

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Cabinet held on
Thursday, 2 July 2009

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

Councillors: Dr DR Bard New Communities Portfolio Holder
MP Howell Housing Portfolio Holder
Mrs SM Ellington Environmental Services Portfolio Holder
NIC Wright Planning Portfolio Holder

Officers in attendance for all or part of the meeting:

Holly Adams	Democratic Services Officer
Gemma Barron	Partnerships Manager
Gary Duthie	Senior Lawyer
Steve Hampson	Executive Director
Greg Harlock	Chief Executive
Georgina Hayward	Communications Manager
Nicole Kritzinger	Economic Development Officer
Jo Mills	Corporate Manager, New Communities
Dale Robinson	Corporate Manager, Health & Environmental Services
Jane Thompson	Cultural Services Manager
Paul Williams	Equality and Diversity Officer

Councillors RE Barrett, SGM Kindersley, MJ Mason, Mrs CAED Murfitt, CR Nightingale, Mrs DP Roberts, Mrs BZD Smith, Mrs HM Smith and RT Summerfield were in attendance for all or part of the meeting, by invitation.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor TJ Wotherspoon and TD Bygott.

Procedural Items

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Leader was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2009 as a correct record.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

3. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

None received.

Recommendations to Council

4. CAMBRIDGE SPORT LAKES TRUST: REQUEST FOR CAPITAL GRANT AID

The Council had received a request for a grant towards the extension and improvements to the existing Visitor Centre at Milton Country Park. Messrs Mick Woolhouse, Company Secretary and Director of the Cambridge Sport Lakes Trust (CSLT), and Mike Muir-Smith Chairman of CSLT, presented to Cabinet their business plan. Local Members Councillors Mrs HM Smith and RT Summerfield spoke in support of the request, describing the increased number of visitors to the park and Council's 2007 decision to support, rather than close, Milton Country Park. The New Communities Portfolio Holder asked members to keep in mind that there was not any zero-cost option, as there would be on-going maintenance and insurance costs to the Council if the park were to close.

In response to questions, Messrs Woolhouse and Muir-Smith, and the Council's Senior Lawyer, confirmed that:

Business Plan and Cambridge Sport Lakes facility:

- Although the Business Plan projected losses up to the end of its five-year life, the long-term outlook was positive as completion of the Cambridge Sport Lakes project next door to the Country Park, due in the next 2-3 years, should increase use of the Country Park and comparable facilities elsewhere in the country had a £1 - £1.5 million annual turnover;
- Once the Cambridge Sport Lakes had opened, the Milton Country Park management costs would be included in the CSLT overheads and no longer chargeable to Milton Country Park;
- The Business Plan assumed that salaries were net of any indexation at this point, accommodated the recession and was the result of a comprehensive working method to produce the final figures;
- CSLT was an admitted body in the Cambridgeshire County Council pension fund and employer and employee contributions had continued since the transfer of Milton Country Park from South Cambridgeshire District Council. It was believed that the facilities could continue with the existing staff and that efficiency savings would be sought on wages for casual employees;
- References to "other premises costs" in the Business Plan included £7-8,000 to the insurers, and the increase in capital costs was a result of depreciation costs expected when built facilities progressed through their lifecycle;
- The first flood risk assessment had been completed, subject to conditions, and the planning process, including s106 agreement, for the Sport Lakes was nearly ready to proceed to the consultation stage after slight delays due to negotiations for the transfer of land owned by Cambridgeshire County Council; and
- Once the s106 agreement had been signed, the planning decision notice could be issued: a donor was in place to buy the land and a two-year fundraising phase had begun.

Existing funding and grants:

- The £250,000 dowry granted by the Council in 2007 remained in the CSLT accounts, and the loss shown in 2008/09 of the Business Plan should be netted from that dowry;
- There was regular income from birthday parties and corporate away days, but without expansion of the available space, there were limited options for increasing income through making the Visitor Centre available to hire for functions. The expansion work could begin immediately upon receipt of the grant and CSLT were willing to accept staged payments in line with the construction works;
- Cambridge City Council had been approached with regard to any s106 monies which could be obtained through other development sites and allocated to CSLT, but the project to expand the Visitor Centre did not currently meet the criteria for

- any City Council grant schemes;
- CSLT staff were pursuing all options for grants, and were in discussion with Natural England and WREN;
- Milton Parish Council had contributed to the Tompkins Mead wetlands restoration project, a funding stream which had not been available before the transfer to CSLT of Milton Country Park;
- There were regular small donations made through the on-site donation box and larger donations from the Friends of Milton Country Park, but CSLT had not yet received any specific pledges of large donations; and
- Without approval of the grant request, it was unlikely that Milton Country Park would be sustainable in its current format beyond another year;

It was noted that there was a 5-year break clause in the 99-year lease agreement. Cabinet members considered the presentation and voiced their support for seeing Milton Country Park succeed and to have the Visitor Centre expansion be complete in time for the opening of the Cambridge Sport Lakes facility. The Leader explained that he had approached other organisations to attend the meeting to see the presentation and consider match-funding, but this offer had not been accepted.

