



**SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL  
COUNCILLORS' BULLETIN  
ISSUE DATE 11<sup>th</sup> February 2004**

**CONTENTS**

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR COUNCILLORS**

1. Forthcoming Committee Meetings
2. Call-in Arrangements

**PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISIONS REPORTED FOR INFORMATION**

1. **Madingley**: Speed control cushions in High Street
2. **Boxworth**: Extension of 30 mph speed limit
3. Safer Routes to School – Church Street, **Great and Little Shelford**

**RESOURCES AND STAFFING PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISIONS REPORTED FOR INFORMATION**

1. Parish Precept Consultation
2. Final Local Authority Finance Settlement 2004 - 2005

**OFFICER DECISIONS REPORTED FOR INFORMATION**

1. Wildlife Enhancement Scheme: Grant award to **Fulbourn** Primary School
2. Arts Project Grant Aid: Grant award to **Gamlingay** Players
3. Community Development: Grant award to **Gamlingay** Resource Centre

**MINUTES AND AGENDAS REPORTED FOR INFORMATION**

1. Minutes from Cabinet meeting 29<sup>th</sup> January 2004.
2. Draft Conservation Advisory Group Minutes from the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2004, subject to confirmation on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2004
  - ❖ South Cambridgeshire Design Guide
  - ❖ Wildlife Enhancement Scheme
  - ❖ Trees and Hedgerows Partnership Scheme
  - ❖ Revised Operational Plan
  - ❖ Support for the Farmland Museum Development Plan
  - ❖ The Woodland Trust
  - ❖ St Denis Church, **East Hatley**
3. Minutes from Information and Customer Services Portfolio Holder meeting 13<sup>th</sup> January 2004

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR COUNCILLORS

### COMMITTEE MEETINGS

FROM 16<sup>th</sup> February to 20<sup>h</sup> February 2004

COMMITTEE MEETINGS			
FROM 16 <sup>th</sup> February to 20 <sup>h</sup> February 2004			
<b>MONDAY 16<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2004</b>	<b>10 am</b>	<b>Cabinet (Estimates)</b>	<b>Council Chamber</b>
<b>TUESDAY 17<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2004</b>			
<b>WEDNESDAY 18<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2004</b>			
<b>THURSDAY 19<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2004</b>			
<b>FRIDAY 20<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2004</b>			

### 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 18<sup>th</sup> February 2004 at 5pm**. All decisions not called in by this date may be implemented on **Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> February 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 PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO HOLDER**

Subject	Action Taken
<u>Madingley</u> : Speed Control Cushions in High Street.	Record of Consultation with Portfolio holder, Mrs J Hughes, Planning Policy, Area Planning Officer and Conservation Manager. Decision taken to agree proposal provided issues raised by the Conservation Manager are resolved satisfactorily
<u>Boxworth</u> : Extension of 30 mph speed limit	Record of Consultation with Portfolio holder, Mrs B Waters, Planning Policy, Area Planning Officer and Conservation Manager. Decision taken to agree proposal providing that further additional signs are not required. The existing signs should be relocated if necessary
<u>Safer Routes to School</u> – Church Street, Great and Little Shelford	Record of Consultation with Portfolio holder, Mrs JE Lockwood, CR Nightingale and Mrs LM Sutherland, Planning Policy, Area Planning Officer and Conservation Manager. Decision taken to support the principle as part of the Safer route to School scheme, in the interests of reducing vehicle speeds and creating a safer environment for pedestrians and school children within the area, provided the issues raised by the Conservation Manager are resolved satisfactorily.

## **DECISIONS MADE BY RESOURCES AND STAFFING PORTFOLIO HOLDER**

Subject	Action Taken
<u>Parish Precept Consultation</u>	Parish Councils were consulted on the proposed change to the payment date of the second precept installment. Five Parish Councils objected to the proposed change; these responses were considered by the Portfolio Holder and it was subsequently agreed that the second installment of the parish precept be paid no later than 30th September 2004.

