

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held on
Thursday, 28 November 2013 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Sue Ellington – Vice-Chairman

Councillors: Val Barrett, Trisha Bear, Francis Burkitt, Brian Burling, Tom Bygott, Nigel Cathcart, Jonathan Chatfield, Pippa Corney, Kevin Cuffley, Neil Davies, Simon Edwards, Alison Elcox, Roger Hall, Lynda Harford, Tumi Hawkins, Mark Hersom, Roger Hickford, Mark Howell, Clayton Hudson, Caroline Hunt, Peter Johnson, Sebastian Kindersley, Douglas de Lacey, Janet Lockwood, Mervyn Loynes, Ray Manning, Mick Martin, Raymond Matthews, David McCraith, Cicely Murfitt, Charles Nightingale, Tony Orgee, Robin Page, Alex Riley, Deborah Roberts, Neil Scarr, Tim Scott, Ben Shelton, Bridget Smith, Hazel Smith, Jim Stewart, Susan van de Ven, Bunty Waters, Aidan Van de Weyer, David Whiteman-Downes, John Williams and Nick Wright

Officers:	Alex Colyer	Executive Director, Corporate Services
	Jean Hunter	Chief Executive
	Fiona McMillan	Legal & Democratic Services Manager and Monitoring Officer
	Graham Aisthorpe-Watts	Democratic Services Team Leader

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Bard, Richard Barrett, Andrew Fraser, Jose Hales, James Hockney, Edd Stonham, Peter Topping, Robert Turner and Tim Wotherspoon.

53. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Sebastian Kindersley, Tony Orgee and Jim Stewart declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute number 61 as members of Cambridgeshire County Council.

Councillor Jonathan Chatfield declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute number 71(a) as he was employed by the Association of Train Operating Companies.

54. REGISTER OF INTERESTS

The Chairman reminded Members that they needed to update their register of interests whenever their circumstances changed.

55. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2013 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

56. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members noted the result of the Comberton by-election held on 21 November 2013 and welcomed Councillor Tim Scott to his first meeting of full Council.

Councillor Sue Ellington, Vice-Chairman, agreed to write to the former Councillor for Comberton, Stephen Harangozo, expressing the Council's thanks for his contributions, particularly with regard to climate change, conservation and the way in which he served the area he represented.

57. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions from the public had been received.

58. PETITIONS

No petitions for consideration by full Council had been received.

59. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS:**59 (a) Licensing (2003 Act) Policy: Review (Licensing Committee, 17 October 2013)**

Consideration was given to the revised Licensing (2003 Act) Policy, which the Licensing Committee considered at its meeting on 17 October 2013 and recommended for adoption.

Councillor Alex Riley, Chairman of the Licensing Committee, proposed that the revised Licensing Policy be adopted. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Mick Martin, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services.

A formatting error in the document was highlighted and the proposer and seconder agreed to amend their original motion to ensure that the document could be amended prior to its adoption.

With a unanimous vote Council **ADOPTED** the revised Licensing Policy, subject to the correction of a formatting error in the document.

59 (b) Future Housing Investment Plans (Cabinet, 19 November 2013)

Council considered the report presented to Cabinet on 19 November 2013 which outlined a pilot scheme for taking forward the Council's new housing company.

Councillor Mark Howell, Portfolio Holder for Housing, moved the following proposal:

"That Council:

- (a) Adopts the pilot proposal and action plan.
- (b) Approves the advance of £7m of funding to South Cambs Ltd on a secured basis funded from prudential borrowing in line with individual investment appraisals being developed before property acquisitions are made, requiring the prior approval of the Executive Director and Director of Housing in consultation with the Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder.
- (c) Instructs the Executive Director (Corporate Services) and the Director of Housing to develop the business case(s) for the further expansion of South Cambs Ltd and to report back with detailed recommendations to Cabinet by the Autumn of 2015."

Councillor Howell explained that the development of the company could enable the Council to meet a number of objectives, including:

- the generation of a revenue stream and capital gains for the benefit of wider Council services;
- meeting housing need and addressing gaps in the housing market, particularly in

respect of those people who were unlikely to be granted an affordable housing tenancy or who did not wish to join the housing register and were experiencing difficulties buying a house or finding a rental home;

- assisting economic development in the district by helping to provide good quality, flexible rental housing for the many local businesses that had workforces with a high turnover of staff;
- demonstrating place leadership and supporting community development by investing in the local district and working alongside other private and public sector bodies.

