



SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL COUNCILLORS' BULLETIN ISSUE DATE 14th JANUARY 2004

CONTENTS

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR COUNCILLORS

1. Forthcoming Committee Meetings
2. Information on Young People Debating Competition 2003 - 2004
3. Information on Local Transport Plan financial settlement
4. Information on Regional Roundup from East of England Regional Assembly (EERA)
5. Information on external visits to:
 - (1) Hockerton Housing Project - 5 February 2004
 - (2) Beddington Zero Emission Development (Bedzed) - 17 February 2004

Please confirm if you plan to attend as soon as possible. Spaces are limited.
6. Information on Non-executive members attending Housing Portfolio Holders meetings
7. Information items from the Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder meeting of 6th January 2004
 - External Audit Appointment for 2004/05 Financial Year Onwards
 - Council Tax Benefit
8. Training Courses/Seminars/Conferences
 - OPPM/LGA Capacity Building seminar
 - CIPFA Local Government Finance for Councillors Seminar
 - The Leadership Challenge conference (EERA and EO)
 - Value Management – Delivering Service Improvement (EERA and EO)
 - Election briefing for candidates and agents (EERA and EMRLGA)
9. Call-in Arrangements

RESOURCES AND STAFFING PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISIONS REPORTED FOR INFORMATION

1. Approval of precautionary item – European Climate Change Menu Programme (ECCMP)

CONSERVATION PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISIONS REPORTED FOR INFORMATION

1. Establishment of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biological Records Centre at **Cambourne**
2. Development of new partnership working with the Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust
3. Village Green Space Pilot Project

OFFICER DECISIONS REPORTED FOR INFORMATION

1. Community Development:
Agree to increase award to the “Most Wanted” Youth Group, **Gamlingay** from £650 to £1400

MINUTES

1. Information and Customer Services Portfolio Holder meeting minutes from 10th of December
2. South Cambridgeshire Environment & Transport Area Joint Committee 8th of December 2003
3. County Council minutes 17th of December 2003

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR COUNCILLORS



COMMITTEE MEETINGS

FROM 19th JANUARY to 23rd JANUARY 2004



MONDAY 19th JANUARY 2004	10 am	Milton County Park Advisory Group	In visitors centre at Milton Country Park
TUESDAY 20th JANUARY 2004	10 am	Travellers Consultative Group	Committee room 1
WEDNESDAY 21st JANUARY 2004	2 pm	Conservation Advisory Group	Committee room 1
THURSDAY 22nd JANUARY 2004	9 am	Cabinet	Council Chamber
	2 pm	Scrutiny	Council Chamber
FRIDAY 23rd JANUARY 2004	2 pm	Cambourne DEG	Cambourne Project offices
	2.30 pm	Constitution Review Working Party	To be advised

Information on Debating Competition for Young People 2003 - 2004

JUDGES REQUIRED!

Further to the interest in last year's Debating Competition for Young People, we're now looking forward to the semi-finals and finals of this year's event. The first rounds have now been completed and the teams to go forward to the semi-finals are from Sawston, Swavesey and two from Comberton.

Last year's semi-finals proved to be a lively event and we would like you to participate in this year's semi-finals taking place on Monday 26th January in the Council Chamber. Doors open at 6:00pm and refreshments will be available until 6:30pm when the first debate starts.

As well as being part of the audience, we need three district councillors to be judges for both the semi-finals and the finals, which take place on Monday 9th February at the same time. The judges will also be involved, with Councillor Roberts, in deciding who should receive the Most Outstanding Speaker award, which will be presented at the finals.

The motion for this year's semi-finals will be "I propose that protecting the environment is more important than providing local services".

The motion for this year's finals will be "I propose that people of all ages should be able to vote as soon as they can understand what they are voting for."

Please contact me if you are interested in becoming a judge for both the semi-finals and finals, or would like more details about being a judge.

If you require any other information on the Debating Competition please contact Geoff Hinkins, Community Projects Officer, on Geoff.Hinkins@scambs.gov.uk or 01223 724154 or Susannah Harris, Community Development Officer at Susannah.Harris@scambs.gov.uk or 01223 724155.

Information on Local Transport Plan - financial settlement

Members' Briefing Paper:

Each year the County Council submits a Local Transport Plan Annual Progress Report (APR) to the Government highlighting progress made throughout the year, and putting forward bids for funds for the next financial year. Members will have noted in the media the decision by the Government on the financial settlement, released just before Christmas.

The third APR received a positive response in the decision letter from the Government. *"You have produced a clear APR, which shows strong evidence of progress against the headline objectives and targets established in your LTP. One clear strength is the ease with which you appear to have adapted to the step change in levels of local transport funding. This has led to a large increase in the numbers of schemes that have been delivered in 2002/3 and good progress towards your headline targets and the Government's core indicators. Reflecting the overall position and in comparison with other transport authorities we have assessed your transport performance as 'above average'."*

Based on this performance, the total block allocation is **£22.040 million** for 2004/5. This is up £4 million on last year. This covers all items of transport capital expenditure apart from major schemes and the figure includes **£10.226 million** for maintenance and **£11.814 million** for integrated transport measures.

The financial settlement covers the whole of Cambridgeshire, but issues of particular interest to South Cambridgeshire include:

Supplementary bid - A14 Traffic Calming

The County Council bid for £3.000 million for the traffic calming of villages affected by increased traffic owing to their proximity to the A14 corridor as identified by the Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-Modal Study (CHUMMS). The Government allocated **£2 million** for this purpose. This is included in the figure of **£11.814 million** identified above. The County Council is expected to fund the balance of £1 million from the increased block integrated transport allocation.

New Major Schemes - Cambridge to Huntingdon Rapid Transit

This scheme, in the form of a guided bus system, was part of a package of measures designed to relieve congestion on the A14 recommended in CHUMMS. Government assessed the guided bus proposal as a standalone scheme and it has been shown to have a strong transport case. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister also see the guided bus as an essential element in delivering the Communities Plan in the area, as it will facilitate the development of a new community of up to 10,000 homes at Oakington/Longstanton ('Northstowe').

Therefore, the Government has '**Provisionally Accepted**' this scheme subject to the outcome of a Transport and Works Act inquiry later in 2004. The estimated cost of the scheme is **£73.8 million** and Government has agreed to contribute **£65 million**. It is expected that the remaining costs will be secured from Section 106 Agreements with developers.

Existing Major Schemes - A1198 Papworth Bypass

The A1198 Papworth Bypass was provisionally accepted in 2001 subject to the completion of the relevant statutory procedures and final approval by Ministers. Government has agreed to provide sufficient resources for completion of the scheme up to a maximum of **£2.769 million**.

Local Transport Plan 2004-2011

The County Council submitted to Government a new Local Transport Plan covering the period 2004-2011 alongside the third APR. This was submitted ahead of the usual LTP cycle to keep pace with substantial development pressures in the County. The new LTP replaces the existing Plan and will be used to measure progress in the next financial year.

Contact Officer: Claire Spencer, Senior Planning Policy Officer 01223 443418.

Background Papers: Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan Annual Progress Report 2003.

Information from East of England Regional Assembly (EERA)

Regional Round Up
December 2003



With the establishment of the new enlarged East of England Regional Assembly, the Executive Committee is keen to ensure that information on the Assembly's work is accessible to all its members, local authorities, community stakeholders and regional partners. As part of this initiative, this is the second of a regular newsletter that will be available electronically and produced quickly after each meeting of the Executive Committee and Full Assembly meeting.

Please feel free to cascade this newsletter to any of your contacts and colleagues. If you have any comments or observations please respond via e.mail to clare.hardy@eera.gov.uk

News from the Assembly

The full Regional Assembly held its second meeting on 5th December at the Fielder Centre, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield.

The notes of that meeting will be available shortly on the Assembly website www.eelgc.gov.uk (please see the Secretariat News later in this newsletter for further information on the website).

In the meantime here are some of the key issues discussed.....

EEDA Regional Economic Strategy Review

The morning session of the Assembly meeting was devoted to a scenario planning workshop as part of the Review of the Regional Economic Strategy. The current review of the Regional Economic Strategy has begun with a series of scenario planning workshops, run by the Henley Centre and jointly funded by EERA and EEDA.

The workshops are being used to: identify key drivers of future change; develop and test a number of 'possible futures'; identify from this process the high level issues that the next RES needs to address; and begin the process of action planning.

The scenario planning workshops will make it possible to engage around 210 individuals and organisations during this stage of the development process.

A written consultation from EEDA on the high level issues emerging for the new RES will take place at the end of February 2004, and a full draft strategy will be consulted on between April and July.

In a national context, this is the first time that an Assembly and Development Agency have worked in partnership at the early stages of a RES review to ensure the broadest possible input to the process from Assembly and sub-regional stakeholders alike.

Assembly Budget

Following discussion in the Executive Committee, the Assembly approved the budget for 2004/5 and the scheme of subscriptions for member authorities for next year. These are:

County Councils	£34,000
Unitary Councils	£28,500
District Councils	£10,500

Please note that these figures are net of any subscriptions levied on behalf of the Employers' Organisation and IdeA and collected by the Assembly as part of its Regional Employers function, but inclusive of subscriptions for the East of England Brussels Office.

Regional Social Strategy

Consultation on the Regional Social Strategy ended on 14th November. A total of 55 responses were received from a broad range of stakeholders, and over 548 hits recorded on the website. Overall, the tone of responses has been very positive and supportive, although a number of key themes have emerged, falling into two broad categories: issues in need of strengthening and issues that were absent.

Issues in need of strengthening:

- rural dimensions of exclusion
- affordable housing
- equality and diversity

Issues that were absent:

- socio-environmental
- the role of faith communities and cultural activity in promoting social inclusion.

Copies of the final draft will be made available to Assembly members by the end of February, and will be considered by the Executive Committee of EERA at its meeting on 31st March, 2004. This timescale will ensure that a final published document is available to inform, amongst other developments, the RES review process.

