

CABINET

At a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Thursday, 4 March 2004

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs DSK Spink MBE (Leader of Council)
Councillor RT Summerfield (Deputy Leader of Council and Finance &
Resources Portfolio Holder)

Councillors:	Dr DR Bard	Planning & Economic Development Portfolio Holder
	CC Barker	Environmental Health Portfolio Holder
	JD Batchelor	Information & Customer Services Portfolio Holder
	RF Collinson	Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder
	Mrs EM Heazell	Housing Portfolio Holder
	Mrs DP Roberts	Community Development Portfolio Holder

Councillors RF Bryant, CJ Gravatt, Mrs SA Hatton, Dr JA Heap and SGM Kindersley were in attendance, by invitation.

Procedural Items

1. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The Leader was authorised to sign as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 16th February 2004, subject to the following amendments:

Housing Strategy and Business Plan Consultation Draft (Minute 7)

Paragraph 5: "The 'other' capital schemes budget mainly related to the Meldreth sheltered..."

Resolution: "(b) that the Housing Portfolio Holder, Leader and Deputy Leader..."

Councillor Dr DR Bard noted that references made to the Council "crest" (**Corporate Identity**, Minute 5) should more correctly be made to the Council coat of arms or achievement of arms.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs DSK Spink	as the Council's representative on the Wysing Arts board, in a non-voting capacity (Item 3, Arts Capital Grant Aid 2003/04)
Councillor Dr DR Bard	as Vice-Chairman of Sawston Parish Council, which was seeking Quality Parish Council accreditation (Item 5, Parish Council Charters)
Councillor Mrs EM Heazell	as an acquaintance of the Fitzwilliam Museum's keeper of admissions (Item 7, Museum Grant Support for Local Museums 2004/05)

Decisions made by the Cabinet and reported for information

3. **ARTS CAPITAL GRANT AID 2003/04**

Messrs D Bickle, hawkins\brown architects, A Davies, Wysing Arts' capital fundraiser, T Hawkins, Artistic Director of Wysing Arts, and D Ouseby, Wysing Arts board member, gave a presentation to Cabinet on current work of Wysing Arts and plans for Phase 2 of their landmark development:

- An estimated 13,000 South Cambridgeshire residents visited Wysing Arts annually;
- The architects had previous experience working within the arts community;
- Challenges facing Wysing Arts in Phase 2 were the demolition and refurbishment of existing building stock;
- Members of the Wysing Arts project team had been involved in discussions with Development Services Officers since 1999 regarding the parameters for the development and had sought advice from elderly and disabled groups regarding access requirements.

The Community Development Portfolio Holder reminded Cabinet that the Council had previously supported Phase 1 of the works, but that it had been made clear that future funding was not guaranteed and would be dependent upon budgets. She commended the plans to Cabinet as the development of a national facility of which all residents could be proud.

Members were supportive of the proposals and felt encouraged by the professional approach of the project team and Cabinet

AGREED to approve the second stage of the award of £70,000 in 2003/04 and

NOTED that the organisation had applied for £75,000 in 2004/05 but that no commitment could be made for future years.

4. **MONITORING OF COUNCIL 2003/04 PRIORITIES - THIRD QUARTER TO DECEMBER 2003**

The Policy and Performance Review Manager explained that the 10 annual priorities had created a large programme of work, but that it was likely all would be achieved by year end or shortly after. Some of the priority performance indicators were unlikely to be achieved as the targets set had been over-ambitious.

The Housing Portfolio Holder, in response to a query from Councillor CC Barker, agreed to e-mail further information about the target of affordable, key sector and general needs housing provided through all means (Priority Performance Indicator SH311), the published figure of 474 being incorrect due to a number of units being counted more than once.

The Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder asked that the deadline and revised date for the agreement of the Marshalls North Works and North of Newmarket Road Masterplan be recorded as unknown as it was impossible to agree a Masterplan until Marshalls had decided on their re-location plans.

Members were encouraged to advise their Parish Councils that a searchable database of planning applications from 1947 to the present day was now available through the Council's website.

Cabinet

AGREED that the deadline and revised date for the agreement of the Marshalls North Works and North of Newmarket Road Masterplan be recorded as unknown; and

NOTED performance against the priority milestones and performance indicator targets for the third quarter to December 2003.

5. PARISH COUNCIL CHARTERS

A conference between Cambridgeshire County Council, the Cambridgeshire Association of Local Councils (CALC) and the District Councils had been scheduled for 28th April to discuss a common way forward on the introduction of Parish Council charters. Charters would formalise working relationships between the District Council and Parish Councils in general, with separate charters for work with Quality Parish Councils (QPCs).

Several South Cambridgeshire Parish Councils were seeking QPC accreditation and conflicting reports had been received on satisfaction levels with the "competent clerk" qualifications. Members expressed concern about some of the QPC qualification guidelines, especially the requirement for 80% of the Parish Council to be elected rather than co-opted, a figure rising to 100% after four years. The cost to Parish Councils of local elections was an issue and the Information and Customer Services Portfolio Holder offered to identify possible ways to reduce the burden on Parish Council budgets and to encourage local democracy.

Councillor SGM Kindersley, who also served as Clerk to Hatley Parish Council, stated that many Parish Councils saw the QPC accreditation as a cynical move by central government to remove Parish Councils by making the scheme too difficult and time-consuming to achieve.

