

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held on
Thursday, 26 February 2015 at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor David Bard – Chairman
Councillor Sue Ellington – Vice-Chairman

Councillors: Richard Barrett, Val Barrett, Anna Bradnam, Francis Burkitt, Brian Burling, Nigel Cathcart, Jonathan Chatfield, Pippa Corney, Kevin Cuffley, Simon Edwards, Andrew Fraser, Jose Hales, Roger Hall, Lynda Harford, Philippa Hart, Roger Hickford, Mark Howell, Caroline Hunt, Peter Johnson, Sebastian Kindersley, Mervyn Loynes, Ray Manning, Mick Martin, Raymond Matthews, David McCraith, David Morgan, Cicely Murfitt, Charles Nightingale, Tony Orgee, Deborah Roberts, Neil Scarr, Tim Scott, Ben Shelton, Bridget Smith, Hazel Smith, Jim Stewart, Robert Turner, Bunty Waters, Aidan Van de Weyer, David Whiteman-Downes, John Williams, Tim Wotherspoon and Nick Wright

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Henry Batchelor, Tom Bygott, Neil Davies, Alison Elcox, Tumi Hawkins, James Hockney, Douglas de Lacey, Janet Lockwood, Robin Page, Alex Riley, Edd Stonham and Peter Topping.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Brian Burling declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in item number 8(c) as a rate payer and indicated that he would leave the meeting upon consideration of this item.

3. REGISTER OF INTERESTS

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

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 29 January 2015 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the deletion of the word 'to' in minute number 8(b) at the end of the fourth sentence from the bottom of page four.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Tim Wotherspoon, Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Transportation, invited Members of the Council to attend a workshop on viability that had been scheduled to be held on 9 March 2015 for Members of the Northstowe Joint Development Control Committee.

6. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

No questions from the public had been received.

7. PETITIONS

No petitions for consideration by Full Council since the previous meeting had been received.

8. TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS:**8 (a) Corporate Plan Priorities 2015-2020 (Cabinet, 12 February 2015)**

Councillor Whiteman-Downes, Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Customer Services, presented a report on the Council's revised Corporate Plan for 2015-20 and proposed that it be approved. Councillor Whiteman-Downes outlined that the Plan had been refreshed to reflect the changing needs and priorities of the Council. The long term vision and aims of the Council would remain unchanged and specific objectives would continue to fall under the three main categories of 'engagement', 'partnerships' and 'wellbeing'.

Councillor Ray Manning, Leader of the Council, seconded the proposal.

The following points were made by Members in debating the revised Plan:

- the objective regarding working with communities should feature ahead of the objective to develop the property company pilot scheme under the 'engagement' heading, in order to convey the right message;
- the Plan still lacked specific information about how each objective would be measured and key performance indicators;
- the Plan should include reference to the Council's relationship with the Government under the 'partnerships' heading, particularly in respect of the Northstowe development and the Greater Cambridge City Deal;
- the issue of conservation was not referred to at all within the Plan;
- the Plan should set out a commitment to protect those rural villages in South Cambridgeshire that were at threat of large scale speculative developments;
- the objectives within the Plan should do more to support the long term vision of South Cambridgeshire being the best place to live, work and study in the country.

(NOTE – Councillor Orgee attended the meeting at this stage of proceedings).

Councillor Manning, as seconder of the proposal, referred to the Council's relationship with Government and agreed that this was an important issue. He reported that, as Leader of the Council, he regularly met with and lobbied Ministers on a range of issues relating to South Cambridgeshire and would continue to do so.

Councillor Whiteman-Downes acknowledged the comments made and highlighted that the numbered objectives were not in a priority order and were all corporate priorities. He emphasised that the Plan had gone through an extensive consultation process, involving workshops for Members and consideration at meetings of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and Cabinet where comments had been taken into account. Councillor Whiteman-Downes agreed that communities in the district had to be protected, which was why the Council's long term vision of ensuring that South Cambridgeshire was the best place to live, work and study in the country remained in the Plan.

Voting on the proposal, with 31 votes in favour, 12 against and 1 abstention, Council **APPROVED** the Corporate Plan, setting out the Council's vision, objectives and actions for 2015-2020 and incorporating key performance measures under each aim.

Enough Members as prescribed in the Council's Standing Orders requested a recorded vote. Votes were therefore cast as follows:

In favour

Councillors David Bard, Richard Barrett, Val Barrett, Francis Burkitt, Brian Burling, Pippa Corney, Kevin Cuffley, Simon Edwards, Sue Ellington, Andrew Fraser, Roger Hall, Lynda Harford, Roger Hickford, Mark Howell, Caroline Hunt, Mervyn Loynes, Ray Manning, Mick Martin, Raymond Matthews, David McCraith, Cicely Murfitt, Charles Nightingale, Tony Orgee, Neil Scarr, Tim Scott, Ben Shelton, Robert Turner, Bunty Waters, David Whiteman-Downes, Tim Wotherspoon and Nick Wright.