News from the Panels

A regional alliance for the East of England Partners around the region are working on the development of a regional alliance for the East of England. At the Europe & International Affairs Panel meeting on 26 November, it was agreed that a “three-pronged approach” should be adopted, building principally upon the PRAXIS network and contacts with and offices in San Jose, USA and Jiangsu, China.

CAP Reform and Sugar The East of England produces 66% of the UK sugar beet crop. The European Commission and DEFRA are currently consulting on 3 possible alternatives for reform of the sugar market. These are: an extension of the current regime beyond 2006; a reduction in the internal price; and complete liberalization of the current regime. DEFRA is inviting comments on these proposals by 16 January 2004 and EEDA and EERA are working together to produce a joint regional response reflecting the likely impact of the proposals on the East of England.

Homelessness and the Asylum Seekers Amnesty

The Assembly’s Housing & sustainable Communities Panel has written to Ministers pointing to the apparent inconsistency in government policy on homelessness and the use of bed and breakfast accommodation and the effects of the proposed asylum amnesty. The letter calls for a re-examination of this potential conflict and for no sanctions to be imposed on local authorities failing to meet the Government’s bed and breakfast target.

Forthcoming Meetings

5th February Special Full Regional Assembly (to consider RPG14) at County Hall, Hertford.
31st March Executive Committee Venue to be confirmed

Secretariat News

Assembly website The website for the Assembly is currently being redesigned and will be found at www.eera.gov.uk. If you were to search for that site you will be transferred to the old East of England Local Government Conference website www.eelgc.gov.uk which has been adapted to accommodate key Assembly information until the re-launch. You should be able to find the key documents including agenda, papers and minutes of meetings.

Panel papers and membership The current website contains further information on the work of the Assembly, its Executive Committee and various Panels. Most papers and agendas together with a list of panel membership can be accessed using the following weblink:

<http://www.eelgc.gov.uk/Category.asp?lsection=1&ccat=73>

If the information you require is not there then the following members of the Policy & Secretariat team may be able to assist:

Full Assembly, Executive Committee, Regional Planning Panel:

Colin Robertshaw colin.robertshaw@eera.gov.uk 01284 729412

Europe & International Affairs Panel, EERA/EEDA Liaison Panel:

Clare Hardy clare.hardy@eera.gov.uk 01284 729409

Asylum & Refugee Integration Panel, Employment & Skills Panel:

Stephen Hinchley stephen.hinchley@eera.gov.uk 01284 729430

Housing & Sustainable Communities Panel, Health & Social Inclusion Panel:

Jane Sellers jane.sellers@eera.gov.uk 01284 729431

Information on external visits to Hockerton & Bedzed Housing projects

The dates below have been booked for visits to the Hockerton Housing Project and Bedzed. These projects have been chosen given they are regarded as 'state of the art' examples of sustainable housing developments. Hence they offer some useful lessons and 'food for thought' with regard to the sustainability of new build developments planned for South Cambs. In both cases, those attending will be given the opportunity to meet the architects and ask detailed technical information about the projects.

(1) Hockerton Housing Project - 5 February 2004

(2) Beddington Zero Emission Development (Bedzed) - 17 February 2004

Further information is available at:

www.bioregional.com

www.zedfactory.com

www.bedzed.org.uk

www.hockerton.demon.co.uk/

Spaces are limited (for each visit a maximum 10 spaces are available) so please can you let me know ASAP if you would like to attend so that I can finalise details.

Many thanks

Cameron Adams

Strategic Development Officer

Direct Line 01223 443135 or Email: Cameron.adams@scambs.gov.uk

Information on Housing Portfolio Holder meetings

At the December meeting of the Housing Portfolio Holder, it was agreed to trial inviting non-executive Members to the meetings. The allocation will be done on a first come, first served basis and will be restricted to two members only. If you would like to attend the next Housing Portfolio Holder meeting, it will be taking place in Committee Room 2 between 10am and 12.30pm on Wednesday 11th February. The first two members to contact me will be able to attend. Members who wish to attend must note that some items may be confidential.

Contact Lucie Edginton, on (01223) 443026 or lucie.edginton@scambs.gov.uk

Information items from the Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder meeting of 6th January 2004

External Audit Appointment for 2004/05 Financial Year Onwards

The Audit Commission has written to confirm the approval of the extension of the appointment of RSM Robson Rhodes, the Council's existing audit supplier for the period up to 31st March 2006.

Council Tax Benefit

The Government have recently announced its intention to remove the ceiling on granting Council Tax benefit with effect from 1st April 2004 which will result in people in bands F, G and H properties having their benefit calculated on their full liability. Prior to this date, Council Tax benefit was restricted to the maximum help available for band E properties. For further information, please contact Paul Smith, Assistant Director Finance and Resources (Revenues), tel: (01223) 443110.

Training Courses/Seminars/Conferences

Name of Course	Description	Date and Venue
<p><u>OPPM/LGA Capacity Building seminar</u></p> <p>Free half-day seminar to hear about and discuss the Capacity Building support programmes available from a variety of national and regional bodies. This event will be of interest to <u>all</u> authorities.</p>	<p><u>Key themes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ODPM/LGA Capacity building fund: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The purpose of the Fund and principles – eg transferability, not rewarding failure ❖ Themes ❖ Framework contract and national initiative ❖ How to access funds • IdeA support and programmes • EERA support and programmes • Panel Discussion 	<p>30th January 2004 9.30 – 1.30</p> <p>Qton Forum, Cambridge</p>
<p><u>CIPFA Local Government Finance for Councillors Seminar</u></p> <p>Designed especially for elected members and will be of particular benefit to those wishing to update their knowledge of the current issues likely to affect the present local government finance system</p>	<p><u>Key themes include:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explain how current system has evolved • outline the main features of the revenue finance system including Formula Spending Shares and Revenue Support Grant • explain what the government meant by “Resource Equalisation” • examine the prospects for further structural reform in England 	<p>12th February 2004 9.30 – 4.30</p> <p>The Montague on the Gardens Hotel, London</p> <p>15 Montague Street, Bloomsbury, London WC1B 5BJ</p>
<p><u>The Leadership Challenge conference (EERA and EO)</u></p> <p>This conference will be of interest to a range of senior officers and elected members including Leaders, Executive Members, Chairs of Scrutiny, Chief Executives, Senior Managers, Heads of HR/Senior HR Managers</p>	<p>To provide the business case for ensuring local government has good quality learning opportunities that address the development needs of current and future leaders within the sector. The conference provides opportunities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hear how authorities in and beyond the region are tackling some of the leadership development issues facing politicians and officers in local government • Share information about a variety of leadership development opportunities that are available nationally and regionally • Shape a learning and development framework for this region that responds to the needs of current and future leaders 	<p>12th March 2004 9.15 – 4.15</p> <p>Duxford Officers Mess, Duxford, Cambridge</p>

Name of Course	Description	Date and Venue
<p><u>Value Management – Delivering Service Improvement (EERA and EO)</u></p> <p>This conference will be of interest to Chief Executives, Cabinet Members, Senior Managers and Heads of Department</p>	<p>Value Management is about improving performance and thus will meet the challenges posed by CPA equally as well as Best Value. Value Management is a multi-faceted discipline that can be applied to any aspect of public service where improved performance is needed or desired. Key themes will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of Value Management • Determining, Measuring and Evaluating Value • Applying Function Analysis and Identifying Value Mismatches • Developing and Appraising Improvement Options • Review and implications of Applying Value Management 	<p>3rd March 2004 9.15 – 4.15</p> <p>Flempton House, Flempton, Bury St Edmunds</p>
<p>Election briefing for Candidate and Agents – A one day workshop</p>	<p>Useful for Candidates, Agents, Elected Members, Chief Executives and Senior Election and Returning Officers to attend</p>	<p>8th March 2004 Sunley Management Centre, Nottingham</p>

More details on the above courses can be found by contacting Lucie Edginton, on (01223) 443026 or lucie.edginton@scambs.gov.uk

Call-In Arrangements

The Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee or any five other Councillors may call in any executive decision recorded in this bulletin for review. The Democratic Services Manager must be notified of any call in by **Wednesday 21st January 2004 at 5pm**. All decisions not called in by this date may be implemented on **Thursday 22nd January 2004**.

Any member considering calling in a decision made by Cabinet is requested to contact the Democratic Services Section to determine whether any relevant amendments have been incorporated.

The call in procedure is set out in full in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution, 'Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rules', paragraph 12.

DECISIONS MADE BY PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

RESOURCES AND STAFFING PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISIONS

Subject	Action Taken
<p>In mid 2002, the Chief Executive approved South Cambs formal involvement in the ECCMP following discussion with the Strategic Development Officer. In October 2002, the programme was successfully piloted. In December 2002, Management Team agreed the programme should be fully implemented across all departments. In pursuit of this decision, the SDO began (May 2003 onwards) preparing the necessary "start-up" documentation required for South Cambs participation in the ECCMP.</p> <p>The total sum required (£20k) is currently scheduled for payment on two instalments; £10k for 2003/04 (Subject to approval of the Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder) and a further £10k due for payment in 2004/05. The payment of £20k will be offset by the Council's receipt of €15,000 for the SDO's input into the programme.</p>	<p>Approval of precautionary item – European Climate Change Menu Programme (ECCMP)</p>

CONSERVATION PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISIONS

Subject	Action Taken
<p>To support the proposed Heritage Lottery Fund bid by the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Biodiversity Group, which seeks funding to establish a Biological Records Centre at Cambourne.</p>	<p>Authorisation of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Confirmation of the Council's continued commitment to support the establishment of the Biological Records Centre at Cambourne, subject to receipt of a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund b) Allocation of capital, grant funding of the £13,000 from the Heritage Initiatives Fund 2003/04, to support the bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund as outlined above, if required the SCDC funding to be released, in 3 financial years: 2004/05; 2005/06; 2006/07 c) Consideration of appropriate levels of revenue funding from the Conservation Portfolio budget to support the revenue costs of the BRC from 2007/08.
Subject	Action Taken
<p>To confirm the authorisation of support for the establishment of the "Village Green Space Pilot Project".</p>	<p>Allocation of up to £5,000 per village to Orwell and Elsworth Parish Councils agreed at the 16th July Conservation Advisory Group. The funding (total of £10,000) to be made available from the Heritage Initiative Fund for 2003/04, as a contribution towards the development of pilot schemes for the future possible establishment of a "Village Green Space" initiative</p>

CONSERVATION PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISIONS continued

Subject	Action Taken
To facilitate the rationalisation of the Historic Buildings Grant Policy and the development of new partnership working with Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust.	Authorise the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Amendment of the existing Historic Buildings Grant policy to enable grant offers to be made toward partnership funding packages designed for the repair of the external fabric of church buildings, subject to a limitation of a maximum contribution from SCDC of £5,000 per church buildingb) Confirmation of a nominated member from CAG to liase with the Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust and assist them with targeting and direction of their workc) An initial, one-off grant contribution of £4,000 to the Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust, to be allocated from the Heritage Initiatives Fund in 2003/04 as a way of endorsing and assisting with the trust's work.

