

CABINET

At a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Thursday, 25 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 RE Barrett, RF Bryant, NS Davies, TJ Flanagan, CJ Gravatt, R Hall, Mrs JM Healey, SGM Kindersley, LCA Manning JP, Mrs JA Muncey, Mrs CAED Murfitt, CR Nightingale, Dr JPR Orme, J Shepperson, Mrs GJ Smith, RGR Smith and PL Stroude were in attendance, by invitation.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor JA Nicholas.

Procedural Items

1. INTRODUCTIONS

Cabinet welcomed Steve Hampson, Housing and Environmental Services Director, and Tim Wetherfield, Head of Policy and Communications.

The Leader welcomed back Councillor Mrs JA Muncey and expressed best wishes for her continued good health.

2. PUBLIC MEETING AT COTTENHAM

(With permission of the Leader)

Councillor RF Collinson explained that he had a prior engagement and would have to send apologies for the afternoon portion of the Cabinet meeting. He explained that he and Councillor JA Nicholas, as local members for Cottenham, urged the Council to resolve the planning contraventions in their village as soon as possible.

A public meeting had been held in Cottenham on 23rd March at which a majority voted not to pay their Council Tax in protest against what they saw to be the District Council's inaction over the Smithy Fen travellers' site. A photograph in the *Cambridge Evening News* clearly showed him and a number of other residents with their hands in the air and the caption stated it was during a vote to withhold Council Tax. Councillor Collinson explained that the photograph was actually of a vote to form a Residents' Association, or of a vote to ask the government to limit the number of occupants on travellers' sites, both issues which he supported. Councillor Collinson would be writing to the *Cambridge Evening News* to correct the situation and ask them to be more careful about future reporting; if his letter were not printed, he would raise the matter with the Press

Complaints Commission.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mrs GJ Smith declared a non-prejudicial interest in Item 4 (Cambridgeshire Guided Busway Order) as Chairman of Directions Plus, a disability information service.

Decisions made by the Cabinet and reported for information

4. **COUNCIL TAX DEMAND 2004/05**

(Urgent item with permission of the Leader)

There had been an error in the percentage rise printed on the Council Tax demand: "South Cambridgeshire District Council" had been printed opposite the total and percentage rise for the Cambridgeshire Police Authority and vice versa. The Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder explained that an announcement and apology would be printed in the *Cambridge Evening News* and included with the next edition of *South Cambs Magazine*, which was delivered to every household in the District.

The Finance and Resources Director explained that, after he had received advice from the Head of Legal Services and had reviewed the Council Tax Regulations, he had concluded that the Council did not have a legal obligation to re-bill as the total amounts were correct as printed. Although the precise cost of a re-billing exercise had not been established, it had been previously calculated for another authority to be in the range of £50,000.

Members were disappointed that the error had occurred but agreed that the cost of re-billing was prohibitive and Cabinet

AGREED that a public announcement and apology be printed in the *Cambridge Evening News* and included on a leaflet displayed prominently with the spring edition of *South Cambs Magazine*.

The Chief Executive explained that the Council Tax demand had been printed before agreement had been reached to exclude "6010 Cambourne Business Park" from the Council address. All future literature would print the agreed address.

5. **RAMPTON VILLAGE HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE - APPLICATION FOR A COMMUNITY GRANT**

The Rampton Village Hall Management Committee had applied for grant aid to rebuild the foyer and front part of the Village Hall, providing access and facilities for disabled users. The Community Development Portfolio Holder noted the strong support of local members Councillors RF Collinson and JA Nicholas and explained that there was an urgent need for building work to keep the hall viable. Councillor Collinson explained that the Village Hall was the only community facility in Rampton and noted the Council's previous support for works.

Cabinet

AGREED to approve the grant of £59,000 to Rampton Village Hall Management Committee for 2003/04, which includes the unclaimed figure of £12,000 indicated in 1998 towards the cost of laying the village hall foundations.

6. **MEMBERSHIP OF NORTHSTOWE MEMBER STEERING GROUP**

Cabinet, at its meeting of 31st July 2003, had agreed that one member of the Cambridgeshire County Council should serve on the Northstowe Steering Group, but a request from the Steering Group had been made for Cabinet to consider increasing that membership to two. The Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder explained that the two local County Councillors both held portfolios which they felt were relevant to the development, but noted that the Steering Group was expected to run for ten years and it was unlikely that they would keep the same portfolios throughout. He also noted that County Council representative was expected to attend as a local member, not as a Portfolio Holder.

Cabinet

AGREED to keep the County Council membership on the Northstowe Member Steering Group at one seat.

7. **CAMBRIDGESHIRE GUIDED BUSWAY ORDER: APPLICATION BY CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL UNDER THE TRANSPORT & WORKS ACT 1992**

The Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder reminded Cabinet that the Council had always supported the guided bus scheme in principle. Although the rail lobby had made representations, the purpose of the discussion was to make representations on the Transport and Works Act Order and not a debate on bus versus rail options.

The Principal Planning Policy Officer (Transport) explained that, although the Guided Busway was not a perfect scheme, it was the only comprehensive solution presented but it was important that the issues raised by South Cambridgeshire District Council should be addressed. It was necessary to provide the infrastructure to support the high level of development proposed for the District and the Council, after having previously considered various options, costs and patronage, had decided to support the Guided Bus system.