**DECISIONS MADE BY RESOURCES AND STAFFING PORTFOLIO HOLDER**  
**continued**

Subject	Action Taken
<u>Final Local Authority Finance Settlement 04-05</u>	Details of the Final Local Authority Finance Settlement 2004-05 announced on the 29th January, show only marginal variations from those reported to Council on 11th December. On a like for like basis compared to 2003/04 adjusted, the increase is now £202,000 (3.5% increase compared to the original 2.4% increase announced in November):

<b>South Cambridgeshire District Council</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> January Final 2004/05 £'000	Council 11 <sup>th</sup> December Provisional 2004/05 £'000	Cabinet 27 <sup>th</sup> November Provisional 2004/05 £'000	Adjusted 2003/04 £'000
National Non Domestic Rate	3,568	3,569	3,569	4,552
Revenue Support Grant	2,370	2,380	2,302	1,184
Total Formula Grant	5,938	5,949	5,871	5,736
Increase	(11)	78	135	
Total increase over adjusted 2003/04	202	213		
Reduction in Formula Grant due to floors and ceilings	72	111	52	

**DECISIONS MADE BY OFFICERS**

Subject	Action Taken
<u>Wildlife Enhancement Scheme</u> Grant to Fulbourn Primary School	The Conservation Manager recommends approval of a grant award totalling £1500 to Fulbourn Primary School from the Wildlife Enhancement Scheme. The award represents approximately 50% funding towards a wildlife pond and garden, complete with viewing areas and basic equipment for nature viewing
<u>Arts Project Grant Aid</u> Grant to the Gamlingay Players for a film project with the young people of Gamlingay	Grant of £1,450 awarded to give young people an opportunity to put their opinions across through a creative medium and build their confidence. To give them experience of working with a professional film makers and composer and introduce them to the skills of filmmaking.
<u>Community Development</u> Grant to the Gamlingay Resource Centre to purchase equipment	Grant of £1,400 awarded to the Gamlingay Resource Centre to expand services available to local residents and widen its services to the local community.

## CABINET

At an extra-ordinary meeting of the Cabinet  
held on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2004 at 2.00 pm

PRESENT: Mrs DSK Spink     Leader and Conservation Portfolio Holder  
          RT Summerfield    Deputy Leader and Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder

Councillors: Dr DR Bard         Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder  
                  CC Barker             Environmental Health Portfolio Holder  
                  JD Batchelor         Information and Customer Services Portfolio Holder  
                  RF Collinson         Sustainability and Community Planning Portfolio Holder  
                  Mrs EM Heazell       Housing Portfolio Holder  
                  Mrs DP Roberts       Community Development Portfolio Holder

Councillors EW Bullman, RF Bryant, NN Cathcart, G Elsbury, TJ Flanagan, R Hall, CJ Gravatt, Mrs SA Hatton, SGM Kindersley, Mrs JE Lockwood, Mrs CAED Murfitt, JA Nicholas, R Page, WH Saberton, NJ Scarr, RGR Smith, Mrs LM Sutherland, Mrs VM Trueman, RJ Turner and AW Wyatt were in attendance, by invitation.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs MP Course, Dr SA Harangozo, Mrs JM Healey, MP Howell and JH Stewart.

### 1.     **Declarations of interest**

None declared.

### 2.     **Priorities and spending plans 2004/05 – 2006/07**

This extra-ordinary meeting of the Cabinet had been convened to allow all Members the opportunity to discuss the priorities and spending plans for 2004/05 – 2006/07 and the implications on the level of Council Tax. The Chief Executive highlighted the following changes which had been made to the final version of the report:

- Two tranches of Electronic Service Delivery (ESD) grants of £200,000 each were included in the predictions;
- Additional income from a revenue grant for growth area delivery had been included for the first year only as it was premature to assume it would be available in future years;
- The on-going costs for refuse collection and street cleansing had been reduced from £218,000 to £76,000;
- The figures assumed the previously-agreed commitment to £300,000 new spending and the savings of £146,000 already identified, for a total of £446,000;
- Predictions were based on existing decisions about the use of capital receipts; and
- Maintaining the Band D Council Tax at £70 would allow only the inescapable bids, the CASCADE / ESD bids and the bid for the Senior Strategic Housing Officer to be funded, the sum of which was £11,000 above the £446,000 already agreed.

The Chief Executive drew Members' attention to the effect on the General Fund Balance of continuing to subsidise the actual underlying Council Tax, which would be £156 in 2004/05.

