

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Thursday, 11 September 2008

PRESENT: Councillor RMA Manning (Leader of the Council)
Councillor SM Edwards (Deputy Leader of the Council and Housing Portfolio Holder)

Councillors: Dr DR Bard New Communities Portfolio Holder
Mrs SM Ellington Environmental Services Portfolio Holder
MP Howell Staffing Portfolio Holder
AG Orgee Finance Portfolio Holder
NIC Wright Planning Portfolio Holder
TJ Wotherspoon Policy, Improvement and Communications Portfolio Holder

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Greg Harlock	Chief Executive
Stephen Hills	Corporate Manager, Affordable Homes
Pat Matthews	Drainage Manager
Guy Moody	Democratic Services Officer
Dale Robinson	Corporate Manager, Health and Environmental Services

Councillors RE Barrett, Mrs VM Barrett, JD Batchelor, Mrs VG Ford, Mrs JM Guest, R Hall, SGM Kindersley, MB Loynes, MJ Mason, Mrs CAED Murfitt, Ms BZD Smith, Mrs HM Smith and Dr SEK van de Ven were in attendance, by invitation.

Procedural Items

28. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Leader was authorised to sign the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2008 as a correct record.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr MP Howell declared personal interests in item 5, Homelessness Strategy, as an employee of the Papworth Hospital Trust and in item 11, Awarded Watercourses Service, as a friend of David Noble (of David Noble Associates who undertook a review of the Awarded Watercourses Service in 1998). He stayed in the meeting and took part in the discussions.

Cllr MP Howell also informed the meeting that he used to work with Heather Wood, the new Housing Advice and Options Manager.

Cllr NIC Wright declared a personal interest in item 11, Awarded Watercourses Service, as a landowner at Connington with 2 such awarded watercourses on his land. He stayed in the meeting and took part in the discussions.

Cllr RMA Manning declared a personal interest in item 11, Awarded Watercourses Service, as a landowner at Willingham with one awarded watercourse on his land. He stayed in the meeting and took part in the discussions.

Cllr Dr SEK van de Ven declared a personal interest in item 11, Awarded Watercourse Service, as a member of the Meldreth sub-committee for flood avoidance. She stayed in the meeting and took part in the discussions.

Cllr SGM Kindersley declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 12, East Hatley, St Denis Church, as an immediate neighbour to the church. He advised that he would leave the meeting during its consideration and take no part in the discussions.

30. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None.

31. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented a report seeking Cabinet approval for the Homelessness Strategy for 2008 – 2013.

Drawing on key indicators and feedback from partnership agencies, the Portfolio Holder paid tribute to the housing team and said that the Council's ethos of acting to prevent homelessness had paid dividends and had been built into the new strategy.

In reply to a question concerning the possibility of young, single, men falling through the support net, the Corporate Manager for Affordable Homes, advised that all cases were assessed on a "priority need" basis.

Cabinet **RESOLVED** that the draft Homelessness Strategy, attached to the report, be approved.

32. TRAVEL FOR WORK PLAN 2008-2011

The Planning Portfolio Holder introduced this item, which requested that Cabinet approve a Travel for Work Plan that aimed to achieve the following vision:

'To promote a wide range of sustainable travel choices for our existing and future employees, elected members and visitors, in order to support their travel needs, reduce our environmental impact from travel and to make the most efficient use of resources in delivering services to our customers and providing leadership to our local communities.'

The Planning Portfolio Holder gave a review of Travel for Work plans to date and advised that the new plan had been informed by staff and Member responses to the Travel for Work survey. A key finding from the survey was that 73% of journeys to work were made by lone car drivers, a figure that was considered too high.

Travel for Work Co-ordinator

Members expressed concern about the justification for a Travel for Work co-ordinator. The Planning Portfolio Holder explained that one of the key reasons for the failure of previous plans had been the lack of ongoing management and maintenance. He said that, to be successful, the plan had to be a living document, requiring adaptation and promotion to achieve its goals.

It was also suggested that a decline in the number of car sharers since 2004 reinforced the need for any plan to be actively managed.