Councillor Edwards, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing, seconded the proposal and reflected on the significance of the proposed investment. He outlined a number of options available for the financing of South Cambs Ltd, such as through a bond issue, a loan by the Public Works Loan Board or pooling with other local authorities.

Councillor Sebastian Kindersley moved an amendment to the motion, inserting an additional paragraph to read:

“That the relevant Portfolio Holder set up a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group to work with the Executive Director (Corporate Services) and colleagues to explore the business case.”

This amendment was accepted by the proposer and seconder and became the substantive motion.

The following points against the motion were noted during debate:

- the proposal was being promoted as the Council meeting housing need, when it was really about creating revenue;
- there was currently not a business plan in place, meaning that there was no indication as to what the return on the investment would be and how long it would take to breakeven;
- a risk assessment should be carried out before the commencement of the pilot in order to identify major risks at the earliest possible opportunity;
- it was unclear what experience the Council had with regard to business management;
- it could be argued that the Council had a conflict of interest due to its responsibility to provide council housing and affordable housing;
- the rentable income that could be achieved would not provide enough of a return on the investment in the area of South Cambridgeshire;
- the Council would be at an unfair advantage in the rental market due to it being able to borrow money at an extremely competitive rate compared to other investors.

Members sought reassurance that South Cambs Ltd would not impact the authority's council or affordable housing provision. It was emphasised that South Cambs Ltd was completely separate from the council housing and affordable housing stock, as well as the Housing Revenue Account which was specifically ring-fenced and protected.

Speaking in favour of the motion, the following points were noted during debate:

- the amendment to set up a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group would provide Members with an opportunity to have an input and scrutinise the business case;

- the Council's membership was made up of individuals who had very relevant experience and expertise that could be drawn upon for a pilot scheme such as this. A number of Members were residential landlords, for example, or owned and ran their own businesses;
- the proposal was for a pilot scheme that saw the Council making the most out of an innovative opportunity;
- the Council had no choice but to look at ways of generating additional revenue as the government continued to cut local government funding streams;
- the proposed scheme was not misleading and was very clear that one of its main aims was to generate revenue for the Council;
- the aim for South Cambs Ltd was to breakeven due to any profit made by the company resulting in the payment of tax.

The Council setting up its own company had raised governance issues, some of which were discussed at the last meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee. Members of the Corporate Governance Committee would continue to consider issues of governance as they arose during the pilot.

Voting on the substantive motion, with 38 votes in favour, 5 votes against, 4 abstentions and 1 not voting

Council:

- (a) **ADOPTED** the pilot proposal and action plan.
- (b) **APPROVED** the advance of £7m of funding to South Cambs Ltd on a secured basis funded from prudential borrowing in line with individual investment appraisals being developed before property acquisitions are made, requiring the prior approval of the Executive Director (Corporate Services) and Director of Housing in consultation with the Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder.
- (c) **INSTRUCTED** the Executive Director (Corporate Services) and the Director of Housing to develop the business case(s) for further expansion of South Cambs Ltd and to report back with detailed recommendations to Cabinet by the Autumn of 2015.
- (d) **REQUESTED** that the relevant Portfolio Holder set up a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group to work with the Executive Director (Corporate Services) and colleagues to explore the business case.

Councillor Deborah Roberts requested that her vote against the motion be recorded.

60. **REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE AND THE ALLOCATION OF SEATS TO COMMITTEES**

Consideration was given to a report which provided the Council with an opportunity to review the authority's political balance and allocation of seats to committees following the Comberton by-election held on 21 November 2013.

Having been proposed by Councillor Ray Manning, Leader of the Council, and seconded by Councillor Simon Edwards, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing, Council unanimously **APPROVED**:

- (a) The allocation of seats, as set out in Appendix A to the report.

- (b) The nominations of the political groups to seats on committees, as set out in Appendix B to the report.

61. CAMBRIDGESHIRE LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME

Council considered a briefing note on the Cambridgeshire Local Government Pension Scheme following a recent presentation to the Council's Corporate Governance Committee.

Councillor Francis Burkitt, Chairman of the Corporate Governance Committee, proposed that the briefing note be received and presented some key highlights regarding governance, administration, investments and performance of the Scheme, together with information on the current financial position and contributions made by South Cambridgeshire District Council.