Following consultation with their Group Members, the Group Leaders had met and decided to reject the Management Team recommendation to raise Council Tax by £30 in 2004/05. The Leader explained that officers had been acting properly in advising the Cabinet to raise Council Tax, but that the final decision would rest with Council. Cabinet would instead recommend that Council Tax be maintained at £70 and would re-examine the budget in the coming year to see if further savings could be identified.

## **Council Tax Increases and Capping**

Central government had selective capping powers for local government budgets. The recommendation to raise Council Tax by £30 in 2004/05 could result in South Cambridgeshire being capped as it would be an increase of 43%, although, as Members noted, the original level had been low to begin with. Historically, the Council had levied a low level of tax, including a six-year period during which no tax was levied at all, although this went largely unnoticed as the Council was the collection authority for other local taxes.

Councillor RF Collinson reported that the Labour group felt that the Management Team recommendations were realistic, but were not necessarily politically acceptable. Councillor NN Cathcart requested that Cabinet consider a phased introduction of Council Tax rises, noting that the reserves could not sustain continued subsidisation of the underlying Council Tax. He felt that a phased rise was more fair to the electorate than a large increase, and noted that the Leader had made a statement in South Cambs Magazine promising to maintain the Council Tax at £70 for 2003/04 but had at that time indicated that a rise would be necessary in the following year, and thus the electorate had been prepared for a rise.

Councillor R Page stated that, at the Council meeting of 25<sup>th</sup> September 2003, the Leader had said that there would not be any rise in Council Tax for 2004/05, and that neither officers nor Cabinet Members had spoken against this, although he felt it should have been obvious at the time that it was not possible to maintain the Council Tax level.

There was a need to increase the electorate's awareness of the serious problems arising from continued subsidisation of the underlying Council Tax and a consultation exercise could be run through South Cambs Magazine; however, the effectiveness of consultation was queried, given the disappointingly low turnout at recent consultation exercises.

The Finance and Resources Director advised that it was realistic to assume that the Council would be asked to account for its actions however a phased Council Tax rise was introduced. He asked Members to consider a 5% increase this year as the government may ask next year why the Council did not begin phasing in a higher Council Tax earlier. Members were reminded that the Minister of State for Local Government had already indicated that he would not look favourably on those authorities which did not increase Council Tax during a local election year.

## **Central Government Support**

Central government was placing an increased number of jobs on the Council, without providing any additional funding. The government grant to South Cambridgeshire District Council was nearly half of that paid to other Shire Districts: £48.06 per head of population compared to the average district grant of £84.10 per head of population, placing a greater financial burden upon taxpayers. Members would be raising this issue with the government and the Local Government Association (LGA).

## **Refuse Collection and Recycling Provision**

Councillor CC Barker cautioned that it was necessary to complete the new refuse and recycling collection scheme and funding must be found to finance the on-going revenue costs of the plastics recycling banks beyond the £50,000 DEFRA grant to start the project: the DEFRA grant was unlikely if the Council could not demonstrate a commitment to on-going funding. Councillor RT Summerfield suggested that the Community payment recycling incentive scheme paid to parish councils could be used to fund the on-going revenue commitment. Councillor Barker agreed, saying that it was not an easy decision to make, but that he felt that it was necessary in order to provide plastics recycling, a service often requested by residents.

Councillor Mrs JE Lockwood noted that it appeared to many residents that their refuse collection service had been halved and, as some residents had greater interest in refuse collection than recycling provision, they would not accept a Council Tax increase when they believed that their services had been cut.

Councillor NJ Scarr queried whether the Council could be more lenient in its conditions for the purchase of additional black wheeled bins and whether this could provide additional income for the Environmental Health budget. He agreed to receive a written response to his question.

### **Community Services**

The Head of Community Services explained that the decision not to fund a Community Strategy Projects Officer would cause the Council to struggle to deliver the Community Strategy as this would place an additional workload on the Community Services team.

### **Housing Department and Provision of Affordable Homes**

Councillor Mrs SA Hatton, stating that she believed some Council departments to be overstaffed and citing the Housing Department as an example, queried whether the Council could reduce its affordable housing costs to zero while continuing to provide affordable housing through the use of s106 agreements and planning conditions, transferring the expense to developers. She suggested that the Council, following full consultation with tenants, could give serious consideration to selling its remaining housing stock. Councillor Mrs DSK Spink noted that any resultant capital receipts could be used only on capital, not revenue, expenditure.