DECISIONS MADE BY OFFICERS

Subject	Action Taken
<u>Community Development</u> Youth Consultation through video project. Working with community education and professional filmmakers to provide a way for young people in Gamlingay to make their views known to the Parish Council and other community groups. The benefits will be the development of new skills and self confidence and the acknowledgement of how young people feel they are perceived in Gamlingay	Agreed to increase award to the "Most Wanted" Youth Group, Gamlingay from £650 to £1400

INFORMATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICES PFH

Meeting held on the 10th December 2003 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillor JD Batchelor

GJ Harlock	JS Ballantyne
S Carroll	SC May
P Swift	M Wylie

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Mrs DSK Spink

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING – 10TH NOVEMBER 2003

2.1 EEDA Broadband Update (Min 4)

It was noted that Richard Jones' extended contract had been finalised

2.2 Member PC Replacement Scheme (Min 17)

Noted that this was not supported by Scrutiny Committee and was likely to fall in the consideration of CIP bids. However, there was sufficient budget for ordinary replacement needs. The opportunity might be taken to update councillors' PCs to Windows XP.

2.3 Homeworking Project (Min 18)

The report was drafted but not yet ready for presentation.

3. COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

3.1 SC circulated a progress report on communications issues, highlighting the main items.

3.2 Corporate Identity

The intention was that the corporate identity team would look at the proposals of 2g Ltd, the company selected, and report to Management Team on 9th February 2004. The original idea had been just the simplification of the crest to use as a logo, but the company had advised South Cambs look at the range of options available.

JB asked for a note to go to Members telling them that the process was starting and that he should see the first tranche of ideas. **SC**

3.3 CIP

The main funding request was for a lunch club for sharing ideas. JSB believed that real efforts must be made to run the lunchtime seminars, even if funding had to be found from current budgets. Further ideas for topics were welcome.

3.4 Internal Communications Survey

This had flagged up that over a third of staff were not given team briefings and they were the most requested improvement to internal communications. A report was going to Management Team to ensure that staff were all briefed orally.

At January's team briefings managers were to be invited to ask staff what questions they had about Cambourne and feed these back to the Information Unit for a corporate response. The answers would be fed back at the next team briefing and also be available on the intranet.

3.5 Translation Service

Further work on this report had been postponed until January.

3.6 Staff Calendar

This was being produced internally. The deadline was the end of the week.

4. **CONSULTATION STRATEGY**

The draft report to be presented to Cabinet on 18th December was considered. PS suggested that the most important issue was to have a corporate timetable and feedback. If the CIP bid of £20,000, which included the Environmental Services and Building Control bids, was not accepted, customer satisfaction survey methods would have to be changed and some consultations put off. It was important to have a consistent approach to customer satisfaction surveys, required by Government; other consultations would be carried out by individual departments but the information should be shared.

The programme was an ongoing process, which would be shared with JB.

The report was accepted for presentation to Cabinet, with the addition of a reference to policy development in paragraph 11.

PS

5. **DIP BACKSCANNING**

PS reported that management team would like to do as much backscanning as possible in the current year to avoid the cost of taking large quantities of paper to Cambourne. A report was therefore to be tabled at Council proposing additional expenditure from reserves this year of £137,500 from the General Fund and £172,500 from the HRA. The portfolios to benefit most would be Housing, Resources & Staffing and Environmental Health.

It was thought that completion of backscanning before the move was feasible if Council agreed the funding the following day. MW confirmed that the underlying assumption was that the paper would be disposed of.

6. **CASCADE UPDATE**

MW reported on the disappointing delays in achieving the CCN link and Steve Rayment was called to give a full report on a meeting the previous day. The issue was over a firewall. The current intention was for services to go live in February but if the firewall in contention was essential, it would probably be the end of March. **AGREED** GJH, MW and SR to meet John Little (County Head of ICT) that afternoon if possible to try to resolve the matter. Other possible contacts were discussed for use if necessary.

GJH/MW

MW also reported that

- the ESD Programme Board had decided to proceed with transfer of the switchboard on full hours. Pat Harding would put forward a costed proposal for 3 FTEs
- the new team leader in the contact centre was Jo Oldham, who was meeting South Cambs Cascade team leaders to agree hand-off “business rules”
- MW was taking over from Bill Newman’s role within the South Cambs side of the project. A replacement was sought for the County-facing aspects of his role as Programme Manager.
- the wheeled bin hotline number would eventually become one of the Environmental Health and Commercial Services numbers. JB requested the hand back rate for calls on wheeled bins. It was thought that the County Council might wish to re-negotiate the fees for agents if the calls continued at a high level.

MW

7. FORWARD PROGRAMME

There was nothing arising.

8. CAMBRIDGE OFFICE

GJH reported that no formal confirmation had yet been received about the provision of the office. **AGREED** MW to obtain letter from the relevant City Council officer making a commitment for 5 years from 1st March 2004. JSB to talk to the Chief Executive if there was no progress by Friday.

9. OTHER ICT/ESD DEVELOPMENTS

Mw reported that

- Geostore was now beginning to deliver. Paul Grainger was to make a presentation to Cabinet on 18th December on PlanAccess
- The Land and Property Gazetteer had gone to status 1 – good. Paul Grainger was to do more work with GDC within budget on synchronising information on the master database with other systems
- The HR and Payroll and the NNDR projects were continuing
- Elections and timesheets were still on the Reality server
- Rachel Woodcock was leaving the authority
- Environmental Health might go into CASCADE at the same time as other services
- The new telephone numbers should be live by the time of the new issue of South Cambs Magazine – MW to send JB a copy of the article for the Magazine.

MW

10. CIPS PROCESS

Noted that Management Team had not yet made recommendations, but had endorsed the completion of CASCADE.

11. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Tuesday 13th January at 10.00 a.m.
Tuesday 10th February at 10.00 a.m.
Tuesday 9th March at 10.00 a.m.

12. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

JB queried whether there were any matters to be considered for this report to Council. Noted that there was a query on the reference to the Standards Board in the minutes of the last Cabinet meeting. JB and GJH agreed with Cllr Summerfield's recollection that the matter of suspended councillors had been referred to the Standards Committee.

Pension age limits to be verified.

SM

The meeting closed at 12.40 p.m.

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT AREA JOINT COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date 8 December 2003
Time 1430h – 1710h
Place South Cambridgeshire Hall, Hills Road, Cambridge
Present: County Councillors
M Farrar, P Gooden, S F Johnstone and J E Reynolds

District Councillors

D Bard (Chairman), C C Barker, J D Batchelor, D Roberts (substituting for D S K Spink) and R Summerfield

CALC Councillors

G Everson, M Mason and D Morison

Also present

County Councillors R B Martlew and A G Orgee
District Councillor Mrs G J Smith
Parish Councillors E Cornell (Linton), M Fell (Little Shelford),
P Haines (Little Shelford), L Littlejohn (Harlton) and S Rowe (Horseheath)

Apologies: Councillors T J Bear, J E Coston and D S K Spink

107. MINUTES – 15TH SEPTEMBER 2003

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th September 2003 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

108. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor S F Johnstone declared a personal interest in relation to Agenda Item 9 under paragraph 8 of the County Council's Code of Conduct as a member of the National Cycling Strategy Board.

109. PETITIONS

The Joint Committee received:

(a) Emsons Close Residents Association – Request for Resurfacing

A 54-signature petition, presented by Mr D Barnicoat, requesting the resurfacing of Emsons Close, Linton.

(b) Access 1307 Group – Access to and across the A1307

A 1,353-signature petition, presented by Ms E Cornell, requesting urgent action to improve the safe access for vehicles, pedestrians and other road users onto and across the A1307.

110. PETITIONS UPDATE

(a) A1307 between Haverhill and A11

The Joint Committee had received a 1,353-signature petition, as outlined in Minute 109 (b), of which 1,301 were South Cambridgeshire residents. The A1307 was a main distributor road within the County's network carrying approximately 18,000 vehicles per day (16 hour annual average weekday flow). It was one of the busiest stretches of main distributor road in the County. The road did not have a particularly good accident record, and as a result, benefited from the attention of the mobile safety cameras.

Members were reminded that the County Council's ability to deal with any issues raised by the public was controlled by the availability of funds. They were aware of priority systems, which had been developed to ensure that funds were directed towards those in most need when measured against Government and County Council targets. The County Council would be undertaking a route study for the length of the A1307 between Bartlow Road and the western Horseheath junction and would report its findings to the Joint Committee in time for the March or June 2004 meetings. It was noted that the County Council was also working with a number of neighbouring authorities to examine issues along the corridor.

