Members noted that previous attempts to hold evening meetings had not resulted in increased public attendance, but decided to hold two evening meetings during the 2007/08 year, during October 2007 and February 2008 when the Medium Term Financial Strategy would be reviewed the 2008/09 budget and council tax levels would be considered, both issues of relevance to all residents. Cabinet would consider at a future date holding meetings at different venues in the district.

Cabinet **AGREED** the following schedule of meetings for 2007/08:

Thursday 10 May 2007 – 2 pm
Thursday 14 June 2007 – 2 pm
Monday 9 July 2007 – 2 pm
Thursday 13 September 2007 – 2 pm
Monday 8 October 2007 – 7 pm
Thursday 8 November 2007 – 2 pm
Thursday 13 December 2007 – 2 pm
Thursday 10 January 2008 – 2 pm
Monday 18 February 2008 – 7 pm
Thursday 13 March 2008 – 2 pm
Thursday 10 April 2008 – 2 pm
Thursday 8 May 2008 – 2 pm

Standing Items

10. MATTERS REFERRED BY SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Nothing to report.

11. UPDATES FROM CABINET MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Nothing to report.

**The Meeting ended at 11.26
a.m.**