The Housing Portfolio Holder felt it would be unwise to take any action which could be seen as prejudicial to the Stock Options Survey. She refuted the comment that the Housing Department was overstaffed, noting that many officers were working overtime without pay. The Head of Shire Homes explained that the nature, focus and emphasis of housing work had changed: although the Council's own development work had reduced dramatically, partnership work with Housing Associations was facilitating more development, especially for Key Worker housing. The Council was using any available sources of funding, primarily through other agencies working in partnership, to continue to provide affordable housing.

### **Staffing**

Councillor Mrs DP Roberts queried whether officers were at the optimum capacity of working, whether the Council was over-staffed in some departments and whether superfluous officers could be transferred to areas in need of resources. Councillor Page blamed officers and fellow Councillors for mismanagement, noting that both groups had received pay rises recently, and agreed with Councillor Mrs Roberts that the Council was over-staffed. He accused officers of not responding to his requests for information and indicated that he would be reporting officers to the Standards Committee. Councillor Mrs Roberts stated that officers of all levels disregarded Members.

Councillor JD Batchelor noted that Cambridge City Council, which provided the same services to fewer residents, had more than twice the number of officers of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

### **Development**

Councillor Dr DR Bard explained that it was difficult to reach a consensus between the services the Council wants to provide, the services that residents want to see being provided and the services required by central government. Although the increased development in the District would increase the tax base in the future, it was necessary at

present to fund the development infrastructure and, in light of the Northstowe and Cambridge fringe bids being rejected, funds would have to be vired from the cycleways budget.

### **Access to Services Best Value Review**

Councillor Batchelor expressed his disappointment that the recommendations of the Access to Services Best Value Review could not now be implemented.

### **Cambourne Offices**

Councillor Page stated that Members and residents had been assured that the new offices at Cambourne would not be an additional expense to taxpayers and demanded that the figures for the construction and day-to-day running costs of the new offices be provided. The Leader promised that a written response would be forthcoming as officers had not prepared the necessary information to answer the request at this meeting. Councillor Page declared himself dissatisfied with this response and accused Cabinet of holding in contempt the opinions of all other Members. The Leader refuted this suggestion and assured all Members that they would receive a written response regarding the construction and running costs of the new offices.

Cabinet **RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL** that the draft budget be produced incorporating:

- a. a Band D Council Tax of £70 for 2004/05;
- b. £503,000 additional spend for 2004/05 with recurring costs of £457,000 in subsequent years (both figures gross of the identified savings of £146,000), reflecting:
  - i. only the inescapable bids of £94,000;
  - ii. the CASCADE bid of £224,000, Land and Property Gazetteer bid of £20,000;
  - iii. the senior Strategic Housing Officer bid of £43,000; and
  - iv. the plastics recycling banks bid of £50,000, the latter of which being subject to:
    - £50,000 costs in 2004/05 being funded by the DEFRA grant; and
    - the ongoing revenue costs of £42,000 being funded from 'savings' within the Environmental Health portfolio;
- c. the additional expenditure on refuse collection and street cleansing service estimated at £76,000.

---

**The meeting ended at 15.15**

---



## **CONSERVATION ADVISORY GROUP**

At a meeting of the Committee  
held on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2004 at 2.00pm

PRESENT: Councillor SJ Agnew - Chairman  
Councillor NN Cathcart – Vice-Chairman  
Councillor Mrs MP Course  
Councillor Dr JPR Orme  
Councillor RGR Smith  
Councillor RJ Turner  
Councillor AW Wyatt

Councillors Mrs JM Healey (Chairman, Development and Conservation Control Committee) and Mrs DSK Spink (Portfolio Holder for Conservation) attended the meeting by invitation.

Councillors Dr JA Heap and JH Stewart sent apologies for absence.

### **1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors NN Cathcart, Mrs MP Course and AW Wyatt declared personal interests in Minute no.7 as Trustees of the Farmland Museum.

### **2. MINUTES**

Subject to the addition of Councillor Dr JPR Orme's name to the attendance list, the Advisory Group authorised the Chairman to sign, as a correct record, the Minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2003.

### **3. SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DESIGN GUIDE**

The Conservation Area and Design Officer presented a progress report and gave a Powerpoint presentation on the Council's Design Guide, proposing a revised structure for the document that would ensure that it was relevant, appropriate and user-friendly.