Speaking as a Local Member, District Councillor Batchelor, welcomed the petition, which was designed to ensure that local concerns were not overlooked. The County Council had recognised this with its membership of a Steering Group to look at issues in the Linton vicinity. He explained that the A1307 was a very busy road and was only likely to get worse. Therefore it was important action was taken as soon as possible.

Also speaking as a Local Member, County Councillor Orgee, welcomed the proposed survey. However, he urged officers to extend it to include the A11 particularly the Babraham crossroads, which also did not have a particularly good accident record. Members were informed that officers would need to consider this request in the light of available resources. He asked for the scoring of priority systems to be reviewed to ensure that action taken at one point did not impact further down the route. It was noted that officers did review the impact of accident remedial schemes on surrounding junctions. Speaking as a Local Member, District Councillor Mrs G J Smith, also asked for the scoring system to be reviewed to enable schemes in this vicinity to be carried out each year in priority order. Officers were unable to meet this request as funds were allocated annually based on priority systems.

(b) Emsons Close, Linton

The Joint Committee had received a 54-signature petition, as outlined in Minute 109 (a). Members were informed that the thin surface of the carriageway was cracking at the joints in the concrete and several areas had deteriorated to expose the concrete slabs. However, there were no deep holes or depressions. Over the last few years, Emsons Close had been submitted as a bid for resurfacing. Members were reminded that funds were allocated to the highest scoring schemes on a countywide basis. Emsons Close had scored 70 points out of 100 in 2003/04. Unfortunately, sufficient funds had only been available to treat schemes scoring 75 or more. A proposal for resurfacing was being assessed as part of the 2004/05 round of bids. It was noted that some short-term remedial measures would be identified if the bid was unsuccessful.

Speaking as a Local Member, District Councillor Batchelor, expressed concern about the condition of the road. He suggested that the scoring system be reviewed to enable this road to be resurfaced after over thirty years. Other Members also expressed their concern about the state of Emsons Close. It was suggested that a different form of criteria should be applied to concrete roads. The Joint Committee was reminded that a number of roads in the County were also in a similar or worse condition. Members were informed that County Council officers were currently dealing with a backlog of maintenance repairs and problems caused by drought damage. Bids were therefore prioritised on safety grounds, volume of traffic and the type of road. Members were reminded that the priority system had been approved by County Councillors.

Some Members were anxious for action to be taken to improve the surface of Emsons Close. However, others were concerned that a petition should not affect the priority order of the ranking system for maintenance schemes.

It was agreed unanimously to:

- i) note the concerns of residents along the A1307 between Haverhill and the A11.
- ii) support the ongoing work, which the County Council was pursuing to address the concerns.
- iii) inform the petitioners accordingly.

It was agreed by a majority to:

- i) recommend that serious consideration be given to the Emsons Close petition with the hope that the priority system which was used to identify resurfacing schemes each financial year would allow the Close to be resurfaced allowing for the County Council's financial constraints.

111. A14 VILLAGE TRAFFIC CALMING PROJECT – PROGRESS REPORT

The Joint Committee was informed of progress in developing and implementing traffic calming schemes in selected South Cambridgeshire villages, along the A14 corridor between Cambridge and Huntingdon.

Members were reminded that they had approved a scheme for Boxworth at their last meeting, which had commenced on 11 November 2003 and was programmed to be completed in seven weeks. The scheme for Madingley had also been approved at that meeting and construction was programmed to start in January 2004 to last for eight weeks. It was noted that questionnaires were currently being analysed for Longstanton with agreement still to be reached with the Parish Council on a suitable scheme. A meeting with Swavesey Parish Council was planned for the New Year.

Speaking as a Local Member, County Councillor Reynolds, thanked officers for undertaking the consultation process in Dry Drayton. It was noted that Dry Drayton Parish Council would be asked to approve the final plans early in the New Year. The Joint Committee was likely to be asked to approve the scheme at its special meeting in February. Councillor Reynolds also asked that Madingley Parish Council be consulted on the construction materials and street furniture proposed for its scheme. The Chairman asked officers to investigate whether the impact of the Home Farm development would be considered as part of the scheme proposed for Longstanton.

It was agreed unanimously to note the progress made.

112. JOINTLY FUNDED MINOR HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT (JFMHI) SCHEMES 2004/2005

The Joint Committee noted an update on progress with improvement schemes that had been approved last year, and considered bids from Parish Councils (only two allowed per parish) as candidates for implementation during 2004/05 under the available budget. South Cambridgeshire District Council would be contributing £90,000 towards the budget. It was anticipated that the County Council would be able to match such a contribution providing a total budget of £180,000 plus the Parish Councils' contributions of 60p per elector.

Members were informed that the upward ceiling for JFMHI schemes had been fixed at £25,000 since its conception in 1999. Since this time, there had been a marked rise in civil engineering costs. The cost of creating more "intelligent" pedestrian crossings and the inclusion of facilities for the disabled had increased the costs associated with these crossings. The typical cost for a controlled pedestrian crossing was now approaching £35,000. It was therefore proposed to raise the upper limit for JFMHI schemes or any one Parish to £35,000. Members noted that the number of schemes implemented in any one year could subsequently fall, with the benefits of minor improvements felt in fewer communities.

79 schemes had been submitted this year, which had been assessed against the agreed scoring criteria. On that basis and subject to increasing the ceiling to £35,000, seven schemes were recommended for implementation in the next financial year at a total cost of £215,000, in Barton, Caxton, Great Shelford, Longstowe, Milton, Papworth and Six Mile Bottom. The Joint Committee was asked to hold Longstowe as a reserve scheme in order not to exceed the available budget. This was based on the scheme having the lowest accident rate.

Members were informed that it had not been possible for a Member to accompany officers on the site visits to witness the scoring process as agreed at their meeting on 9 December 2002. It was therefore proposed that the Joint Committee elect a Member to accompany officers on next year's visits after the District Council elections in June 2004.

During discussion, the following comments were made and points noted:

- the need to balance increasing the ceiling with the resulting impact of doing less schemes. Some Members felt that it was more important to implement less schemes more effectively. It was noted that the inflation rate for highway maintenance was significantly higher than the standard rate of inflation.
- concern that Parish Councils had not been informed of the proposal to change the ceiling when letters had been sent requesting 2004/2005 scheme submissions. Some Members were concerned about changing the ceiling mid way through the process. It was noted that Parish Councils had been asked to identify problems rather than solutions this time. Therefore the JFMHI budget was not really an issue for individual parishes. Members asked officers to consider the possibility of identifying smaller schemes in order to meet the requirements of parishes.
- highlighted the gap in funding between the Medium Sized Traffic Management and Safety Schemes Programme and the current JFMHI schemes budget. It was noted that the County Council's Cabinet had increased threshold limits for the Medium Sized Traffic Management and Safety Schemes Programme to include schemes with a minimum value of £30,000 and a maximum value of £500,000 to reflect the costs of inflation. The gap between the two schemes was currently £5,000.
- the possibility of ensuring that as many schemes as possible were constructed in order to achieve benefits for the maximum number of communities. Members were reminded that the scoring process was based on a number of set criteria, which included road safety.
- the possibility of funding the junction remodelling scheme in Impington and the traffic calming scheme and short length of footway in Oakington as part of the A14 Village Traffic Calming Project.
- Local Member, County Councillor Summerfield expressed support for a controlled pedestrian crossing in Cambridge Road, Milton, and highlighted the need to complete schemes to a satisfactory standard.
- Local Member, County Councillor Farrar, expressed concern about the principles of the scoring system in relation to Stapleford. It was noted that it was not possible to compare previous years as different people were involved in the scoring process. Councillor Batchelor reported that he had been involved with officers in the review of the scoring process. He acknowledged that there was an amount of subjective judgement. However, he was satisfied that the current process ensured consistency and reasonableness.
- CALC Councillor D Morison raised a number of concerns about the scoring of the scheme for Comberton.
- the Chairman reported that Local Member, County Councillor Orgee, had expressed his support for the two Great Abington schemes.

It was agreed unanimously to:

- i) re-affirm that the number of schemes submitted for consideration from this budget should be restricted to two per Parish;
- ii) defer the election of a Member to accompany officers on next year's site visits until after the District Council elections in June;
- iii) approve the following schemes for implementation next financial year:
 - a) a controlled pedestrian crossing in Cambridge Road, Milton;
 - b) a controlled pedestrian crossing on the A1198 at Papworth;
 - c) an extension of the existing footway on the A1198 at Caxton;
 - d) alterations and improvements to the existing speed reduction scheme at Six Mile Bottom;
 - e) a pedestrian refuge and relocation of the bus stop on the A603 at Barton;
 - f) an extension of the existing dual-use footway/cycleway along Hinton Way, Great Shelford;
 - g) hold the planings footway alongside the A1198 at Longstowe as a reserve scheme.

- iv) inform all Parish Councils that submitted bids accordingly.

It was agreed by a majority to:

- i) raise the maximum cost ceiling to £35,000 for any single scheme and for any single parish.

113. ST. IVES MARKET TOWN STRATEGY

The Joint Committee received a report detailing progress on the preparation of the St. Ives Market Town Strategy. Market Town Strategies were an essential part of the Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan and were being produced jointly with District Councils to cover all of the Market Towns across the county. The study area of the Strategy covered an area greater than that of the town itself and included wards in both Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire.

Members noted the process for producing the Market Town Strategy. Stakeholder workshops and meetings with the Town and Parish Councils were scheduled for January/February 2004. Consultation on the draft strategy would take place in September 2004. The Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire Environment and Transport Area Joint Committees would be asked to endorse the strategy in December 2004.