Advantage of Guided Bus over Increased / Improved Regular Bus Service

The Guided Bus system could be delivered by 2007 in time to meet the requirements of the first residents of Northstowe, and would be free from the heavy traffic congestion on the A14 which delayed existing bus services. The Guided Bus could be developed in conjunction with the service providers to produce low emission vehicles and offer passengers a better quality of ride than a regular bus. A continuous walking / cycle route between Cambridge and St Ives would be developed alongside the Guided Bus track. The Principal Planning Policy Officer (Transport) agreed to request that Cambridgeshire County Council provide further information about use of the Guided Bus track during adverse winter weather conditions and how it would be kept clear of leaves and litter.

Addenbrooke's Link

A link to Addenbrooke's was a vital part of the service, and the Principal Planning Policy

Officer (Transport) agreed to investigate details of how the Guided Bus could penetrate the Hospital site. Some Members were sceptical of the link to Addenbrooke's and felt that employees and hospital visitors were just as likely to use the bus from the Trumpington Park and Ride.

Maintenance Track

Concern was expressed about the safety and convenience of cyclists and pedestrians using the maintenance track as it crossed the main track at various locations.

Disabled Access

Concern was expressed that the system was not fully accessible by disabled people and the 7-inch kerbs would be difficult for people with pushchairs to navigate. Councillor PL Stroude noted that the kerb might not be necessary as the Guided Bus could use a Global Positioning System or similar to follow the track.

Councillor Mrs GJ Smith asked that a disability forum be immediately implemented to offer constructive criticism of the scheme. The Principal Planning Policy Officer (Transport) explained that any group wishing to appear before the planning inquiry had a statutory requirement to make representations by 2nd April, and agreed to provide members with the address to send representations. Councillor Mrs Smith queried whether the District Council could make representations on behalf of the forum, establishing the forum later. The Leader reminded members that the Cambridgeshire County Council was obligated to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Park and Ride Stops

Members noted that whilst the Report from the Development Services Director suggested a Park and Ride site north of Willingham this could prove difficult to construct as the countryside here was open fen. The Principal Planning Policy Officer (Transport) explained that the proposal was not site-specific but aimed to encourage Cambridgeshire County Council to investigate places where traffic could be intercepted as early as possible before the route reached Longstanton / Northstowe, preventing increased traffic through villages such as Willingham. The District Council was very mindful of flooding issues in the area.

More clarification should be sought about ensuring that any Park and Ride site, "kiss and ride" site or car park associated with the scheme was designed to prevent "cruiser" gatherings. In addition, careful consideration and design of stops and associated infrastructure would be necessary to prevent nuisance to local residents through group gatherings.

There was a need to clarify the management of short-term car parking at Histon and how to restrict its use to local people rather than longer distance commuters. An integrated parking / bus ticket was a possible solution. There was a dilemma between limiting the number of spaces in Histon, risking increased car parking on side roads, or increasing the number of spaces and making the site attractive for use by long-distance commuters thus adding to traffic in the village.

Heavy / Light Rail Alternatives

A rail system would be unable to access Cambridge city centre and the Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-Modal Study (CHUMMS) had demonstrated that a railway would not

achieve financial viability and would always require public subsidy. Councillor JD Batchelor, the Council's representative on the County Council Rail Strategy Group, confirmed that at the recent meeting of that body the rail industry had stated that it was uninterested in providing a line to St Ives.

The Principal Planning Policy Officer (Transport) agreed to provide the member who had raised the issue of comparative costs with the cost analysis set out in the CHUMMS study, comparing the Guided Bus with heavy and light rail alternatives.

Access to village stops

Local Members concurred with the report regarding the provision of a "kiss and ride" facility at Swavesey. It was suggested that a drop-off / pick-up facility 1½ miles from the village was unlikely to be used sufficiently to justify the substantial environmental impacts in a sensitive location, a situation not unlike that at Oakington, where no provision had been made for vehicular access.

Members raised concerns about the apparent contradiction of approaches towards addressing travel needs of commuters and day users at village stops. Only Histon with a small car park would serve day users if adequately managed. The characteristics of the stops at Oakington and Swavesey were very similar, yet had been treated differently. In addition, unlike the car park at Histon, the Swavesey "kiss and ride" did not address local needs.

Environmental and Economic Impact

Councillor TJ Flanagan queried the removal of the existing rail line and its impact on the local environment and economy. The Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder explained that the rail line was likely to be unstable and would need to be rebuilt, at a substantial investment, if it were to be used for heavy rail.

Recommendation

The Principal Planning Policy Officer (Transport) explained that the representations from the District Council would be sent to the Department for Transport for the independent inspector to review. Cambridgeshire County Council would receive copies of all representations and aimed to work with all parties to determine ways to improve the scheme.

Cabinet, with six in favour and two opposed,

AGREED to support the Guided Bus proposals in principle but that the strong representations made on the points set out in the report and in the Appendix of Technical Comments which are required to be addressed.

The Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder thanked the Principal Planning Policy Officer (Transport) and his team for their work on the Cambridgeshire Guided Busway Order.

The Meeting ended at 11.40 a.m.