He envisaged a consultation process that would enable the Council to publish the Design Guide in Autumn 2004. The intention was that the Guide would be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance within the new Local Development Framework.

Members made the following comments:

- consultation with parish councils could be useful, but they should be given a realistic timescale in which to respond, especially as some councils might want to seek advice from special interest groups within their villages
- the practicalities of the office relocation to Cambourne in May 2004, and the local elections in June 2004 should be taken into account when setting the programme for finalising the Design Guide
- the Guide should take the form of a loose-leaf document (or folder consisting of separate chapters) to facilitate cost-effective amendment as and when required
- the Guide should be specific in its protection and creation of habitats, and on the relationship between the Guide and the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance Note 8, relating to housing (including densities).
- the Council should insist on "buffer zones of biodiversity" between housing developments and the agricultural element of the surrounding countryside in order to enhance quality of life. These "buffer zones" should be excluded from the density calculation.

The Conservation Manager commented that the Local Biodiversity Action Plan would also be proposed as Supplementary Planning Guidance under the Local Development Framework, in due course.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RECOMMENDED** that the Portfolio Holder for Conservation

- (1) endorses the revised structure for the Design Guide, as set out in the Conservation Manager's report; and
- (2) supports the continued development of the Design Guide, noting the revised timetable, with the proviso that sufficient time be allowed for consultation (including with parish councils) and consideration of amendments before final publication.

#### **4. WILDLIFE ENHANCEMENT SCHEME ("WES")**

The Ecology Officer presented a report seeking the views of Members on how best to prioritise expenditure in 2004-05, and gave a Powerpoint presentation on the variety of wildlife enhancement projects supported in 2003-04, including that at Histon Green pond.

Members examined a copy of the application form to be completed by those seeking support through this scheme.

The Chairman congratulated the Ecology Officer for the success of the enhancement scheme to date, and suggested that, in 2004-05, the Council should offer awards for natural environment enhancement schemes it identified as being of note.

The Portfolio Holder for Conservation asked the Ecology Officer to prepare a short report on the wildlife enhancement scheme that could be presented to the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Review Team as evidence of how the Council was encouraging partnership working.

The Conservation Advisory Group **RECOMMENDED** that the Portfolio Holder for Conservation authorise continued funding for the Wildlife Enhancement Scheme in 2004/05 at current levels, and instruct officers

- (1) to inform all parish councils about the potential availability of the WES grants;
- (2) subsequently to inform local conservation groups and schools about the potential availability of the WES grants;
- (3) in late summer to undertake a media campaign to achieve a wider promotion of the WES to the general public;
- (4) to draft an article for the summer edition of the South Cambs magazine reporting on the range of projects supported to date; and
- (4) to maintain personal contact with the public.

#### **5. TREES AND HEDGEROWS PARTNERSHIP SCHEME**

The Trees and Landscape Officer addressed the meeting about the Trees and Hedgerows Partnership Scheme.

In particular, he informed Members about nuisance hedges as defined by the Anti-Social Behaviour Bill, currently before Parliament.

The Conservation Manager informed Members that Cambridgeshire County Council was considering whether or not to withdraw from the Partnership, and said that Members should consider how South Cambridgeshire District Council should react. The Portfolio Holder for Conservation asked that officers convey to the County Council this Council's grave concern

should the Scheme's future be jeopardised as a result of the County Council's withdrawal from it.

Members made the following points:

- before determining its future involvement in the Scheme, South Cambridgeshire District Council should await the decision of the County Council as to its position
- the Scheme had been a great success over the last ten years and had tremendous benefits for the countryside - in the five years to 2001-02, 23,000 trees and 45,000 metres of hedge had been planted.
- the Council should endeavour to ensure that the Scheme continued without a break
- parish councils could be asked to contribute financially

## **6. REVISED OPERATIONAL PLAN**

The Conservation Advisory Group received an initial report on the draft operational strategy for the delivery and enhancement of the Conservation service in line with the Council's Objectives and Priorities. As certain information was still outstanding, the issue would be discussed in more detail at the next meeting but, in the meantime, the Conservation Manager circulated copies of a document entitled *Conservation Service: Draft Operational Plan 2003/04 to 2005/06*.