Against

Councillors Anna Bradnam, Jonathan Chatfield, Jose Hales, Philippa Hart, Peter Johnson, Sebastian Kindersley, Deborah Roberts, Bridget Smith, Hazel Smith, Jim Stewart, Aidan Van de Weyer and John Williams.

Abstention

Councillor Nigel Cathcart.

(NOTE – Councillor David Morgan was not in attendance for the consideration of this item).

8 (b) Medium Term Financial Strategy (General Fund Budget 2015/16 including Council Tax Setting), Housing Revenue Account (including Housing Rents), Capital Programme 2015/16-2019/20 and Treasury Management Strategy (Revised 2014/15 and 2015/16)

Councillor Simon Edwards, Deputy Leader and Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder, proposed the Medium Term Financial Strategy and associated elements as set out in the agenda, subject to a revised version of Appendix A1 which corrected some typographical errors and was circulated at the meeting. Putting forward the proposal, Councillor Edwards made the following points:

- further reductions in government grant funding would mean the Council receiving £830,000 less in 2015/16 than it did in the previous year;
- the Medium Term Financial Strategy's savings target had been reduced to £670,000, as £400,000 had already been saved as a result of the restructure of waste services and the introduction of new waste collection rounds. In addition, more modelling had taken place since November on business rates which had indicated a slightly more favourable position than originally anticipated;
- the Strategy included an increase in Council Tax of 1.99%, which equated to an annual increase of £2.45 per band D home. Councillor Edwards acknowledged that any increase in Council Tax was regrettable but stated that the proposed increase was modest, being below the inflation rate, and would still see South Cambridgeshire as having one of the lowest levels of Council Tax in the country;
- in terms of fees and charges, the Council had to breakeven in respect of the Local Land Charges service and was not allowed to make a profit, so the Strategy included a proposal to reduce fees and charges for the service to

facilitate this. Building Control fees and charges would remain unchanged in view of the fact that work was ongoing with regard to a Building Control shared service. An increase fees for the Council's planning pre-application service was proposed as part of the Strategy;

- other shared services proposals for ICT and Legal Services would seek to deliver further savings. Additional savings had also been identified through the waste services joint working with Cambridge City Council, as well as through improved procurement and license renewals. The Strategy also sought to make better use of South Cambridgeshire Hall to increase its income potential;
- the Housing Revenue Account remained unchanged and continued to provide £4.5 million every year for the new council house build programme for the next five years, with that amount due to increase thereafter;
- £5 million had been allocated in the Infrastructure Reserve Fund as a contribution to the A14 improvement scheme, funded via New Homes Bonus. The first £1.8 million of New Homes Bonus receipts in each year would be used to offset expenditure previously covered by the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant. It was also proposed that a proportion of New Homes Bonus receipts in each year would be contributed towards the Greater Cambridge City Deal;
- the Capital Programme included a proposal to invest £500,000 in solar panels for the car park at South Cambridgeshire Hall and at the Waterbeach Depot. The £500,000 should be recovered within seven years of their introduction, subject to the detailed business case currently being worked up.

(Councillor David Morgan attended the meeting at this stage of proceedings).

In conclusion, Councillor Edwards reflected on the next ten years and stated that the proposed Medium Term Financial Strategy worked on the assumption that Government grant funding would cease altogether by 2020. The Council's housing company had been established to bridge that shortfall and he emphasised the importance of making South Cambridgeshire District Council truly sustainable and self-sufficient. He took this opportunity to thank Alex Colyer, Executive Director (Corporate Services), John Garnham, Head of Finance, Policy and Performance, and their teams for the work they had done throughout the year and in preparing this proposed budget.

Councillor Mark Howell, Portfolio Holder for Housing, seconded the proposal and explained that the 2.2% inflationary figure to be applied in this year's rent was in line with revised government guidelines and also reflected the September 2014 Consumer Price Index, which now had to be used instead of the Retail Price Index. The average rent per week would therefore be £103.95.