On the proposal of Councillor Dr DR Bard, seconded by Councillor MP Howell, Cabinet **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** that a revenue grant of £261,000 be awarded to Cambridge Sport Lakes Trust towards the cost of an extension and improvements to the Visitor Centre at Milton Country Park.

5. CAPITAL PROGRAMME - AWARDED WATERCOURSES

The Leader, in consultation with the Chief Executive, withdrew this item from the agenda following confirmation that Council, on 5 December 2002, had delegated authority to the Portfolio Holder with responsibility for land drainage to use the Land Drainage Infrastructure Improvement Fund for land drainage purposes, including the purchase of plant.

6. FOOD SAFETY SERVICE PLAN 2009-10

The Food Safety Service Plan was an annual plan required by the Food Standards Agency (FSA), stating the Council's current processes and highlighting the increase in work as the number of food service establishments in the district has grown. The Service Plan demonstrated links to the corporate objectives as the Council supported local businesses with their legal compliance requirements, and all the proposed actions were within budget. Members commended the successful Scores on the Doors programme, which was being adopted by other authorities, and the Corporate Manager, Health and Environmental Services, explained that the staff member who led the project had been invited to World Health Organisation meetings in Brussels and Sri Lanka as Chairman of the national user group.

Cabinet **RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL** that the Food Safety Service Plan 2009-10 be approved.

Decisions made by Cabinet

7. LISTED BUILDINGS AND BIODIVERSITY SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS (SPD)

The New Communities Portfolio Holder commended both Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to Cabinet, drawing attention to the very useful responses received and the subsequent recommended alterations. The Planning Portfolio Holder explained that a resident had spoken to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee about his enthusiasm for listed buildings, after which the Conservation Manager had met with him and a number of his suggestions had been taken on board, including the recommendation to establish a Listed Building Owners club.

Cabinet **AGREED**

- (a) to adopt the Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) relating to Biodiversity and Listed Buildings, and to proceed with their adoption in accordance with Regulations 18 and 19; and
- (b) that no changes be made to the Sustainability Appraisals for each SPD and that these be published in their final form alongside the SPDs.

8. **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The Leader reminded members of the recent Scrutiny and Overview Committee consideration of the Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan, and drew attention to the responses received during the recent twelve-week consultation period. He clarified that the requirement for Executive members to attend Parish Council meetings outside of their own ward should read to “three parish council meetings *annually*”.

In response to questions about the quality of consultation undertaken, especially with younger people, the Executive Director explained that the Youth Participation Strategy was already underway and due in October 2009.

Cabinet **AGREED** to adopt the Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan.

9. **EQUALITY STANDARD FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT - LEVEL 2**

Councillor MP Howell, lead member for Equality and Diversity, presented the Council's successful achievement of Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government, explaining that the Council could have self-declared some months earlier, but Paul Williams, Equality and Diversity Officer, believed that the Council should accept the challenge of a peer review by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), to add increased transparency and confidence to the self-declaration. The peer review had concluded that the Council had not only successfully achieved Level 2, it had in some areas exceeded the requirements.

The Portfolio Holder paid tribute to Mr Williams and his late predecessor, and stated that the Council could now progress to achieving Level 3, but, to be certain to surpass the requirements rather than reaching the bare minimum, made a commitment to achieve Level 3 by June 2010.

Cabinet **NOTED** the IDeA peer review report and **AGREED** that South Cambridgeshire District Council self-declare its achievement of Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

10. **APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE, JOINT AND OTHER MEMBER BODIES**

Cabinet **AGREED** the following appointments to Outside, Joint and other Member bodies:

Cambridge City Centre Management Consultative Forum	New Communities Portfolio Holder
Cambridge Marriage Guidance Council (Relate)	Councillor Mrs VM Barrett
Cambridgeshire Councils' Association Waste and Environment Forum	Environmental Services Portfolio Holder
East of England Regional Assembly	Leader
Joint Cambridgeshire Regional Spatial Strategy Review Panel (CReSSP)	New Communities Portfolio Holder
Joint Transport and Planning Lead Members	New Communities Portfolio Holder
Joint Transport Forum	Planning Portfolio Holder
Local Government Association Rural Commission	Councillors Mrs SM Ellington and DC McCraith
South Cambridgeshire Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership	Leader
South Cambridgeshire Traffic Management Area Joint Committee	Conservative members: Councillors Dr DR Bard, RMA Manning and NIC Wright, with DH Morgan as substitute Liberal Democrat members: Councillor JD Batchelor Independent members: to be determined (no nominations received)

Cambridgeshire Together (Local Area Agreement) Partnership Boards:

Cambridgeshire Horizons Board	New Communities Portfolio Holder
Cambridgeshire Together (Local Area Agreement Board)	Leader
Children and Young People's Partnership / Children's Trust	Councillor Mrs BZD Smith
Community Wellbeing Partnership	Environmental Services Portfolio Holder
Environmental Sustainability Partnership	Sustainability, Procurement and Efficiency Portfolio Holder
Greater Cambridge Partnership	Councillor JA Hockney
RECAP (REcycling Cambridgeshire And Peterborough) Board	Environmental Services Portfolio Holder
Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership	Leader

Cabinet **AGREED** not to make appointments to the Local Government Association Annual Conference and General Assembly and asked that appointments to these be reviewed during 2009/10.

Cabinet **NOTED** that the Joint Member Reference Groups for Cambridge East, Cambridge Southern Fringe and Northwest Cambridge had been disbanded and their duties assumed by the new s83 joint committee.

11. NI 179 (FORMERLY ANNUAL EFFICIENCY STATEMENT)

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder explained that the actual NI 179 value-for-money gains demonstrated that the Council had surpassed the 3% target: adding the savings made over and above the same target set under the Gershon regime from 2004-07, the Council had made a total of £1.2 million savings, far exceeding the NI requirement.

Cabinet **AGREED** to delegate authority to the Leader and the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Finance and Staffing and Sustainability, Procurement and Efficiency Portfolio Holders, for submitting the total net value of ongoing cash-releasing value for money gains achieved since the start of the 2008/09 financial year.

Information Items

12. ADDRESSING THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN - QUARTERLY REPORT

Councillor NIC Wright provided an update on the many activities the Council had undertaken, and was continuing to undertake, to support local businesses during the economic downturn, noting that the Council was now being described as “business friendly” by the business sector. Councillor Wright described the two business breakfast events as having been highly successful. The “Ride the Recession” event, held at Duxford the day before the Cabinet meeting, had aided in deepening relationships with businesses. The “How to Win Contracts” event had been oversubscribed and Councillor Wright commended the Council’s Procurement Officer, Sean Missen, as an outstanding speaker who held the attention of all the attendees.

Nicole Kritzinger, Economic Development Officer, had been praised by the head of Business Link for her work. Councillor Wright emphasised how the economic development work had added value by linking with organisations such as Business Link. Councillor MP Howell asked members to note that the actions being taken to address the downturn were not just outward-looking, but also included supporting Council staff.

Cabinet **NOTED** the actions being taken to support local businesses during the recession.

13. EXTERNAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER 2007/08

The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder presented the audit letter, which had been received by the Corporate Governance Committee and which came to Cabinet at the request of the Audit Commission, which asked that it receive a wide circulation. The Council’s performance continued to improve and the authority would now face more difficult tests to maintain or improve its current score of 3 out of 4.

Cabinet **RECEIVED** the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter 2007/08.

14. INTEGRATED BUSINESS MONITORING REPORT AND UPDATED FINANCIAL POSITION 2008/09

The Scrutiny and Overview Committee had considered the report and financial position at its recent meeting and the Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder was pleased to see that work to reduce underspendings continued to yield good results, which were now within the agreed tolerance range of +/- 3%. It was noted that six of the nine missed targets related to housing completions, which were beyond the Council’s control. The Chief Executive commended the excellent performance, which had been achieved with staff resources half as many of those at neighbouring authorities.

Cabinet **NOTED** the contents of the report and that

- (a) levels of underspending were all within the target range of +/- 3%;
- (b) overall the authority had succeeded in achieving most objectives that it set out to

- do; and
(c) the Performance Management Portal was launched in June 2009.

Standing Items

15. ISSUES ARISING FROM THE SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Nothing to report.

16. UPDATES FROM CABINET MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Mrs SM Ellington, representative on the Cambridge University Hospital Joint Council Forum, offered congratulations to Addenbrooke's Hospital for its successful achievement of recognition as an academic health sciences centre, one of five in the country, which would see an increase in research and development job opportunities in the district.

Councillor NIC Wright, noting that the only business or industry showing growth in South Cambridgeshire was agriculture, supported the Planning Committee's recent decision to approve an extension to a large wheat-drying structure, which demonstrated the Council's commitment to supporting local needs.

17. REPORTS FROM CABINET MEMBERS ATTENDING PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

Councillor SM Edwards commented about visits he had had recently to Fulbourn Parish Council and the inaugural meeting of Orchard Park Community Council. He read a letter of thanks from Orwell Parish Council, whose members he said were extremely articulate, intelligent and well-informed, and had questioned him for an hour. He encouraged all members to attend parish council meetings outside of their patch and to bring the parish councils' ideas back to the District Council.

Councillor Dr DR Bard also had attended the inaugural meeting of Orchard Park Community Council and felt that the new councillors were a benefit to their community.

Councillor NIC Wright spoke of the value of parish councils and attending their meetings, especially as it presented an opportunity to explain issues, especially in relation to his portfolio, and to emphasise that it was not the District Council, but the Planning Inspector, who was the final arbiter of planning decisions. He spoke of recent successful visits at Willingham and Duxford, and his forthcoming visit to Steeple Morden.

It was clarified that the Cabinet did not want to be seen to be intruding on the local member's patch, but that they did welcome the opportunity to visit parish councils and offer clarification on the work of the District Council. Gemma Barron, Partnerships Manager, was organising the visits and any parish councils who would like to invite an Executive member to attend were encouraged to contact her.

**The Meeting ended at 4.10
p.m.**