The Conservation Manager gave a short Powerpoint presentation outlining the background to the Operational Plan.

## **7. SUPPORT FOR THE FARMLAND MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

The Conservation Manager circulated copies of a draft report entitled *Museum Grant and Heritage Initiative fund support for local museums in 2004-05*.

The Museums budget was controlled by the Community Development Section. However, the Portfolio Holder for Community Development had asked the Conservation Manager to consider supporting the next stage of the enhancements at the Farmland Museum from within the Heritage Initiatives Fund.

This item would be considered in detail at the next meeting of the Conservation Advisory Group, but Members were minded to endorse the Conservation Manager's recommendations, set out in the report, subject to any further developments or changes in circumstance.

## **8. THE WOODLAND TRUST**

Members noted that the meeting between South Cambridgeshire District Council and the Woodland Trust to discuss possible future partnership working had been postponed until the week commencing 36<sup>th</sup> January 2004.

One issue to be considered was the development of a 100 acre woodland area within the District. Members' initial reaction was that this was too ambitious a project in this part of the country, and that smaller woods would be more beneficial to the needs of local wildlife, and would receive greater community support. The Chairman asked the Conservation Manager to invite the Woodland Trust to present their proposals at the next meeting of the Conservation Advisory Group.

## **9. ST DENIS CHURCH, EAST HATLEY**

The Conservation Manager had addressed a public meeting in East Hatley on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2004, He circulated copies of a note made of the issues discussed at that meeting.

The following points were made:

- East Hatley Parish Council supported restoration of the tiled roof
- the Cabinet would need to be presented with all the options, and a logical case for proceeding with the preferred one
- options included
  - to seek planning permission for an appropriate conversion to residential or other uses to enable the disposal of the building
  - to sell the building – to the individual farming the adjacent land, to the Astor Estate, or on the open market
  - to give it away
  - as had been the original intention, to allow it to deteriorate gracefully as a nature reserve
  - to request that the churchyard be formally closed
  - to ask consultants to take over consideration of the future of St Denis Church in view of the considerable amount of the Conservation Manager's time having to be devoted to this issue
  - to take such steps deemed necessary to allow St Denis Church to become a stabilised ruin

---

The meeting closed at 5.00pm

---

## INFORMATION AND CUSTOMER SERVICES PFH

Meeting held on the 13th January 2004 at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillor JD Batchelor Councillor Mrs DSK Spink

GJ Harlock S Carroll  
SC May M Wylie  
David Hill for items 4 and 5

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**  
JS Ballantyne

2. **MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting of the 10th December 2003 confirmed as correct.

3. **MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING – 10TH DECEMBER 2003**

3.1 Corporate Identity (Min 3.2)

SC confirmed that the ideas being put forward were within the agreed cost.

3.2 Members Allowances (Min 12)

Noted that the upper age for joining the pension scheme was 70; but the upper age for contributing was to be verified.

SM

JB asked about the production of information for members. GJH reported that the County Council were talking of producing a leaflet; an idea of the timing was needed to determine whether the District needed to send its own information. It was assumed that eligibility for pensions would begin on 1st April 2004.

GJH/SM

4. **COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**

4.1 SC circulated a progress report on communications issues, highlighting the main items:

- media releases were still gaining 100% pick up
- the Cambourne office press day was to be on 22nd June
- lunchtime seminars would probably start in mid February continuing at a rate of at least 2 a month. Dates and rooms were being arranged. MW was to have the first session.

5. **SOUTH CAMBS MAGAZINE**

5.1 SC reported problems the publishers were experiencing in obtaining payment from some advertisers who were apparently reluctant to pay them rather than the Council. The publishers had suggested that the Council send out the invoices, possibly with a small reduction in the percentage of the fee allocated to the publishers.

5.2 Concern was expressed at this suggestion since the company had taken on the business offering a full service. A considerable cut in their fee would be required if the Council were to take over debt collection. It was considered that more information was needed and a meeting with the

publishers required at an early date. They should recover the outstanding debts, whatever arrangements were made for the future. **AGREED** that SC arrange a meeting; JB and David Hill also to be involved. **SC**

## 6. BUDGET EXAMINATION

### 6.1 Media and Information

Discussion centred on whether the budget for South Cambs Magazine could be reduced as it appeared that potential income was perhaps not fully being taken into account. SC advised that increasing advertisement fees was not an option; GJH suggested that staffing budgets should not be examined in this exercise since the costs would simply be recharged elsewhere.