The following points were made by Members in debating the proposed budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy:

- the proposed budget was being complacent with regard to the New Homes Bonus and the required increase in affordable housing. The Council's affordable housing policy of 40% was not being adhered to by large scale developers, with Northstowe and the Wing development cited as two examples where the affordable housing element would be as low as 20%. It would therefore be very difficult to achieve the levels of New Homes Bonus stated within the proposed Strategy, which was already committing part of this funding stream to the A14 improvement scheme and the Greater Cambridge City Deal;
- more details should be provided regarding the savings targets and headline savings for 2015/16, together with additional income streams such as the renting of office space at South Cambridgeshire Hall;

- funding of the Council's sheltered housing scheme should be monitored carefully in future years;
- the budget did not include any reference to conservation;
- clarification was sought on the level of New Homes Bonus that would be contributed to the Greater Cambridge City Deal, in terms of whether it was a residual amount or a specific amount;
- clarification was sought as to where the loan of £7 million to the Council's housing company featured in the accounts;
- it was very important for the Council to become self-sufficient, which was what this proposed budget sought to achieve.

Councillor Edwards confirmed that it was proposed for the Council to contribute 40% of New Homes Bonus receipts in 2015/16 and 50% from 2016-17, which was in line with the County Council and City Council contributions. The details relating to anticipated New Homes Bonus receipts were set out in Appendix B5 of the report. He also referred Members to Appendix A1, which included an item for borrowing of £7 million for 2014/15. This was where the Council's loan to its housing company appeared in the accounts.

Voting on the proposal, with 31 votes in favour, 1 against and 13 abstentions, Council:

- (a) **APPROVED** the Capital Programme and the associated funding up to the year ending 31 March 2020 as set out in Appendix A1 of the report included in the supplementary agenda, as circulated at the meeting.
- (b) **APPROVED** the revenue estimates for 2015-16 in the General Fund summary as set out in Appendix B1 of the report.
- (c) **APPROVED** the precautionary items for the General Fund, as set out in Appendix B2 of the report.
- (d) **APPROVED** the Medium Term Financial Strategy for the General Fund, as set out in Appendix B3(A) of the report, based on the assumptions contained within the report.
- (e) **APPROVED** the fees and charges proposed for 2015-16 as set out in Appendix B4 , including those relating to the planning pre-application service.
- (f) **RESOLVED** that the Executive Management Team be instructed to identify additional income or savings of £670,000 from 2015-16.
- (g) **RESOLVED** that the Council Tax requirement for 2015-16 is £7,478,550.
- (h) **RESOLVED** that the Council sets the amount of Council Tax for each of the relevant categories of dwelling in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 on the basis of a District Council Tax for general expenses on a Band D property of £125.31 plus the relevant amounts required by the precepts of Parish Councils, Cambridgeshire County Council, the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner and the Cambridgeshire Fire Authority, details of those precepts and their effect to be circulated with the formal resolution required at the Council meeting.

- (i) **APPROVED** the Housing Revenue Account estimates and the rent increase for the financial year ending 31 March 2016, as set out in Appendices C and C1 of the report, with the rent increase being in accordance with rent restructuring guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government.
- (j) **APPROVED** the service and other charges for housing services for the financial year ending 31 March 2016 as set out in Appendix C2 of the report.
- (k) **APPROVED** the Housing Revenue Account business plan summary for the next 30 years to 31 March 2045 as set out in Appendix C3 of the report.
- (l) **APPROVED** the Borrowing and Investment Strategy for the year to 31 March 2016 as set out in Appendix D1 of the report.
- (m) **APPROVED** the prudential indicators required by the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities for the year to 31 March 2016 as set out in Appendix D2 of the report.
- (n) **RESOLVED** that the Executive Director (Corporate Services) be given delegated authority to issue the final version of the Estimates Book, incorporating the amendments required from the Council's decisions.
- (o) **RESOLVED** to commit a proportion of New Homes Bonus receipts in each year to the Greater Cambridge City Deal, amounting to 40% in 2015/16 and 50% from 2016-17 onwards as set out in Appendix B5 of the report.

In addition to resolution (g) above, Council **AGREED** the following statutory resolution in respect of the Council Tax for 2015/16:

That the following amounts be now calculated by the Council for the year 2015-16 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:

- (a) **£88,348,234** being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (2) (a) to (f) of the Act (gross expenditure including parish precepts, the Housing Revenue Account and additions to reserves)
- (b) **£76,315,960** being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) (a) to (d) of the Act (gross income including the Housing Revenue Account and use of reserves)
- (c) **£12,032,274** being the amount by which the aggregate at (a) above exceeds the aggregate at (b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the Act, as its council tax requirement for the year (net expenditure to be met from council tax) being the district amount of £7,478,550 and the parish precepts of £4,553,724

- (d) **£201.61** being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year (average council tax for a band D property for the District including parishes)
- (e) **£4,553,724** being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (parish precepts)
- (f) **£125.31** being the amount calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no special item relates (average council tax for a Band D property for the District excluding parishes), the amounts being for each of the categories of dwellings shown below in **Table 1**
- (h) In accordance with Section 34(3) of the Act, the basic amounts of council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a special item relates are shown by adding the amounts for band D for the District Council in **Table 1** and Appendix A of the report.
- (i) In accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands are shown by adding the amounts for each band in **Table 1** and Appendix A of the report.