The involvement of Members in all stages of the Strategy was essential. It was proposed that a joint District and County Member Steering Group be established to guide the process leading to the development of the Strategy. South Cambridgeshire District Council was asked to appoint one Member to the Group, which would meet on 4 February 2004. South Cambridgeshire District Councillors on the Joint Committee were concerned that the first meeting would clash with its Development Control Committee. It was noted that the Group would need to meet on a monthly basis and the first meeting could therefore be restricted to St. Ives itself.

It was resolved unanimously to endorse the process leading to the completion of the St Ives Market Town Strategy.

114. CAMBRIDGE INFORMATION SIGNING SYSTEM

The Joint Committee received a report detailing further design work that had been undertaken on the development of a variable message information signing system for Cambridge. A further stakeholder workshop had also been held to explore the detailed design ideas for the proposed outer ring (park and ride), middle ring (network management), and inner ring (car park management) information systems. The signs would have radio-based communications controlled from a central in-station. A public consultation exercise was planned for early next year, the feedback from which would inform final designs for the sign faces and locations. Officers from the District Council's Conservation Section would also be consulted on any sensitive areas in the District. It was anticipated that the outer and inner ring of signs would be implemented by September 2004, ready for the closure of the main part of the Lion Yard car park, with the final element fully operational by summer 2005.

Members were concerned about the possible size and appearance of signs in rural locations. They were also concerned about the likely proliferation of signs. It was noted that these signs would mainly replace those already in existence. Members requested a map showing the wider implications of the location of the signs. They also hoped that the signs on the city bound approach to each of the Park and Ride sites would not contain too much information, which could be a distraction for drivers. However, they stressed the need for the information to be reliable.

Some Members queried whether this system provided the best value for money and suggested that Real Time Information (RTI) for buses would be a better investment. It was noted that the County Council was reluctant to release funding for RTI in the absence of a national standard. However, it was likely that RTI would be available on the A428 in the next twelve months as part of

a partnership arrangement with Peterborough, Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire local authorities.

It was resolved unanimously to support the variable message information signing system detailed in Section 2.

115. PROGRESS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CYCLE NETWORK IN SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE

The Joint Committee received an update on existing and likely future cycle infrastructure within South Cambridgeshire and a schedule of possible schemes. Members were reminded that they had requested a report at their June meeting detailing the existing cycle infrastructure in the District, a vision for the likely future network in South Cambridgeshire and provision made for data gathering in respect of cycle usage. The report included a series of plans detailing the cycle infrastructure and the shape and scope of what was envisaged for the District in the future.

Corridor improvements to the main radial routes leading into Cambridge were one of the main strands in the development of a cycle network in the District. Provision had been made for these in the LTP 2004-2011 bid. Members noted the schemes required to complete the Network. The Joint Committee considered counts on the main corridors into Cambridge based on provisional July 2003 data.

Members were concerned that they did not have enough information detailing actual usage of cycle routes. They welcomed the monitoring update but were concerned about the downward decline in usage. It was noted that the monitoring information was based on annual traffic counts provided by automated counting loops or manually with the former providing a more accurate reading.

Speaking as a Local Member, District Councillor Roberts, was concerned that the cost of improving the A10 Cambridge – Foxton route was £500,000. She suggested that this route should not be considered as a priority as it was only used by a small number of cyclists. It was noted that the cost of constructing a high quality scheme increased in more rural areas and was also likely to be less used than urban routes. However, the County Council had received a number of complaints about the quality of this route, and would forward them to the Local Member.

Speaking as a Local Member, County Councillor Johnstone, suggested that the Swavesey – Over – Fen Drayton scheme should be ranked as a high priority to improve access for children from Over travelling to Swavesey Village College. These villages were traditionally linked and it was therefore important that access was improved. She welcomed a proposal to identify A14 funding for this scheme.

The CALC representative, Councillor Mason, acknowledged the ambition of the plans for future cycle provision detailed in the report. However, it was also important to examine past experience particularly in relation to dual use cycleways some of which were not in a very good condition with weed growth in the tarmac. He was particularly concerned about the specification and standard of some cycle routes particularly the Histon – Cottenham route, which was close to a six-foot ditch, and was very difficult to use when frosty. It was therefore important not to sacrifice quality for quantity. He also expressed concern about the NCN 51 Cambridge to Huntingdon route, which included a diversion through Histon from the Rapid Transit route. He was concerned that the Rapid Transit route was too narrow to accommodate a cycleway and a bridleway. Members were informed that the status of route NCN 51 had not yet been established. The proposed route was an indicative route identified by Sustrans.

Speaking as a Local Member, County Councillor Reynolds, was concerned that the Girton route was too narrow. He was also concerned that the Bar Hill – Cambridge route (62) could go past the proposed animal testing laboratory. It was noted that there were no firm plans for the exact location of the route. County Council officers were discussing a number of highway issues in relation to this development with the Police and would report back accordingly.

The Chairman reported that County Councillor Orgee, the Local Member for Sawston, had expressed his support for Sawston –Genome Campus and Sawston – Babraham including Granta Park development routes. Speaking as a Local Member, the Chairman, was concerned about the poor surface of the Stapleford – Sawston route. He requested that action be taken to improve its condition as a high priority. Also speaking as a Local Member, County Councillor Summerfield, highlighted the need to improve Towpath, Pike and Eel – Waterbeach Clayhithe, which was a very much used route. It was noted that this was a high priority as part of a planned leisure route and alternate Sustrans route to Ely. The Cambridge Conservators had only recently given consent for work to commence on the towpath.

It was resolved unanimously to note the list of suggested schemes and their place within the context of the overall cycleway network.

116. PROPOSED DISABLED BAYS, QUEENS CLOSE, HARSTON & HIGH STREET, ORWELL

The Joint Committee considered a request to install a disabled persons' parking bay in Queens Close, Harston and High Street, Orwell. Members noted objections received to both draft orders for the proposed disabled bays. The Joint Committee asked officers to investigate whether the disabled resident of Queens Close, Harston was still resident.

On balance, the Committee felt that the Orders should be introduced as advertised.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- i) determine the objections without holding a public inquiry and introduce the Orders as advertised subject to confirmation that the disabled resident of Queens Close, Harston was still resident at this property, and
- ii) inform the objectors accordingly.

117. PROPOSED PROHIBITION OF WAITING ORDER – VARIOUS STREETS, LINTON

The Joint Committee considered objections lodged against the proposed Prohibition of Waiting Order that would introduce various parking restrictions in Linton.

Members were already aware of the daily congestion experienced in Linton High Street as buses and delivery lorries compete for road space with cars parked and pedestrians on the narrow section of the High Street. The Linton Steering Group had been formed to co-ordinate input from all the action groups within Linton. The Group was proposing parking restrictions and had carried out a consultation exercise with affected residents and businesses. It was envisaged that the proposed restrictions would improve traffic flow and safety for residents when using the High Street.

Eleven objections had been received to the proposed restrictions primarily around concerns regarding the increase in vehicle speed once the parking restrictions were in place and the loss of parking spaces. No objections had been received from commercial premises. There was a District Council Car Park nearby and the Parish Council was currently in discussion with the District Council about a number of issues relating to the site. The proposal had received the support of the Steering Group and the Local District Councillors.

Speaking as a Local Member, District Councillor J Batchelor, welcomed the first proposals of the Steering Group. He acknowledged that it was difficult to please everyone in the village. The recently published Parish Plan survey for Linton had demonstrated clear support for a one-way system in the High Street. He hoped that the new Community Safety Officer would diligently enforce the parking restrictions.

Members acknowledged the work of the Linton Steering Group in tackling a very difficult problem. However, it was important not to ignore the views of High Street residents, particularly in relation to speeding vehicles, who comprised the majority of the objectors. They discussed the possibility of introducing and monitoring a temporary Order. It was noted that there was no difference in the cost of revoking a permanent or temporary Order. Some Members suggested that the latter would allow officers to take on board the concerns of High Street residents. The Joint Committee was informed that all residents would be informed in the Linton Village Newsletter in January that the Order could be revoked if the scheme was unsuccessful. It was noted that speed monitoring would take before and after the introduction of the parking restrictions.

On balance, the Committee felt that the Order should be introduced as advertised.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- i) determine the objection without holding a public inquiry;
- ii) introduce the Order as advertised, and
- iii) inform the objectors accordingly.

118. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE & NETWORK MANAGEMENT STAGE 2 REPORT

The Joint Committee received a report on progress of actions arising from the Stage 1 of the Review and on the improvement action plan developed as a result of the Stage 2 work. The Review had been very large, covering around £35 million in expenditure and more than 300 staff. The improvement plan would be used to drive forward significant changes to the highways maintenance and network management service over a five-year period and enable the provision of a high quality, cost-effective service.

Members were reminded that the Best Value approach was part of the wider government agenda to improve public services. The final report had been taken to the County Council's Environment & Transport Scrutiny Committee on 5 November 2003 and would need final approval by its Cabinet.

It was resolved unanimously to note the report.

119. AGENDA PLAN

The Committee noted its agenda plan, up until the 2005 spring cycle. It was noted that the Police had withdrawn an objection to the Middlewatch and Boxworth End, Swavesey Traffic Regulation Order.

Chairman

COUNTY COUNCIL: MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 17th December 2003

Time: 10.30 a.m. – 3.20 p.m.