Public Transport

Members reiterated the concerns expressed in the report about the unavailability of public transport at a time when the cessation of local bus services continued. It was suggested that the County Council be contacted in respect of the issue.

Community Leadership

It was considered that a robust Travel for Work plan was required to enable the Council to demonstrate community leadership; as such, the view was expressed that the authority should be looking to reduce, not increase, the number of car parking spaces. The Planning Portfolio Holder replied that reducing the number of parking spaces was a measure within the plan, but that currently a lack of parking spaces restricted the use of South Cambridgeshire Hall as a public venue.

Cabinet **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Travel for Work plan and the associated package of measures to reduce the environmental impact of staff and others who travel to the council offices and on council business be **APPROVED**.
2. That the Planning Services Portfolio Holder be designated as the political champion for taking forward the Travel for Work plan.
3. That any staffing resources required to ensure effective implementation of the new Travel for Work plan in future years be considered as part of the service planning process for 2009/10.
4. That the additional permanent on site parking spaces and associated improvements to the outside amenity area for staff be implemented, subject to the necessary planning consents.

33. REVIEW OF HACKNEY CARRIAGE FEES AND CHARGES

The Environmental Services Portfolio Holder presented this item requesting that Cabinet endorse an increase in tariffs, explaining that there were two factors behind the request:

1. increases in fuel prices
2. to move in line with increases elsewhere in the County.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the Council did not benefit financially from the increased tariffs.

It response to a question it was confirmed that there were currently five licensed hackney carriages within the district.

Cabinet **APPROVED**

- (a) the new tariff structure and fees for advertising, as attached to the agenda,

Cabinet AGREED

- (b) to future fee increases being in line with that of Cambridge City Council, ie follow the Public Carriage Office (London Cabs) formulation,
- (c) that if, after advertising the proposed tariffs, no objections are received, then the Corporate Manager for Health and Environmental Services be delegated to set an implementation date as soon as possible with the trade and meter manufacturers, and
- (d) to delegate authority to the Environmental Services Portfolio Holder to change tariffs relating to Hackney Carriage Drivers, if and when required.

34. RESTRUCTURE OF THE FORMER POLICY, PERFORMANCE & PARTNERSHIPS SERVICE AND PROPOSED REVISED SENIOR MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The Leader introduced a report requesting that Cabinet consider the outcome of a review of the new corporate management arrangements in relation to the former Policy, Performance and Partnerships (PPP) service area. He advised that the Audit Commission had raised concerns over the council's senior management structure and succession planning arrangements; the proposals were intended to address these concerns.

Cabinet was advised that the salary figures included in the report did not include employment overheads, approximately 30% of the amounts shown. There was consistency throughout the report, however, so any comparisons would be valid.

Cabinet RESOLVED

1. That the proposal to create a new Partnerships team be approved with the following amendments to the establishment list with effect from 1 November 2008:
 - i) delete post of Community Development Manager following the early retirement of the current post holder in October 2008 and establishment of a new Partnerships Manager post and,
 - ii) delete post of Strategic Partnerships Officer and create a new Community Partnerships Officer post.
2. That the creation of a Community Liaison Officer joint funded post on a two year fixed term contract from 1 April 2009 be supported in principle subject to the necessary funding being secured through the service planning and budget setting cycle for 2009/10.
3. That the Corporate Project Support Officer (formerly Inspire Project Officer) post be made permanent with effect from 1 April 2009 subject to the necessary funding being secured through the service planning and budget setting cycle for 2009/10.
4. That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, be authorised to consider options for the configuration of the Policy & Performance team in the event that any members of that team confirm proposed retirements.
5. That the post of Executive Director – Corporate Services be established with

effect from 1 January 2009 and a recruitment process be designed and agreed to enable an appointment as soon as possible from that date and, that the post of Corporate Manager – Finance & Support Services be made redundant with effect from 31 March 2009.