That it be noted that for the year 2015-16 Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority have stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings as shown in Table 1:

Table 1	Band A £	Band B £	Band C £	Band D £	Band E £	Band F £	Band G £	Band H £
County Council	762.84	889.98	1017.12	1,144.26	1,398.54	1,652.82	1,907.10	2,288.52
Police & Crime Commissioner	120.90	141.05	161.20	181.35	221.65	261.95	302.25	362.70
District Council	83.54	97.46	111.39	125.31	153.16	181.00	208.85	250.62
Fire Authority	42.84	49.98	57.12	64.26	78.54	92.82	107.10	128.52

and

- (j) That the Council, in accordance with Section 30(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the amounts set out in Appendix B of the report as the amounts of council tax for the year 2015-16 for each of the categories of dwellings shown in Appendix B.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION IN RESPECT OF SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX

Including the precepts from the County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Fire Authority and all of the parishes, the formal Council Resolution would produce a Council Tax for a band D property of:

		£	%
	p		
District Council	General Expenses	125.31	+1.99%
	Special Expenses for Parish Precepts (average)	76.30	+0.87%
County Council		1,144.26	+1.99%
Police Authority		181.35	+0%
Fire Authority		64.26	+0%
Total		1,591.48	+1.62%

On these figures the Council Tax would range from £1,010.12 for Band A to £3,277.24 for Band H before any discounts or benefits.

Appendix C of the report showed the General Fund summary including Parish precepts and the final Formula Grant figure.

A recorded vote was held further to the requirements of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014 and Council Standing Order 16.6. Votes were therefore cast as follows:

In favour

Councillors David Bard, Richard Barrett, Val Barrett, Francis Burkitt, Brian Burling, Pippa Corney, Kevin Cuffley, Simon Edwards, Sue Ellington, Andrew Fraser, Roger Hall, Lynda Harford, Roger Hickford, Mark Howell, Caroline Hunt, Mervyn Loynes, Ray Manning, Mick Martin, Raymond Matthews, David McCraith, David Morgan, Charles Nightingale, Tony Orgee, Neil Scarr, Tim Scott, Ben Shelton, Robert Turner, Bunty Waters, David Whiteman-Downes, Tim Wotherspoon and Nick Wright.

Against

Councillor Deborah Roberts.

Abstention

Councillors Anna Bradnam, Nigel Cathcart, Jonathan Chatfield, Jose Hales, Philippa Hart, Peter Johnson, Sebastian Kindersley, Cicely Murfitt, Bridget Smith, Hazel Smith, Jim Stewart, Aidan Van de Weyer and John Williams.

8 (c) Swavesey Byeways Rate 2015/16

Having declared a disclosable pecuniary interest, as referred to in minute number 2, Councillor Brian Burling left the meeting for the consideration of this item.

Councillor Robert Turner, Portfolio Holder for Planning, proposed the Swavesey Byeways maintenance and levy rate as set out on the agenda. Councillor Sue Ellington, Vice-Chairman of the Council, seconded the proposal.

Council unanimously **AGREED** to:

- (a) Maintain the current level of byeway maintenance for the period 2015/16.
- (b) Levy a rate at £1 to fund the required maintenance for the period 2015/16.

9. QUESTIONS ON JOINT MEETINGS

Councillor David Morgan, in reference to a leaflet he had received about a joint meeting at Addenbrooke's hospital, asked whether any vetting took place regarding the content of such publications. This particular leaflet contained the logos and names of a number of companies and gave the impression that they all supported the points made at the joint meeting, which he felt was misleading.

Councillor Nick Wright, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, stated that the meeting was an informal meeting for those businesses located on the site at Addenbrooke's hospital where they had been invited to discuss their points of view about the future of the site and opportunities for the future. Councillor Wright explained that the leaflet simply set out the views that had been put forward at that informal meeting, so he felt that it would be inappropriate for the Council to interfere with the publication.