Place: Shire Hall, Cambridge

Present: Councillor: R Driver (Chairman)

Councillors: C M Ballard, R S G Barnwell, I C Bates, T J Bear, B S Bhalla, A J Bowen, S V Brinton, J Broadway, C Carter, R L Clarke, J E Coston, P J Downes, J A P Eddy, M Farrar, H J Fitch, S A Giles, J L Gluza, A Hansard, G F Harper, V A Hearne-Casapieri, G J Heathcock, W G M Hensley, J L Huppert, S F Johnstone, J D Jones, A C Kent, I C Kidman, S J Kime, S J E King, M L Leeke, V H Lucas, A R Mair, R B Martlew, L W McGuire, A K Melton, A S Milton, S B Normington, M K Ogden, L J Oliver, A G Orgee, D R Pegram, J A Powley, P A E Read, A A Reid, J E Reynolds, R C Speechley, A B Stenner, P L Stroude, J M Tuck, J K Walters, R Wilkinson, L J Wilson and F H Yeulett

Apologies: Councillors: P D Bailey, B Hardy, C E Shaw and P W Silby

171. MINUTES: 22nd OCTOBER 2003

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 22nd October 2003 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

172. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Deaths of former Councillors

The Chairman announced with sadness the deaths of former Councillor K Aspinall, who had represented the Queen Edith's ward from 1985 to 1989, and former Councillor J Schicker, who had represented the Abbey ward on the former Cambridgeshire and Isle of Ely Council and on the County Council from 1970 to 1993. Members observed a minute's silence in their memory.

Chairman of the EERA's Regional Planning Panel

The Chairman congratulated Councillor J E Reynolds on his appointment as the Chairman of the East of England Regional Assembly's Regional Planning Panel.

Assistant Director (Children), Social Services

Members noted that Colin Green, the Assistant Director (Children) in Social Services, would be leaving the Council in February 2004 to work for the Children, Families and Young People's Directorate of the Department for Education and Skills. The Chairman and the Cabinet Member for Social Services, Councillor J A Powley, paid tribute to Mr Green's achievements during his time with the County Council and wished him well for his future career.

Green Apple award for 50-year Wildlife Vision Map for Cambridgeshire

The Chairman congratulated all those who had contributed to the achievement by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Biodiversity Partnership of a Green Apple award for its 50-year Wildlife Vision Map for Cambridgeshire.

173. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor S F Johnstone declared a prejudicial interest under Paragraph 10 of the Code of Conduct as a Non-Executive Director of Addenbrooke's NHS Trust in relation to the discussion recorded under Minute 174 a), item 15, on the response to consultation by Addenbrooke's NHS Trust and Papworth Hospital NHS Trust on their applications for Foundation Trust status.

174. REPORTS OF THE CABINET

a) Report of the meetings of Cabinet held on 28th October 2003 and 25th November 2003

The Leader of the Council, Councillor J K Walters, moved receipt of the report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 28th October 2003 and 25th November 2003.

Key decisions for information

- 1) 'Prospects' – Corporate Plan 2004-08
- 2) Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder: Fenland Rural Area Proposal
- 3) Accident Remedies and Traffic Management Programme – Medium- Sized Schemes
- 4) Improving Disability Services

Councillor R B Martlew warned of the risks associated with partnership working and commented that adult disability services had been delivered satisfactorily under previous structures. He suggested that the increasing emphasis by Government on partnership delivery was part of a longer-term agenda to abolish shire counties. If this were the case, Government should be open about it, to enable appropriate arrangements to be made.

The Lead Member for Vulnerable Adults, Councillor D R Pegram, explained that the purpose of the proposed standalone structure within Social Services was to provide additional support to adults with a disability, promoting independent living. Consultation on the proposed arrangements would continue into January 2004.

- 5) Revenue Support Grant Settlement 2004/05

Other decisions

- 6) Joint Review of Social Services

Councillor C M Ballard expressed concern that the press releases issued by the Council following the publication of the Joint Review report had been more positive than the findings of the Review merited. He emphasised that the report included serious comments on older people's services, including consistently low performance on help to live at home, and children's services, particularly

foster care. He welcomed the recognition in the report of the work of the member led reviews of delayed discharges and welfare benefits take-up, but suggested that more could be done within the Council to develop the findings and recommendations of these reviews. He noted that in 'Prospects', the Council committed itself to a strategic refocusing of Social Services in conjunction with partners, especially the Primary Care Trusts, and hoped that this would prove an effective vehicle for implementing the recommendations of the Joint Review.

Councillor S V Brinton echoed Councillor Ballard's concerns that press releases on the report had been unduly positive. She also noted that the financial position in Social Services had worsened since the Review, intensifying the concerns highlighted in the report.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services, Councillor J A Powley, emphasised that overall the Social Services Directorate was performing well. He congratulated the Director and staff for the recent renewal of the Directorate's two-star performance rating. He accepted that both the Joint Review and the annual report of the Social Services Inspectorate had highlighted areas in which improvements could be made and assured members that these were being addressed.

- 7) Social Services Inspectorate Annual Review of Performance
- 8) Charges for Services Provided Under Section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983

Councillor C M Ballard commented that the requirement for local authorities to reimburse social care charges made to people sectioned under the Mental Health Act highlighted the problems potentially associated with bringing together free health services and charged social care. The Social Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee had been concerned at the financial consequences for the Council of making these reimbursements. However, Councillor Ballard emphasised that there was also a human aspect to this issue, as some of the people to whom money was owed were living in real hardship.

Councillor R B Martlew expressed concern at the Cabinet's decision to defer seeking out potential claimants until all known claimants had been reimbursed. He urged that all eligible people be reimbursed as quickly as possible.

The Lead Member for Vulnerable Adults, Councillor D R Pegram, noted that an additional officer was being appointed to help identify all those eligible for reimbursement. To date, thirteen people had been identified, to whom a total of £239,000 was due, plus interest at a rate to be agreed. Further reports would be brought to members as the full extent of the Council's liability became known.

- 9) Archives Service: Adoption of the National Archives Standard and a Collecting Policy
- 10) 'Implementing Electronic Government' Statement – Third Year
- 11) Registration Services Best Value Improvement Plan – Outstations
- 12) Dispensation from Contract Regulations – Use of Alternative Contractors to Cover Building Repairs and Maintenance

13) Further Dispensation from Contract Regulations

Other matters

14) Issues Arising from Scrutiny Committees

The Chairman of the Policy Scrutiny and Audit Committee (PSAC), Councillor P J Downes, highlighted the Committee's concern that the 'Prospects' consultation document should make clear to the public the full range of options available to the Council. He asked whether the Committee would be able to comment on the final version of the document before it was published.

Councillor S V Brinton commented that, in the past, Group Leaders had been able to see the final version before it went to print. She sought assurance that this would continue.

Councillor S J E King noted that PSAC had recognised the constraints placed on the Council by the tight timescale set by Government funding announcements. He asked that the role of PSAC in commenting on 'Prospects' be clarified for future years.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor J K Walters, commented that the final version of the Council Tax consultation leaflet was due to be printed imminently and that there was therefore not time for PSAC to meet. However, if individual members were able to submit comments within the printing timescale, he would welcome these.

15) Response to Consultation by Addenbrooke's NHS Trust and Papworth Hospital NHS Trust on Applications for Foundation Trust Status

Councillor T J Bear commented that, in his view, the comments of the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee on the applications by Addenbrooke's and Papworth for Foundation Trust status had not been 'unduly negative', as suggested in the Cabinet report. The Scrutiny Committee had recognised the potential benefits associated with Foundation Trust status. However, scrutiny members had been concerned that the presentations they had received from the Trusts had focussed on the process of acquiring Foundation Trust status, and had not been very strong on how Foundation Trust status would actually improve patient care. In particular, the Trusts had not been specific as to how they would use their increased freedom to borrow to develop services.

Councillor J M Tuck emphasised that the health scrutiny legislation enabled the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee to respond in its own right to consultations such as these. The Scrutiny Committee had submitted its comments after careful consideration of the evidence received.

Councillor S V Brinton noted that the Scrutiny Committee's main concerns had been about the Foundation Trust structures, not the delivery of services. Despite detailed consideration, it had not been clear to the Committee how the structures would benefit patients and the wider community.

Councillor J L Gluza expressed concern that Foundation Trust arrangements might give pressure groups undue influence, resulting in the neglect of less high profile services. He was also concerned that the governance arrangements might prove to be unwieldy and unworkable.

The Lead Member for Vulnerable Adults, Councillor D R Pegram, commented that acquiring Foundation Trust status was likely to enable Trusts to develop local services better, leading to an enhanced level of care for patients. His comments were echoed by Councillor I C Bates, who expressed regret that the extent of the financial freedoms available to Foundation Trusts might not now be as great as previously anticipated. Councillor S J E King noted that Foundation Trust status would help to make Trusts more accountable to patients for the services they provided.

The Cabinet Member for Social Services, Councillor J A Powley, noted that he had been involved in the consultation processes of both Addenbrooke's and Papworth. He emphasised that the key concern in considering the proposals was whether they would benefit patients. He believed that they would, as Foundation Trusts would be subject to reduced Government control and have greater flexibility to develop their services, staff and research. He welcomed the Trusts' aspirations to modernise their services.

Councillor S F Johnstone left the chamber whilst this item was discussed.

16) Budget Monitoring 2003/04

Councillor S V Brinton congratulated the Director of Resources and his team on resolving the difficulties in carrying out the bank reconciliation on the new IT system. She drew attention to comments made by the Audit Commission in their Audit of Accounts for 2002/03 on the difficulties with the bank reconciliation and with financial management in Social Services and sought assurance that these would not recur in future years.

17) Delegations to Individual Cabinet Members

b) Report of the meeting of Cabinet held on 9th December 2003

The Leader of the Council, Councillor J K Walters, moved receipt of the report of the meetings of the Cabinet held on 9th December 2003.

Key decisions for determination

1) Revenue Budget Cash Limits for 2004/05

The Chairman reminded members that since the meeting of Cabinet on 9th December 2003, the Government had announced additional funding for local authorities in 2004/05. To assist members' discussion of the proposed cash limits for 2004/05, the report to Cabinet from the Director of Resources had been updated to reflect the additional funding and had been circulated in advance of this meeting.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor J K Walters, moved the following recommendations, which were seconded by the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor J E Reynolds:

- a) To approve the revised cash limits, as set out in Appendix 1 of the updated report of the Director of Resources, as a basis for:
- Public consultation on the Council's proposed budgetary strategy, based on a Council Tax increase of 6%

- Directors and Cabinet Members to present detailed budget proposals to Budget Advisory Panels in January
- The submission of the Council's proposed 'Schools Budget' to the Secretary of State for Education and Skills by 31st December 2003;

b) To delegate to the Leader of the Council, following e-mail consultation with Cabinet Members, the authority to:

- Make any changes to cash limits and the 'Schools Budget' that may be required as a result of any additional information that emerges during December
- Approve the consultation process and the content of consultation materials.

