

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Planning and New Communities Joint Portfolio Holders' Meeting held
on
Tuesday, 7 July 2009 at 10.00 a.m.

Portfolio Holders: Dr DR Bard and NIC Wright

Councillors in attendance:

Scrutiny and Overview Committee monitors: R Hall

Opposition spokesmen: Mrs PM Bear

Also in attendance:

Officers:

David Grimster	Accountant
Peter Harris	Principal Accountant (General Fund and Costing)
Gareth Jones	Corporate Manager, Planning & Sustainable Communities
Jane Lampshire	Sports Development Officer
Keith Miles	Planning Policy Manager
Jo Mills	Corporate Manager, New Communities
Andy O'Hanlon	Arts Development Officer
David Rush	Development Control Manager
Ian Senior	Democratic Services Officer
Jane Thompson	Cultural Services Manager

6. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2009 had not yet been finalised, and would be published by 17 July 2009.

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

8. PRE-APPLICATION CHARGING

The Planning Portfolio Holder considered a report seeking his agreement to a system of charges for pre-application planning advice.

The report had not been in the public domain for five clear working days, but the Planning Portfolio Holder agreed to accept it onto the agenda as a late item because of the need to consult agents before the next Portfolio Holder meeting.

The Corporate Manager (Planning and Sustainable Communities) and Development Control Manager outlined the steps taken in an effort to identify an acceptable level of fee. The Planning Portfolio Holder considered such a fee to be reasonable in principle, and suggested that one option was to levy it at the outset and collect it once a subsequent planning application had been submitted. The Development Control Manager urged caution at this approach because of the situation where no pre-application advice was either sought or given. Imposing a charge where no service was given could well be challenged. The Planning Portfolio Holder agreed that officers should seek legal advice as to the manner and circumstances in which a charge could be levied.

The Corporate Manager (Planning and Sustainable Communities) emphasised that pre-application advice should be offered to all applicants. If an applicant declined to take such advice and subsequently submitted a planning application deemed to be defective (where that defect would have been identified at a pre-application stage), then officers should act quickly to refuse planning consent. The Development Control Manager added that, should the offer of pre-application advice be rejected, no subsequent advice would be offered to an applicant.

The Planning Portfolio Holder instructed officers to develop the finer details of the scheme, including the nature, degree and consistency of advice to be given. The overriding concern should be to help applicants to better understand the planning process and, as a result, to enhance customer service.

The Planning Portfolio Holder and New Communities Portfolio Holder noted the potential difficulties in implementing pre-application charging for developments along the Cambridge fringes. A consistent and coherent approach would be essential. A review after 6-12 months would be valuable.

Councillor Mrs Bear suggested deferring the adoption of pre-application charging in view of the current economic pressures on developers. In reply, the Development Control Manager referred to paragraph 24 of the report, which clarified that householder developments, small businesses, and works to listed buildings and trees would initially be exempt from pre-application charging, subject to review after six months.

The Planning Portfolio Holder was **minded to agree** to the levying of a fixed charge as follows, subject to any comments from agents and further consideration, by him, of those comments:

<p>Strategic Development For all developments of over 100 residential units. For all other uses: over 5000 square metres or on sites greater than 2 hectares in area.</p>	<p>By negotiation</p>
<p>Major Development For residential development: 10 or more dwellings, or a site area of 0.5 hectares. For all other uses: 1000 square meters or more of floorspace, or where the site area is 1 hectare or more. This includes changes of use of existing buildings.</p>	<p>50% of application fee up to a maximum of £2500</p>
<p>Minor Development For residential development: one to nine dwellings. For all other uses: new building or change of use of building of up to 999sqm floorspace.</p>	<p>25% of application fee</p>
<p>House Extension & Alterations</p>	<p>Not to be introduced at this time</p>
<p>Listed Building Advice</p>	<p>Not to be introduced at this time</p>
<p>Tree Advice</p>	<p>Not to be introduced at this time</p>

Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) and Trees in Conservation Area	Not to be introduced at this time
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The scheme would be subject to review after six months and one year, after which time the charging structure might be revised to reflect the complexity of the service.

9. CONCESSIONARY FARES

The Planning Portfolio Holder considered a report suggesting what the Council's response might be to a Department for Transport consultation on options for change to the administration of concessionary bus passes, introduced on 1 April 2008.

The report had not been in the public domain for five clear working days, but the Planning Portfolio Holder agreed to accept it onto the agenda as a late item because of the need for the Council to respond to consultation before 21 July 2009 (before the next Portfolio Holder meeting on 1 September 2009).

The Planning Portfolio Holder said that it was sometimes necessary to alter the application of concessionary fares where, for example, local rural timetables would otherwise mean that bus users were prevented from receiving maximum benefit from the scheme. He feared that this type of flexibility, which South Cambridgeshire District Council was able to provide at a district level, might be lost if administration was transferred to Cambridgeshire County Council. Any variation to the concessionary fares scheme should only be made once problems had been identified, and it was still too soon to determine what changes were necessary, or whether they were practical.

The Planning Policy Manager informed the Portfolio Holder that the current proposed response related only to administration of the scheme. Options for change in its funding would be considered later in the year. The County Council had indicated that changes in administration were undesirable unless and until the funding review suggested otherwise.

The Planning Portfolio Holder **endorsed** the proposed response to consultation attached to the report as Appendix 1.

10. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT - FINAL PLANNING PORTFOLIO EXPENDITURE FOR 2008-09

The Planning Portfolio Holder received a report comparing the final actual revenue and capital expenditure for the Planning Services Portfolio with the working budget for the year ending 31 March 2009.

The Accountant referred to the overspend of £54,718 detailed in Appendix A, attributing it to the greater than expected cost of appeals and inquiries, and a reduction in the level of planning application income.

The Planning Portfolio Holder

1. **endorsed** the final actual revenue and capital expenditure for the Planning Services Portfolio compared with the working budget for the year ending 31 March 2009, regretting the overspend, but understanding and accepting the reasons for it; and
2. **instructed** officers to report to him, in due course, on the current financial status of the 'traveller budget'.

11. ARTS SERVICE ACTION PLAN

The New Communities Portfolio Holder considered a report seeking his approval for the arts delivery framework 2009-2012 and action plan 2009-2010.

The Portfolio Holder was urged to give the residents of emerging communities the opportunity to express their aspirations as to public arts provision locally, rather than simply to rely on 'top-down' decisions.

The New Communities Portfolio Holder **approved** the Arts Delivery Framework 2009-2012 and Action Plan 2009-2010

12. ELITE ATHLETES AWARD SCHEME

The New Communities Portfolio Holder considered a report on grant eligibility, application process, level of grant award, and grant conditions for the Elite Athlete Award Scheme.

Those present discussed the process for selecting those eligible for grant support and the residency criteria applied.

The New Communities Portfolio Holder **approved** the grant eligibility, application process, award levels and grant conditions in relation to launching the Elite Athlete Award scheme on 21 July 2009.

13. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT - FINAL NEW COMMUNITIES PORTFOLIO EXPENDITURE FOR 2008-09

The New Communities Portfolio Holder received a report comparing the final actual revenue and capital expenditure for the New Communities Portfolio with the working budget for the year ending 31 March 2009.

The Principal Accountant (General Fund and Costing) referred to the underspend of £36,899 (before recharges) detailed in Appendix A. The authorisation of Rollovers for unspent one-off expenditure caused by delays on the Community Facilities Audit, Growth Area initiatives at Cambourne and Orchard Park, and sustainability projects, amounting to £32,000 in total, was being sought from the Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder.

The New Communities Portfolio Holder **endorsed** the final actual revenue and capital expenditure for the New Communities Portfolio compared with the working budget for the year ending 31 March 2009.

14. FORWARD PLANS

The Planning Portfolio Holder and New Communities Portfolio Holder received their respective forward plans, **agreeing** that they should be updated to incorporate the following:

1 September 2009	System Thinking	Both portfolios
	Pre-application charging update	Planning
	Mid-year economic downturn report	Planning

	Financial monitoring reports	Both portfolios
December 2009 / January 2010 (special meeting)	Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document	New Communities

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Planning and New Communities Portfolio Holders' meetings had been scheduled for 10.00am as follows:

- Tuesday 1 September 2009
- Thursday 5 November 2009
- Tuesday 26 January 2010
- Tuesday 2 March 2010
- Tuesday 11 May 2010

An additional meeting, to consider the next stage of the Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan Document process would be arranged in due course, probably to take place in December 2009 or January 2010.

The Meeting ended at 12.05 p.m.