6. That the financial implications of the appointment of an Executive Director – Corporate Services be addressed within the Revised Estimates for 2008/09 as part of the annual budget cycle and, in the meantime, the Chief Executive be authorised to incur the necessary expenditure to enable an appointment to that post.
7. That the revised senior management structure set out as option one in Appendix 3 to the report be agreed in principle in the event that a housing transfer does not proceed and that the Chief Executive has delegated authority to implement this proposal.
8. That the revised senior management structure set out as option two in Appendix 4 of the report be agreed in principle should a housing transfer go ahead and that the Chief Executive has delegated authority to implement this proposal.
9. That the post of Head of Housing Strategic Services be made redundant with an effective date of 30 June 2009.
10. That the post of Corporate Manager – Community and Customer Services (or Housing & Community Services) be established, conditional upon the deletion of the post of Head of Housing Strategic Services, with a permanent appointment to be made with effect from 1 July 2009.
11. That a contingency sum of £30k be included within the 2009/10 Estimates to accommodate any additional senior management capacity required with the change management process.
12. That Senior Management Team be requested to resolve the detail of the proposals in discussion with senior managers and staff.

35. REVIEW OF RISK MANAGEMENT

The Leader presented a report seeking Cabinet's agreement that responsibility for risk management should remain with the Corporate Governance Committee. He welcomed Councillor TJ Wotherspoon as the new Portfolio Holder for Policy, Improvement and Communications, and the former Chairman of the Corporate Governance Committee, to Cabinet and invited comment on the report.

Councillor TJ Wotherspoon expressed the view that an executive forum was inappropriate to review risk management and believed that the Corporate Governance Committee was better suited for the task.

Cabinet **RESOLVED** that responsibility for risk management remain with the Corporate Governance Committee, to include annual review of the risk management strategy and process and quarterly review and approval of the strategic risk register and associated action plans.

36. SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND CAMBRIDGE CITY IMPROVING HEALTH PLAN

The Environmental Services Portfolio Holder introduced this item, and requested Cabinet to:

- a) Endorse the Improving Health Plan
- b) Focus the Council's attention on those actions listed in the Improving Health Plan where the Council can add value, and
- c) Continue to influence partners and partnerships on tackling the improving health agenda.

The Portfolio Holder explained that the plan was an important document that listed priority items with clear action plans for improvement.

Concern was expressed in respect of service deficiencies encountered by people moving between differing local authority catchment areas. It was requested that the issue be raised with partnership health organisations.

During the discussion, Members drew attention to the high levels of compliments for the provision of sports facilities and raised the following health issues of concern for the district.

- Adverse comments were directed at the number of road deaths (116) within the district.
- Local Strategic Partnerships had been awarded £200,000 to help road improvements, but Local Authorities would have to do more to help prevent road traffic accidents.
- There was a need to review access to mental health services for young people,
- Attention should be directed at health issues specific to the district, those related to 'new town blues', Travellers and rapidly expanding communities.

Cabinet **APPROVED** the Improving Health Plan.

Cabinet further **RESOLVED** to focus the Council's attention on those actions listed in the Improving Health Plan where the Council can add value, and to continue to influence partners and partnerships on tackling the improving health agenda.

37. AWARDED WATERCOURSES SERVICE - CONTRACT TENDERING

The Environmental Services Portfolio Holder presented a report setting out options and recommendations for the future of the Council's awarded watercourses service.

Concern was expressed that the cost of maintenance at £850 per kilometre appeared high and it was hoped that this cost could be reduced.

The Corporate Manager, Health and Environmental Services added that he did not favour letting the whole contract to one provider, and that the Council should be looking to promote competition in both price and quality whilst retaining flexibility.

The Pitt Report into the 2007 national floods

Cabinet was advised that the Scrutiny and Overview Committee would review the Pitt Report at its December meeting. The report, commissioned by the government, was

likely to have implications for the Council in its management of surface water drainage systems in the district, therefore it was important to build flexibility into any recommendations for action at this stage.

Local Expertise

Local Ward Members raised concerns that contractors potentially lacked the necessary knowledge to deal with local issues.

The Leader advised that the recommendations sought to contract out maintenance work and would not substitute local knowledge in management issues, and advised further that Cabinet did not feel it necessary to wait for the full response to the Pitt Report because of the flexibility in the recommendations before it.

Cabinet RESOLVED:

(1) To undergo a competitive tendering process and obtain tenders for the works from external contractors and the in-house service.