The Chairman stated that he would also take item 5) on the agenda, the report of the Education, Libraries and Heritage Scrutiny Committee on the proposed cash limits, in conjunction with this item. The Chairman of the Education, Libraries and Heritage Scrutiny Committee, Councillor J L Gluza, moved receipt of the Committee's report.

In speaking to the recommendation, the Leader of the Council noted that the late announcement of additional funding had led to considerable additional work for officers, to a very compressed timescale. He expressed concern that it was likely that the Government had known when the provisional Revenue Support Grant (RSG) settlement was announced on 19th November 2003 that this additional funding would be available, and that the late announcement was a political move, unhelpful to local authorities. The Council was still required to submit its schools budget to the Department for Education and Skills by 31st December 2003. Public consultation on the budget proposals would start on 13th January 2004.

The Leader of the Council restated his commitment to a 6% Council Tax increase as this was, in his view, the maximum that people could reasonably be asked to pay. He reminded members that under the provisional RSG settlement announced on 19th November 2003, £12.5 million due to Cambridgeshire had been held back by the ceiling on funding increases. The Chancellor's subsequent announcement had slightly revised the ceiling, but had also made additional RSG available to local authorities. The overall effect for Cambridgeshire was that:

- The Council's Formula Spending Share (FSS), the Government's assessment of its spending needs, was unchanged
- The Council's entitlement to formula grant (RSG) had increased by £3.4 million, before the ceiling was applied
- Revisions to the ceiling would mean that Cambridgeshire would actually receive an additional £4.8 million in grant
- The effect of these changes reduces the loss of grant as a result of the ceiling to £11.1 million (£12.5m + £3.4m - £4.8m).

The Leader of the Council commented particularly on the requirements set by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills for schools budgets. These included achieving the national 4% per pupil minimum increase guarantee and 'full' passporting, i.e. passing on to schools the full amount of funding they had been assessed as needing according to the Formula Spending Share (FSS), as opposed to the lesser level of funding actually received through the ceiling applied to formula grant (RSG).

The Leader of the Council explained that the cash limits now proposed would allow the 4% per pupil increase to be achieved. They would not enable 'full' passporting to schools, but would slightly exceed 'partial' passporting, i.e. passing on that element of schools funding for which money had actually been received. Spending on schools would still exceed the Government's assessment of need (Schools FSS), but not to as greater an extent as in previous years.

The Chairman of the Education, Libraries and Heritage Scrutiny Committee, Councillor J L Gluza, reported that the Committee welcomed the additional money being made available to schools. However, the Committee continued to have a number of concerns, as set out in its report. These centred on the effect that limited funding increases and the requirement to make cashable efficiency savings would have on schools. It was anticipated that schools with existing deficits would see these deepen, more schools would go into deficit and financial recovery would become harder.

Councillor J L Huppert shared the concern of the Leader of the Council at the late announcement of the additional funding and commended the officers for their rapid work in recalculating the figures. He expressed concern at two assumptions made in the calculations: the level of income that would be generated by achieving Local Public Service Agreement targets and the assumed savings on debt charges. He asked the Leader of the Council what his spending priorities were, given that the Council would be spending at 20% over FSS on personal social services and at 0.8% below FSS on Education. This would be the first time that the Council's spending had been below FSS for Education. With regard to the schools budget, he asked to be advised of the cost to the Council of achieving the 4% per pupil increase. He expressed concern that the failure to achieve 'full' passporting to schools might mean that the Council would receive a direction on its schools budget from the Secretary for Education and Skills. He asked that public consultation on the budget include a range of options for Council Tax increases and suggested 6%, 8% and 10%. He urged the Leader to take account of the comments received and to alter his stated position on the Council Tax increase if the results indicated that this was appropriate.

Councillor A C Kent recognised the difficulties caused by inadequate Government funding for schools and noted that she would shortly be presenting a petition with over 1,000 signatures to the Minister for Local Government and the Regions. However, she expressed concern that with the cash limits now proposed, the Council would be still spending significantly less per pupil than its statistical neighbours. More than half of the County's secondary schools already had deficits. Funding to develop 14-19 initiatives would be very limited. Achieving the 4% per pupil increase would still mean that schools had to make 1% efficiency savings. The Secretary of State's definition of passporting would not be met, and it was likely that schools would lobby for a direction from him. Councillor Kent also highlighted concern at the impact that 2% cashable efficiency savings would have on other parts of Education, Libraries and Heritage, including the Youth Service, which continued to receive only half the funding recommended by the FSS, and central school support services. Echoing Councillor Huppert, she also questioned the Administration's priorities, noting its stated intention in 'Prospects' to spend at or above FSS on Social Services and Education, whereas in fact expenditure on Education would be £2 million below.

Councillor J L Gluza expressed concern that the Administration no longer aspired to bring Cambridgeshire's Council Tax into line with the shire county average and that it in fact appeared that it would be falling further behind. Whilst he recognised that not all parts of the County were prosperous and that some people were on fixed incomes, he suggested that residents did have the ability to pay a higher Council Tax than at present, to bring Cambridgeshire more closely into line with its neighbours. He noted that the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister was expecting local authorities to set 'low single figure' Council Tax increases, but argued that the main determinant for the size of the increase should be the size of the budget needed to provide proper services for the people of Cambridgeshire.

Councillor A J Bowen shared Councillor Gluza's concerns that Cambridgeshire's Council Tax had been kept deliberately low for a long time. He suggested that the Council, as well as central Government, should take steps to address Cambridgeshire's funding position.

Councillor A R Mair commented that the key issue was the adequacy of Government funding. Despite the additional £4.8 million now announced, Cambridgeshire was still £11.1 million short of its full RSG. It was therefore up to the Council to determine how best to distribute the financial burden between Council Tax payers and spending departments.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Libraries and Heritage, Councillor R Wilkinson, gave the costs of the 4% per pupil increase, as requested by Councillor J L Huppert. He emphasised that the 4% increase would be met and slightly exceeded. He recognised that there were competing needs within the Council and noted that with the additional funding, schools would still be £4.8 million short of 'full' passporting. Schools' budgets would be discussed more fully with the Schools Forum in January.

Councillor J Broadway welcomed the increase of the Environment and Transport cash limit by £400,000 in light of the additional funding announced. She noted that this money would now not have to be taken from the budget for highways maintenance. However, she expressed concern that cuts to the support the Council gave to Parish Councils for tree and hedge planting, which had been discussed at the November Environment and Transport Budget Advisory Panel, now appeared to have been implemented without due consideration through the rest of the budget process.

Councillor P J Downes commented on the need for clear and consistent information about the Council's position to be given. In the Director's report, it had been stated that although Cambridgeshire's Council Tax had been the third lowest of all County Councils in 2003/04, it had increased by an average of 9% per year in the last five years. Councillor Downes emphasised that other County Councils' Council Taxes had also increased significantly during this period. He also questioned the evidence for the assertion that public support for large increases was reducing, as he did not believe that it was possible consistently to benchmark the consultation responses. In addition, the Policy Scrutiny and Audit Committee had been advised in the previous year that the option of a 12% increase was the one that had received greatest support. He also commented that because of the Council's relatively low Council Tax, small percentage increases did not bring a large yield. He therefore asked for consultation documents to indicate the actual sums that would be generated, as well as possible percentage Council Tax increases.

Councillor I C Kidman recognised that the Labour Government was holding back £11.1 million of funding that Cambridgeshire had been assessed as needing. However, he noted that there had been similar discrepancies between assessed need and actual funding of local authorities under the previous Conservative Government. He also commented that historically there had been a low assessment of levels of need in Cambridgeshire, on which funding assumptions had been based. He urged the County to seek a fairer assessment of its levels of need and deprivation.

Councillor S V Brinton noted that the present local government finance system had been discredited in an Audit Commission report and needed fundamental review. She noted that the Minister for Local Government and the Regions had indicated that he would consider local authorities' overall positions before deciding whether to cap proposed Council Tax increases. Given the imposition of the RSG ceiling and the challenge of meeting the Secretary of State for Education and Skills requirements for the schools budget, she urged the Administration to consider setting a Council Tax increase higher than the 6% previously stated. Otherwise, she was concerned that cuts to essential services would ensue. Councillor Brinton also called on the Leader of the Council to approve the budget consultation process and the content of consultation materials after consultation with Group Leaders, as well as Cabinet members.

Councillor F H Yeulett, the Lead Member for Education Resources, thanked the Education, Libraries and Heritage Scrutiny Committee for its comments. He noted that the Council would now be meeting two of the three tests of the Secretary of State for Education and Skills on schools budgets. He emphasised that the shortages in the schools budget were due to the Government withholding funding, the need for which they had recognised, for the second year running.

Councillor S J E King commented that few members seemed willing to suggest a Council Tax increase higher than the 6% proposed. He challenged members, if they were not willing to countenance a higher increase, to put forward alternative budgetary measures to those currently proposed.

Summing up, the Leader of the Council, Councillor J K Walters, commented that no definite decision on the Council Tax increase had yet been taken. However, he would be making it clear during consultation that his preferred option was a 6% increase. He echoed Councillor King's comment that Opposition members had not to date proposed an alternative increase. With regard to the schools budget, he noted that he was not seeking a direction from the Secretary of State for Education and Skills and, now that the 4% per pupil increase was being met, thought that this was less likely to be received. Responding to Councillor Kent's question about the statement made in 'Prospects', he noted that the schools budget would be above FSS but that, because of the settlement announced by Government since the publication of 'Prospects', it would not be possible to spend at FSS across the whole of Education.