Reducing the number of issues was not considered desirable since the magazine was the main means of communication with the public. JB believed that savings could nevertheless be made on the basis of figures presented and it was **AGREED** that SC and David Hill be requested to examine the budget figures in detail. **SC/DH**

### 6.2 ICT

£17,000 savings were offered, but these were from the overheads estimates already accepted and GJH suggested that the saving did not justify the amount of work required to make all the consequential amendments. He felt that worthwhile savings would require a revolutionary approach, such as the withdrawal of a service area.

It was concluded that there might be scope for permanent savings in later years, but not for 2004/05.

### 6.3 Electoral Services

JSB was understood to believe that there was scope for some savings.

### 6.4 Democratic Representation

The possible areas for savings – computers for members, seminars and courses, allowances – were discussed, but there was reluctance to cut the first two because of the potential for larger than usual numbers of new councillors in 2004. The allowances budget was based on 58 councillors from June, whereas there might be only 57. However, no provision had specifically been made for pension contributions for members and GJH suggested that the budget should be retained to cover this eventuality. No significant savings could therefore be identified.

6.5 It was therefore concluded that, other than any savings to be found in the South Cambs Magazine budget, the Information and Customer Services portfolio could offer no reductions for 2004/05.

## 7. OTHER ICT/ESD DEVELOPMENTS

MW reported that:

- The CASCADE project was progressing according to plan, with services live by the end of February. The physical link between this Council and the County should be resolved within a week.
- MW was the CASCADE Project Manager for the District, in place

of Bill Newman; the manager for the County side was now Mark Andrews. A temporary project co-ordinator (Maureen Abbott) had been appointed.

- The DIP project was progressing. Back scanning was proceeding as far as possible on existing resources; the aim being to take as little paper as possible to Cambourne.
- A contract had been signed with Northgate as the supplier of replacement HR and payroll systems. There were some problems with the consortium approach, but officers were determined that this would not delay this Council's plans.
- The GIS and Land and Property Gazetteer project was progressing. DSKS suggested that a presentation to all members might be useful. MW
- An evaluation of Electoral Registration software was taking place and the hope was that it would be operational in time to support the June elections. GJH queried whether this was a good time to be installing new software. MW
- Recruitment to new posts would take place if the CIP bids were accepted, but funding was not available until July. This was the cause of considerable disappointment, but all budgets had been prepared on the basis that new posts would only be filled from July, on advice from the Policy Team. JB queried whether this need delay recruitment since there would be balancing underspends from vacancies, but GJH reported that vacancies tended to be covered by agency staff. GJH considered, however, that the ruling about new posts should be changed for future years, GJH

## 8. FORWARD PROGRAMME

The only item for this portfolio was on corporate identity.

## 9. HOMEWORKING

Dale Robinson had circulated a draft policy to Management Team for consideration the following week. The intention was then to take it to the next Resources & Staffing PFH meeting for approval subject to no objections from the Information & Customer Services PFH at the next meeting. GJH

As DSKS would be away at the time of the relevant meetings, she asked to be sent a copy of the draft policy SM

## 10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

### 10.1 Elections

JB asked about plans for publicising how the combined election would work and stated that he would discuss this with JSB outside these meetings for speed. It was confirmed that the Head of Legal Services was no longer directly involved with Electoral Services.

### 10.2 Cambridge Office

GJH reported that Cambridge City had made a proposal, which the NOW Group was to consider that afternoon. MW was moving ahead on the basis that the Cambridge office would proceed.

10.3 Member Training Needs

JB was content with the proposal to ask the Scrutiny Committee to discuss ways of assessing members' training and development needs. He accepted an invitation to attend the Committee meeting.

10.4 Members' Diaries

A survey of members showed that some needed new diary pages now, whereas others were prepared to wait until meeting dates had been fixed. **AGREED** that standard diary inserts should be purchased for those members requesting them.

11. **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

Tuesday 10th February at 10.00 a.m.

Tuesday 9th March at 10.00 a.m.

Tuesday 20th April at 10.00 a.m.

The meeting closed at 12.20 p.m.