Councillor David McCraith, Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Governance Committee, seconded the proposal.

In discussing the content of the briefing note Members thanked Councillor Burkitt for the report and suggested that the Council should continue to monitor the Cambridgeshire Local Government Pension Scheme's performance.

Council **RECEIVED** the briefing note.

62. UPDATES FROM MEMBERS APPOINTED TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Sue Ellington, Vice-Chairman, informed Council that an update report by Councillor Robert Turner on the Swaffham Internal Drainage Board had been circulated to Members outside of the meeting, for information.

63. THE FARMLAND MUSEUM - COUNCILLOR PETER JOHNSON

A report by Councillor Peter Johnson was considered on the Farmland Museum.

Council **NOTED** the report.

64. WATERBEACH LEVEL INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARD - COUNCILLOR PETER JOHNSON

A report by Councillor Peter Johnson was considered on the Waterbeach Level Internal Drainage Board.

Council **NOTED** the report.

64 (a) Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group Overview and Scrutiny Committee Liaison Group - Councillor Bridget Smith

A report by Councillor Bridget Smith on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group Overview and Scrutiny Committee Liaison Group was considered.

Council **NOTED** the report.

64 (b) Cambridgeshire Health and Wellbeing Board - Councillor Sue Ellington

A report by Councillor Sue Ellington on the Cambridgeshire Health and Wellbeing Board was considered.

Council **NOTED** the report.

65. COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE 2014/15

Council unanimously **AGREED**:

(a) That meetings of full Council in 2014/15 be held as follows:

Thursday 5 June 2014 (Annual General Meeting) – 2pm
Thursday 24 July 2014 – 2pm
Thursday 25 September 2014 – 2pm
Thursday 27 November 2014 – 2pm
Thursday 29 January 2015 – 2pm
Thursday 26 February 2015 – 2pm
Thursday 23 April 2015 – 2pm

(b) That an extraordinary meeting of full Council be held on Thursday 13 March 2014 to consider the Local Plan.

66. QUESTIONS ON JOINT MEETINGS

There were no questions by Members on joint meetings.

67. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**67 (a) From Councillor Sebastian Kindersley**

Councillor Sebastian Kindersley asked the Portfolio Holder for Localism and Planning Policy the following question:

"Could we know what steps the Council is taking to prevent the future of South Cambridgeshire being compromised by opportunistic development proposals on sites which are not identified in the upcoming Local Plan as suitable for development?"

Councillor Pippa Corney, Localism and Planning Policy Portfolio Holder, said that the Council's Local Plan would be its biggest defence against opportunistic development. She reminded Members that the consultation closed on 14 October 2013, the results of which would be published shortly. A Localism and Planning Policy Portfolio Holder Meeting was scheduled to be held in February 2014 to consider and discuss the responses received to the consultation. An extraordinary meeting of the Council on 13 March 2014 would then be held to determine whether or not the Plan was suitable for submission to the Planning Inspectorate. Councillor Corney emphasised that the quicker the Local Plan was submitted the more weight it would have and the more confident she would be in the Council being able to defend itself.

67 (b) From Councillor Bridget Smith

Councillor Bridget Smith asked the Leader of the Council the following question:

“Please could the Leader give an update on the progress that is being made in the current consultation between South Cambridgeshire District Council and City with the County Council about the provision for housing support for elderly people and indicate how, now that this provision is to be available to people living in their own homes as well as those in sheltered housing, we might cope with the extra demand?”

Councillor Mark Howell, Housing Portfolio Holder, answered this question and stated that Cabinet had considered this issue as part of an exempt report at its last meeting. He confirmed that the Council had entered into a tendering process and would be holding discussions with Cambridgeshire County Council regarding the provision of these services.

Councillor Smith claimed that only 5% of elderly people living in their own homes currently received support, meaning that the remaining 95% potentially needed support to ensure that they too remained in their own homes. As a supplementary question she asked whether this could be achieved with existing staffing levels.

Councillor Howell responded by saying that existing staff were currently coping with demand and there was capacity to take on more customers. He added that if demand did exceed capacity then it would be necessary for people to join a waiting list.

67 (c) From Councillor Lynda Harford

Councillor Lynda Harford asked the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing the following question:

“Members will be aware that the two year period of wage protection for those staff adversely affected by Job Evaluation is about to come to an end. There is no doubt that this Council has sought to carry out this regrettably necessary project in exemplary fashion but it has nonetheless had a significant impact on our staff. May we please be told what proportion of those originally identified as facing salary cuts remain in the Council's employment?”