A vote was then taken and both recommendations were approved.

[Voting pattern: a) Conservatives in favour, Liberal Democrat and Labour Groups against, no abstentions; b) unanimous.]

2) Structure Plan Delivery

It was moved by the Lead Member for Strategic Planning, Councillor J E Reynolds, and seconded by the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, Councillor S F Johnstone, that:

- a) The County Council becomes a member of the Infrastructure Partnership; and
- b) The current Lead Member for Strategic Planning, Councillor J E Reynolds, be nominated as the County Council's board member on the Partnership.

On being put to the vote, the proposal was carried.

[Voting pattern: unanimous]

Key decisions for information

3) Huntingdon Town Centre

Councillor P J Downes welcomed the involvement of Huntingdonshire District Council in the development of plans for services in Huntingdon. He emphasised the importance of partnership working to deliver local authority services across organisational boundaries.

Other matters

- 4) Local Education Authority Strategy for Developing 14-19 Phase in Cambridgeshire
- 5) Examination and Test Performance in Cambridgeshire Schools 2003

175. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES: REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

It was proposed by the Leader of the Council, Councillor J K Walters, and seconded by the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor S V Brinton,

- a) To receive the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (Appendix 1 to the report to Council) and endorse the recommendations contained therein;
- b) To agree that, as required under the new Regulations, the existing Members' Allowances Scheme be revoked and a new scheme be introduced from 31st December 2003 to remain in force until 31st March 2004. This Scheme shall be identical to the Council's current Members' Allowances Scheme, with the exception of the payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance to the Council's Fire Authority Spokesmen, which shall cease from such time as the Fire Authority's introduces its own Allowances Scheme;
- c) That a new Members' Allowances Scheme, amended to take account of the Panel's recommendations, be introduced from 1st April 2004 (Appendix 3);
- d) That from 1st April 2004, all Councillors be eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme and that Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances count as 'income' for this purpose. However, given the Panel's comments about the suitability of the scheme, Members are urged to seek independent financial advice before applying to join.

Councillor M K Ogden spoke of the need for members' allowances to be sufficiently high to attract more younger people to stand for election as Councillors. He expressed concern that the rates now proposed would encourage only those who had sources of income other than from employment to stand for election.

On being put to the vote, the recommendations were approved.

[Voting pattern: all political Groups in favour; four abstentions – Councillors I C Bates, R L Clarke, P J Downes and M Farrar.]

176. WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Members noted that two written questions had been submitted under Rule 9 of the Council Procedure Rules:

- Councillor J L Huppert had asked the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, Councillor S F Johnstone, and the Leader of the Council, Councillor J K Walters, about the links between the widening of the A14 and the guided bus proposals and about funding for guided bus. Their response advised that although the widening of the A14 and the development of guided bus would be considered at separate public inquiries, both were part of an integrated package of measures being developed from the Cambridge to Huntingdon Multi-Modal Study. The Council would be brought detailed information on the funding of guided bus when asked to approve the Transport and Works Act application on 10th February 2004. However, the Leader had emphasised that the scheme would be funded through Government grant and developers' contributions, with no use made of the Council's revenue budget or reserves.
- Councillor M L Leeke had asked the Leader of the Council, Councillor J K Walters, how much additional income would be generated if the Council were to levy the average level of Council Tax for shire counties, and how many additional teachers or social workers or how much additional road maintenance this would pay for. The response advised that a levy at the average level would generate an additional £15 million, and showed how this could be spent on additional services. However, it was noted that if the Council Tax for the current year had been set at the county average, this would have required an increase of almost 20%, rather than the 9.2% increase actually levied. An increase of this scale was unlikely to be acceptable to the Government.

Copies of the questions and responses are available from Democratic Services.

177. ORAL QUESTIONS

Three oral questions were asked under Rule 9 of the Council Procedure Rules:

- Councillor P J Downes asked the Lead Member for Strategic Planning, Councillor J E Reynolds about the Government's recent announcement on airports in the East of England and in particular, the suggestion that Marshalls could relocate from Cambridge to Alconbury. Councillor J E Reynolds noted that the announcement had not referred specifically to Marshalls, but to a servicing facility; it would be up to Marshalls to determine its own future arrangements.
- Councillor M L Leeke asked the Cabinet Member for Social Services, Councillor J A Powley, about the plans being made by Social Services to respond to new legislation on asylum seekers, which included the possible withdrawal of benefits from them and the taking of their children into local authority care. As Councillor Powley had had to leave the meeting, the Leader of the Council undertook to ask him to respond to Councillor Leeke in writing.

- Councillor J L Huppert asked the Lead Member for Strategic Planning, Councillor J E Reynolds, for his views on possible development on Clay Farm and the former show ground in Cambridge and about comments made by Cambridge City Councillors about these sites. Councillor J E Reynolds stated that the Council's policies were set out in the Structure Plan.

A full transcript of the questions and responses is available from the Democratic Services Division.

178. MOTIONS

Two motions had been submitted under Rule 10 of the Council Procedure Rules.

Motion from Councillor C M Ballard on behalf of the Labour Group

Councillor C M Ballard proposed the following, which was seconded by Councillor J D Jones:

This Council requests Cabinet to collaborate with health and other partners in setting up a high profile campaign to publicise the range of available family benefits, along the lines of the Local Government Association's 'Quids for Kids' initiative. The objective is to minimise the impact of child poverty in our county, with a side benefit of maximising the funding base of our schools.

A number of members spoke of the importance of encouraging the take-up of welfare benefits by those people eligible to them. There was clear evidence of a correlation between household income and quality of life. Increased take-up of benefits would also lead to an increase in the Council's Formula Spending Share (FSS), as the level of benefits claimed was used as a measure of deprivation, which the FSS reflected. Members emphasised the importance of working with partner agencies who were already active in the field of benefits advice, such as the Citizens Advice Bureaux.

On being put to the vote, the motion was carried.
[Voting pattern: agreed unanimously.]

Motion from Councillor J L Huppert

Councillor J L Huppert proposed the following, which was seconded by Councillor S V Brinton:

Cambridgeshire County Council

1. Recalls that the Council Tax was brought in by the Conservative Government in 1993 on short notice to replace the unsuccessful Poll Tax, itself a product of a Conservative Government.
2. Notes that the national average Band D Council Tax bill has risen by £455, or 70%, since the Labour Government came into office in 1997;
3. Notes further that the average Cambridgeshire Band D Council Tax bill has risen by £326 or 69% since the Labour Government came into power nationally and the Conservatives locally in 1997;
4. Notes with great concern the major and unfair impact that these successive Council Tax increases have on many citizens, and recognises that this is substantially due to the way the Government has managed its grants to local authorities;

5. Regrets that the present system of local taxation takes no direct account of ability to pay;
6. Recognises that Council Tax therefore places a disproportionately high burden on residents with low incomes, such as many public service workers and pensioners;
7. Notes that the national cost of administering Council Tax in 2002/03 was £569 million and that it costs almost four times as much to collect £1 in Council Tax as it costs to collect £1 in income tax;
8. Recognises that the huge increase in the role of direct and ring-fenced grants, combined with rising costs and additional duties imposed by Government on local councils, has left many authorities, such as Cambridgeshire, with stark choices of huge cuts in services or massive increases in Council Tax, or a combination of the two;
9. Regrets that the present system of local government finance is so confusing and lacking in transparency that accountability for the tax levied is obscured, with very few citizens able to penetrate the Government's portrayal of every settlement as 'generous', regardless of the facts;
10. Notes that the forthcoming Cambridgeshire County Council budget will be affected strongly by the inconsistencies and obfuscation of the Government grant-making process, with an unforeseeable ceiling significantly reducing the level of grant to the County, in a manner more extreme than elsewhere in the country;
11. Welcomes the willingness of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, in its initial response to the local authorities 'Balance of Funding' consultation, to investigate seriously alternative methods of financing local government.

Cambridgeshire County Council therefore calls on the Deputy Prime Minister:

- a) To establish future funding settlements which provide sufficient mainstream grant for local authorities to ensure the provision of high quality, locally accountable public services;
- b) To replace the Council Tax system with a fairer system including a local tax based on income, consistent with the principle of progressive taxation, that the more one earns, the more one pays;
- c) To ensure that any future funding and taxation system has a high level of transparency, so that citizens can understand who is responsible for making budgetary decisions.

The following amended wording was proposed by Councillor J A P Eddy and seconded by Councillor V A Hearne-Casapieri:

Cambridgeshire County Council calls on the Deputy Prime Minister:

- a) To establish future funding settlements which provide sufficient mainstream grant for local authorities to ensure the provision of high quality, locally accountable public services; and
- b) To ensure that any future funding and taxation system has a high level of transparency, so that citizens can understand who is responsible for making budgetary decisions.

Members discussed the challenge of ensuring that local government taxes were simple, cheap to collect and fair. A number of differing views on previous, the present and possible future models were expressed.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was carried.

[Voting pattern: Conservative and Labour Groups in favour; Liberal Democrats against.]

The amendment therefore became the substantive motion and on being put to the vote was carried.

[Voting pattern: no one voting against.]

179. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES

The following membership changes were proposed by the Chairman of Council, Councillor R Driver, seconded by the Vice-Chairman, Councillor S B Normington, and agreed:

- Councillor A G Orgee to be appointed as a substitute member on the Education, Libraries and Heritage Scrutiny Committee
- Councillor A R Mair to replace Councillor V A Hearne-Casapieri on the Environment and Transport Scrutiny Committee
- Councillor V A Hearne-Casapieri to replace Councillor A R Mair as a substitute member on the Environment and Transport Scrutiny Committee
- Councillor J A P Eddy to replace Councillor A B Stenner on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Fire Authority.

[Voting pattern: unanimous]

Chairman: