

## **SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on  
Thursday, 3 July 2008

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

<b>Councillors:</b>	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

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Steve Hampson	Executive Director
Greg Harlock	Chief Executive
Geoff Keerie	Principal Environmental Health Officer

Councillors JD Batchelor, Mrs VG Ford, R Hall, Mrs EM Heazell, SGM Kindersley, Mrs CAED Murfitt, Mrs DP Roberts, Ms BZD Smith, Mrs HM Smith, JH Stewart, RT Summerfield and Mrs BE Waters were in attendance, by invitation.

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### **Procedural Items**

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#### **12. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Leader was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2008 as a correct record.

#### **13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

#### **14. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

None.

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### **Recommendations to Council**

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#### **15. FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN**

The Environmental Services Portfolio Holder presented this report seeking Cabinet's approval and recommendation to Council of a Food Service Plan for 2008/09.

##### **Scores on the doors**

The Principal Environmental Health Officer explained that the Scores on the Doors initiative had the support of the Food Standards Agency and legislation was expected

that would ensure that inspected premises displayed the score resulting from the Council's hygiene inspection. It was also noted that there was some variance in the process used by different authorities.

The Cabinet **RECOMMENDED** that Council approve the Food and Safety Plan 2008/09.

#### 16. **MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2008-2011**

The Environmental Services Portfolio Holder introduced this item, which requested Cabinet to approve a draft Member Development Strategy for recommendation to Council for adoption, by stating that all Members needed to own the member training process and so would be asked to carry out a self-assessment.

In response to concerns regarding the funding of useful external courses, the Environmental Services Portfolio Holder explained that Building Capacity East and the Improvement and Development Agency had provided financial assistance for member training and hopefully would continue to do so.

The Environmental Services Portfolio Holder explained that she would be setting up a task and finish group to help set up a training programme for the coming year based on needs identified by the Members' self-assessment.

Cabinet

**RECOMMENDED** that Council adopt the Member Development Strategy 2008-2011

#### 17. **HEALTH AND SAFETY PLAN**

The Environmental Services Portfolio Holder introduced this item, which requested Cabinet's approval of a Health and Safety Plan for 2008/09, by explaining that its aim was to reduce accidents in workplaces throughout the District.

Cabinet

**AGREED** the Health and Safety Service Plan 2008/09

#### 18. **REVISIONS TO THE DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT POLICY**

The Environmental Services Portfolio Holder introduced this item which sought approval of policy to incorporate new grant legislation which extended the maximum level of mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG); gave discretion to seek part-repayment of mandatory DFGs; added facilitating access to a garden as a purpose for DFG and altered the financial Test of Resources.

A recommendation in the report stated that delegated power should be given to the Portfolio Holder to waive repayment of the property charge upon disposal. However, Cabinet suggested that as these decisions were likely to be contentious and in the absence of specific criteria, they should be made by collectively by Cabinet. It was agreed that criteria regarding these decisions were required. It was noted that decisions could urgently be required on this matter and concerns were expressed regarding a possible delay that taking these decisions to Cabinet could entail.

Cabinet

**NOTED**

- A) The requirement to extend the mandatory DFG from a maximum limit of £25,000 to £30,000
- B) All of the alterations to DFG Test of Resources
- C) The requirement to facilitate access to and from a garden by a disabled occupant and making access to a garden safe for a disabled occupant, defined in legislation.

Cabinet

**AGREED**

- A) To local property charge applicable on mandatory DFG in excess of £5,000, up to a maximum charge of £10,000. To be repayable if applicant disposes of the property within 10 years of certified date
- B) That a report detailing a clear criteria of when the repayment of the property charge should be waived
- C) That in the meantime discretion be delegated to Cabinet to waive repayment of the property charge upon disposal, as per legislation.

**19. NEW COMMUNITIES AND GROWTH RELATED ISSUES**

The New Communities Portfolio Holder presented this report, which highlighted a number of outstanding items relating to elected member roles in new communities issues and recommended steps for dealing with them.

Paragraph 12 was amended to read, "The New Communities Working Group will focus on the development of Northstowe", to address concerns regarding a possible widening of the remit of the Group.

**Members champion for major development sites**

The New Communities Portfolio Holder explained that Councillor TJ Wotherspoon had expressed an interest in this role, but he recommended that the role of the champion needed to be defined and that all Members should be invited to volunteer for the role, before an appointment was made. It was agreed that the role of local members also needed to be considered before the champion's role was defined.

**Northstowe Community Trust Governance Group**

The New Communities Portfolio Holder explained that this would be a temporary Group and whilst he recognised concerns regarding its membership and whether it would meet in public, it was more important to get the Group set up to access Government funding. The Executive Director explained that the Council had agreed to set up the Group in December 2007. The Group would discuss accessibility to its meetings, minutes and agendas at its first meeting.

Cabinet

**AGREED** that the

- A) Issues raised by the Arbury Park Task & Finish Group, including those relating to

member champion roles, be referred for further consideration by the New Communities Portfolio Holder;

- B)** New Communities Portfolio Holder be asked to give further consideration to the establishment of a New Communities Working Group and, if establishment be agreed, that the terms of reference of a such a group be delegated to the New Communities Portfolio Holder for decision; and
- C)** New Communities Portfolio Holder be appointed as one of the Council's member representatives on the Northstowe Community Trust Governance Group and that Cabinet select and appoint a second member to the Group.

## **20. ANNUAL EFFICIENCY STATEMENT, 2007/08 BACKWARD LOOK**

The Finance Portfolio Holder introduced this report which asked Cabinet to delegate authority for finalising the 2007/08 Backward Look Annual Efficiency Statement (AES) to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and the Finance Portfolio Holder.

The Chief Executive explained that 2007/08 marked the end of the original three-year period of obligatory Gershon efficiency savings of 3%. From 2008/09 the Gershon savings were aspirational and no longer compulsory.

Cabinet

**AGREED** to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, with the Leader and the Finance Portfolio Holder, for finalising the Council's Backward Look 2007/08 Annual Efficiency Statement. The finalised statement will be copied to all Members, as in previous years.

## **21. EAST OF ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY (EERA) REPRESENTATIVE**

The Leader introduced this item, which recommended the appointment of Councillor Mrs VG Ford as the Council's representative on the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA), by explaining that the need to attend other meetings which were directly relevant to the Council made it impossible to attend the EERA meetings. Councillor Ford had ably represented this Council at one of these meetings and the Cabinet was keen to allow her to continue to do so.

Councillor SGM Kindersley expressed his opposition to this appointment, stating that it was an important role that should be carried out only by the Leader or Deputy Leader and not by a non-executive member. He added that events following the Cabinet meeting of 8 May meant that he could not trust Councillor Ford. Councillor Mrs DP Roberts supported Councillor Kindersley and expressed concern about staff morale.

Following an adjournment on a matter of order, the Leader attributed Councillor Kindersley's allegation to a misunderstanding and he asserted that it was unacceptable for Members to use public meetings to criticise each other in this way.

Cabinet

**AGREED** To appoint Councillor Mrs VG Ford as the Council's representative on the East of England Regional Assembly.

**22. 2012 OLYMPIC AND PARA-OLYMPIC GAMES - APPOINTMENT OF MEMBER CHAMPIONS**

Cabinet

**AGREED** To appoint Councillor Miss JA Dipple as the Member Champion for the Olympics

It was noted that Councillor Dipple would be invited to attend the next New Communities Portfolio Holder meeting where issues relevant to the Olympics would be discussed.

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**Information Items**

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**23. EXPENDITURE OUTTURN 2007/08**

The Finance Portfolio Holder introduced this item which informed Cabinet of the actual expenditure figures for 2007/08 and how they compared, firstly with the original estimates when the Council Tax and rents were set, and secondly, with the revised estimates.

**Planning Policy**

The Finance Portfolio Holder explained that the underspend in the Planning Policy budget was partly due to work on the Council's response to the unexpected Hanley Grange proposal taking precedence over other work.

**Housing Revenue Account**

The Deputy Leader and Housing Portfolio Holder explained that the variance in the HRA was partly due to an expected "claw-back" of a grant that did not occur. When this was taken into account the actual underspend was only 1.2% instead of 2.9%.

**Housing Futures**

The Deputy Leader and Housing Portfolio Holder explained that the variance in the Housing Revenue Account was most due to the transfer of the £250,000 from the Provision for Unanticipated Expenditure budget to the Housing Futures budget, which had been estimated at £0.

Cabinet noted that the Scrutiny and Overview Committee planned to set up a Task and Finish Group to examine the Council's finances.

**24. IMPROVEMENT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT**

The Leader presented this item, which provided Cabinet with an update on the work of the Improvement Board.

**Arbury Park Task and Finish Group**

It was agreed that paragraph 12 of the report should be amended to make it clear that the Task and Finish Group was set up as a result of questions asked by members of a parish council at a Scrutiny and Overview Committee meeting.

**Performance targets**

The Leader highlighted the fact that the Council's performance in 2007/08 had improved from the previous year in 72% of cases.

**Relationship with parish councils**

Councillor Batchelor explained that the Scrutiny and Overview Committee were considering the setting up of a task and finish group to examine the Council's relationship with parish councils.

The Planning Portfolio Holder explained that steps had been taken to try and improve communications with parish councils on planning issues, following recommendations from the Scrutiny and Overview Committee

**Scrutiny**

Cabinet noted that the Council's Scrutiny process was well developed and compared favourably with other District authorities.

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**Standing Items**

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**25. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE**

None.

**26. UPDATES FROM CABINET MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

None.

**27. STAFFING ISSUE**

The Leader introduced this item requesting Cabinet to allow a member of staff to take early retirement at no additional cost to the Council. It was noted that the report needed to be amended to correct the officer's job title to Community Development Manager.

Cabinet

**AGREED** the early retirement of the Community Development Manager with effect from 1 November 2008, without waiver of the early retirement actuarial reduction.

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**The Meeting ended at 4.00  
p.m.**

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