Cabinet

AGREED

- (a) that Councillors Mrs DSK Spink, Mrs DSK Roberts and one non-executive Member attend the conference on 28th April, the vacancy for the non-executive Member to be filled on a first-come, first-served basis; and
- (b) if no volunteers were forthcoming, that Councillor RF Collinson attend as the third Member.

6. HOME WORKING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

The Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder introduced the report, explaining that it had been brought to Cabinet because concerns had been expressed about the principle. The Council had a statutory obligation to consider flexible working arrangements for staff, which included home working, and a pilot scheme had been conducted successfully. Councillor RT Summerfield commended the policy, noting that very few officers would likely wish to work from home on a permanent basis.

Some Members expressed reservations about the effectiveness of home working, but it was clarified that employees would still be accessible by telephone. Volunteers for the scheme would be asked to complete a thorough self-assessment which should help identify potential home and relationship issues.

It was noted that broadband availability would enhance successful home working and the Information and Customer Services Portfolio Holder updated Members on broadband provision:

- Six BT exchanges had been activated since the Council received its EEDA grant;
- The aim was still to connect villages not seen as commercially viable and eight further villages would be connected within the next 1-2 months;
- Stage 2 work was going to tender; and
- It was hoped the broadband provision would be completed well ahead of schedule.

Cabinet

AGREED

- (a) that the Home Working Policy and Guidance be adopted subject the final formal consultation with UNISON;
- (b) that the Home Working Policy and Guidance be reviewed after 12 months; and
- (c) that Chief Officers be requested to include suitable budget provision for home working applications within their departmental budgets.

7. MUSEUM GRANT SUPPORT FOR LOCAL MUSEUMS IN 2004/05

The Community Development Portfolio Holder commended the support proposed, noting that the grant levels had been thoroughly reviewed in recent years. She explained that the reduced grants to Citizens' Advice Bureaux had been part of the Cabinet exercise undertaken to decrease expenditure.

The Conservation Manager, in response to a question from Councillor Dr DR Bard, explained that the museums budget could provide assistance to public displays local history collections at the village level. Villages could also see lottery funding and the Cambridge and County Folk Museum conducted outreach programmes to assist local history societies.

Cabinet

AGREED that the Museum Grants budget for 2004/05 be as follows:

Farmland Museum & Denny Abbey	£26,800	Increase of inflation only
Cambridge & County Folk Museum	£31,500	Includes £10,000 towards the development works
Other Museum Grants:		
1. Fitzwilliam Museum	£5,000	Funding to be prioritised for agreed development projects
2. Museum of Technology		
		Total Museum Grants: £63,300

8. CITIZENS' ADVICE BUREAUX

The Community Development Portfolio Holder explained that it had been necessary to reduce the total of Citizens' Advice Bureaux (CAB) grants by £5,000 as part of the Cabinet exercise to reduce expenditure, and that the level of grants proposed represented all available funding remaining in her budget. The Head of Community Services confirmed that the cost-cutting exercise had been very difficult, but that every attempt had been made to reduce expenditure in all areas.

The new Community Development Manager had been appointed and one of her priorities would be a thorough review of voluntary organisation funding. Members regretted the reduction in CAB grant funding but felt that it was premature to change the current grant policy before the Community Development Manger's report had been completed.

The Head of Community Services clarified that the Cambridge Independent Advice Centre specialised in welfare benefits and the Cambridge CAB provided general financial and debt advice, so the roles of the two organisations did not overlap.

Councillor CJ Gravatt reported that the Cambridge CAB was very grateful for the grant and that it was considering opening an advice and counselling service in Cambourne. He added that the CAB was very dependent on local authority funding and welcomed the plans to review the grant policy.

Cabinet

AGREED that the Cambridge Citizens' Advice Bureau receive a grant of £65,000 for 2004/05; and

NOTED the grants awarded by the Community Development Portfolio Holder.

9. COLLECTIVE CABINET RESPONSIBILITY

Cabinet, at its meeting of 22nd January 2004, had asked for legal advice on collective Cabinet responsibility. Members discussed the advice from the Head of Legal Services at length, but Councillor JD Batchelor noted that the wording was legal advice only, not a Council policy or constitutional amendment.

The Chief Executive explained that the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Peer Review Team had recommended that the collective Cabinet responsibility be clarified. Collective Cabinet responsibility had been adopted originally to give a clear direction to staff once a decision had been taken, and was now being clarified to demonstrate that Cabinet members could speak freely on recommendations to Council.

Cabinet

AGREED that the legal advice be referred to the Constitution Review Working Party to simplify the wording.

Standing Items

10. MATTERS REFERRED BY SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

None.

11. RE-LOCATION OF OFFICES TO CAMBOURNE

Construction was on schedule for a handover on 31st March 2004.

Cabinet members were invited to join the New Offices Working Group on a site visit to

the new building on Thursday 18th March at 9.00am.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Councillors Dr DR Bard and Mrs DP Roberts expressed concern that legal advice from the Council's external solicitors had not been conveyed to them and asked that a report be brought to Cabinet about the advice being given, an update on the position of the current High Court injunctions and their impact on future injunctions, and that the external solicitors be invited to that meeting. Officers were asked to determine whether the information should be part of a regular Cabinet meeting or an extraordinary meeting.

The Meeting ended at 11.45 a.m.