(2) That the tenders so obtained are for all the separate aspects of the works such that the maximum flexibility may be used in the evaluation of the tenders. The contract length to be five years extendable by mutual agreement for a further two. It may then prove beneficial to use a combination of external contractors and a portion of the in-house service.

38. EAST HATLEY, ST DENIS CHURCH

Councillor SGM Kindersley declared a personal and prejudicial interest as an immediate neighbour to the church. He left the meeting during its consideration and took no part in the discussions.

The Planning Portfolio Holder introduced this item, which requested that Cabinet approve an additional Historic Buildings Preservation grant of £5,500 towards further repair work at St. Denis Church, East Hatley.

Concern was expressed that there had been no consultation with Local Ward Members or the Parish Council. The church was not in use and had poor access, therefore additional grant support could not be justified.

The Planning Portfolio Holder advised that, historically, the church had become the responsibility of the council and, as such, there was little option but to approve the grant. He added that, by refurbishing the floor, there was the opportunity to use the building as some future juncture.

Cabinet **APPROVED** an additional £5,500 of Historic Buildings Preservation Funding, in order to secure £16,500 of grant aid from English Heritage to complete the repairs to the stonework tracery in the east window and to install a floor within the nave of St Denis Church, East Hatley.

39. TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2007/08 PERFORMANCE

The Finance Portfolio Holder presented a report on the performance of the treasury management function and requested that Cabinet approve additions to the list of

counterparties.

The Leader suggested that the Section 151 officer should have an input to any decision to approve additions to the list of counterparties. The Finance Portfolio Holder concurred.

Cabinet **NOTED** the performance of the treasury management function and **APPROVED** the addition of the organisations listed in paragraph 11 of the report to the category of other banks and financial institutions with a maximum limit of £2.5 million, subject to consultation with the Section 151 Officer.

40. **EFFICIENCY SAVINGS PROJECT - UPDATE**

The Finance Portfolio Holder presented this item, which provided Cabinet with an update on the Council's efficiency savings project and Central Government's expectations and targets for efficiencies within local authorities. He advised that the report highlighted excellent performance and that he regarded the targets for the coming years as realistic.

The Finance Portfolio Holder requested that Cabinet agree the forecast for the National Indicator 179 (NI 179)

Concern was expressed that the Cabinet was looking to set targets when there was no requirement to do so.

The Finance Portfolio Holder replied that he was seeking to embed a culture that embraced continual improvement and new ways of working. Although savings had been made he considered it important to continue to do so, adding that it would be difficult to justify otherwise publicly. Such a policy was particularly important given the Council's budgetary pressures.

The Deputy Leader undertook to provide a written answer to a question posed in respect of the proposed efficiency target on customer service standards.

Cabinet **ENDORSED** the recommendation that the amount to be forecast for NI179 be 3% for 2008/09 and 2% for 2009/10 and 2010/11.

41. **INTEGRATED BUSINESS MONITORING REPORT TO 31 JULY 2008**

The Finance Portfolio Holder presented a report, which provided Cabinet with the first 2008-09 monitoring report against budgets and the Corporate Plan performance measures.

Cabinet **NOTED** the projected expenditure position and referred the report to the next meeting of the Finance Portfolio Holder for more detailed consideration.

Cabinet further **AGREED** that the first call on the additional £545,870 revenue element of the Housing & Planning Delivery Grant would be to address the potential planning overspends indicated in the report.

Information Items

42. UPDATED FINANCIAL POSITION TO 31 AUGUST 2008

The Finance Portfolio Holder presented this item as an update to the July Financial Position, part of the Integrated Business Monitoring Report as presented at item 15 on the agenda (see minute 41 above).

Cabinet **NOTED** the report.

Standing Items

43. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

None.

44. UPDATES FROM CABINET MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr TJ Wotherspoon informed Cabinet that at a recent seminar on "Comprehensive Area Assessment" only 3 of the 177 delegates were elected Members, a disappointingly low proportion. He said that he would prepare a summary report for Cabinet members.

Councillor Dr DR Bard advised Cabinet that he had attended a Cycling England meeting and had been made aware of the existence of funding for the provision of new, and refurbishment of existing, cycle paths.

**The Meeting ended at 5.00
p.m.**