Councillor Simon Edwards, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Staffing, explained the process undertaken as part of Job Evaluation that the Council went through over two years ago. He reported that 47 employees received increases in their salaries, with 114 having their salaries reduced as a result of posts being evaluated. In order to support those employees whose salaries had been reduced he explained that salary protection was put in place for a period of two years. This was due to end in April 2014 and employee's wage slips had been specifically designed to highlight the exact amount per month that had been protected so that they were aware of the revised amount they would receive from the end of the salary protection. Councillor Edwards set out some of the other supportive measures that had been put in to assist those members of staff adversely affected by Job Evaluation such as training and development, one-to-one coaching and career guidance, study leave and access to flexible retirement. Of the 114 employees whose salaries had reduced, Councillor Edwards reported that 82 would remain employed by the Council with reduced salaries as a consequence of the Job Evaluation process.

Councillor Harford was concerned that some service areas seemed to have suffered more than others in going through Job Evaluation and questioned as a supplementary whether this presented any risks with regard to a loss of skills and experience.

Councillor Edwards referred to the recently approved Organisational Development Strategy which outlined the Council's culture and workforce planning. He highlighted talent management initiatives that were currently in place and stated that the Council would continue to support personal development and provide employees with opportunities to widen their expertise through avenues such as participation in corporate project teams or secondments into other service areas.

67 (d) From Councillor James Hockney

Councillor Sue Ellington, Vice-Chairman, asked the following question to the Leader of the Council on behalf of Councillor James Hockney:

"Will the Leader please update this Council on the current situation regarding Police Community Support Officers?"

Councillor Ben Shelton answered this question as the Council's Police Champion and stated that Police Community Support Officers were a vital part of the local community. A high number of responses from the public were received to a consultation held in the summer as part of a review that was being undertaken. A decision on this review was scheduled to be made soon, the outcome of which would be reported to the Police and Crime Panel in due course. Councillor Shelton stated that he would update the Council on this decision at the relevant time.

68. NOTICES OF MOTION

68 (a) Standing in the name of Councillor John Williams

Councillors Tom Bygott, Pippa Corney, Neil Davies, Douglas de Lacey, Janet Lockwood, Charles Nightingale, Ben Shelton, Jim Stewart and Aidan Van De Weyer declared non-pecuniary interests in this item as members or substitute members of the Cambridge Fringes Joint Development Control Committee and did not participate in the discussion or voting of this motion.

Councillor John Williams moved the following motion:

"This Council continues to prioritise the provision of a new railway station at Chesterton sidings to serve the Cambridge Science Park and the northern part of Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire. This station will not only unlock employment potential for South Cambridgeshire residents by enabling the Cambridge Science Park to be fully developed, but also ease traffic congestion for our residents and link the guided bus way more directly to the national rail network. It is a vital part of the emerging Local Plans for both this district and the city. This Council seeks reassurance from the Secretary of State for Transport that the project continues to have the highest priority within Government to enable the Cambridge sub region to support the UK economy going forward."

Councillor Williams thought it was very timely to reaffirm a commitment towards a new railway station at Chesterton sidings and highlighted that it would contribute to the regeneration of the wider area.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Susan van de Ven.

Councillor Simon Edwards supported the concept of the motion, but wanted to make it clear that this was an issue which the District Council had no jurisdiction over. He therefore moved a number of amendments so that the motion read as follows:

“That this Council continues to acknowledge the necessity of a new railway station at Chesterton sidings to serve the Cambridge Science Park, Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire. This station will not only unlock employment potential for South Cambridgeshire residents by enabling the Cambridge Science Park to be fully developed, but also ease traffic congestion for our residents and link the guided bus way more directly to the national rail network. It is a vital part of the emerging Local Plans for both this district and the city. This Council seeks reassurance from Cambridgeshire County Council that the project continues to have the highest priority to enable the Cambridge sub-region to support the UK economy going forward.”

The proposer and seconder of the motion accepted these amendments, which became the substantive motion and was unanimously **AGREED** by Council.

69. CHAIRMAN'S ENGAGEMENTS

Council noted those engagements attended by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman since the last Council meeting, as set out on the agenda.

The Meeting ended at 3.40 p.m.