10. QUESTIONS ON THE GREATER CAMBRIDGE CITY DEAL

Councillor Bridget Smith, Member of the Greater Cambridge City Deal Joint Assembly, referred to the last meeting of the City Deal Executive Board and asked whether the public would be able to witness proper debate and have a clear explanation of how decisions were made at future meetings of the Board, in order to avoid the perception of decisions having already been agreed by Board Members before meetings took place.

Councillor Ray Manning, Leader of the Council and Vice-Chairman of the Greater Cambridge City Deal Executive Board, responded by saying that Board Members had not agreed anything before the last meeting of the Board. He was of the opinion that the Executive Board had to be dynamic in its decision making and that it was not always necessary to hold long debates in order to reach a final decision on something. He agreed that it was important for people to understand how the Board came to its conclusions.

Councillor Van de Weyer thought that there was a lack of clarity over the role of the Joint Assembly, and asked Councillor Manning for an explanation.

Councillor Manning perceived the Joint Assembly as having a pre-scrutiny role, with comments and recommendations feeding into the Board on the important decisions it was expected to make. He explained that the Chairman of the Joint Assembly had a standing item on the agenda for Board meetings where he or she could present a report on any comments or recommendations coming forward from the Joint Assembly.

Councillor Sebastian Kindersley asked Councillor Manning if he could explain the strategic vision for the Executive Board.

Councillor Manning responded by saying that the overarching strategic vision for the Greater Cambridge City Deal was that of a Combined Authority, comprising of a formal

structure within which partners would work together. This, however, required a change in legislation which could take a number of years to become enacted. He reflected on the way in which the City Deal had developed so far, in partnership with the City Council, County Council, the Local Enterprise Partnership and the University, and was pleased that politics had not played a part in the governance or delivery of the City Deal agenda. He acknowledged, however, that this was a risk for the future, which was why he felt that a Combined Authority was the right approach.

11. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

11 (a) From Councillor Bridget Smith

Councillor Bridget Smith, Leader of the Opposition, asked the following question:

“How many households require assisted bin collections and how many incidents have there been of assisted bin collections being missed since the new contracts were implemented?”

Councillor Mick Martin, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services, reported that 983 households had officially registered as requiring assisted bin collections and that a monthly cycle would see the collection of 4915 assisted bins. In the first month of the revised collection rounds Councillor Martin reported that 132 assisted bins had been missed and that this figure had reduced to 47 for the month of January. He explained that there had been some confusion with the change in collection rounds. In some circumstances the original crews, out of good will, had provided assisted collections for residents who had not actually been registered on the database for requiring an assisted collection. When the new rounds were introduced the new crews only undertook assisted collections for those residents included on the database, therefore missing those residents not on the database who assumed they were registered and would previously have had an assisted collection.

Councillor Smith, as a supplementary question, asked whether there were any plans in the next five years to withdraw or start charging for assisted collections, or start charging for any other bin collections.

Councillor Mick Martin confirmed that there were not any plans to withdraw or start charging for assistance collections, or charge for any other bin collections.

11 (b) From Councillor Aidan Van de Weyer

Councillor Aidan Van de Weyer asked the following question:

“As we are now seeing the larger applications for speculative developments in the wake of the Waterbeach appeals come through to the Planning Committee, what attempts has the Council been making to ensure that the impact of the policy void in so many areas, most notably transport, healthcare and education, can be mitigated?”

Councillor Robert Turner, Portfolio Holder for Planning, responded by saying that there was no policy void in respect of transport, healthcare and education matters and that, even without the five year supply, the sustainable development and viability test would apply.

Councillor Van de Weyer was concerned with what he perceived as being a lack of engagement by representatives of organisations responsible for transport, healthcare and education with these applications and the subsequent strategic impact. As a supplementary question he asked for the Portfolio Holder's views.

Councillor Turner outlined that these organisations would be statutory consultees as part of the planning process that would be followed when processing applications and had to be consulted.

11 (c) From Councillor Tim Scott

Councillor Tim Scott asked the following question:

“Will the Leader confirm the current situation with regard to homelessness in South Cambridgeshire?”

Councillor Mark Howell, Portfolio Holder for Housing, answered the question by stating that of the 75 case work decisions between 1 April 2014 and 30 December 2014, 54 households were considered to be statutorily homeless. This compared to 145 household case work decisions made between the same period in 2013, with 109 households considered to be statutorily homeless.

Councillor Howell reported that much more work on this issue now focussed on prevention and between 1 April 2014 and 30 December 2014 the Council had prevented 160 cases of homelessness from occurring in comparison to 119 in 2013.

It was also noted that the average monthly expenditure on Bed and Breakfast accommodation had reduced from £2,075 during 2013/14 to £575 for the first six months of 2014/15. However, there had been a short term increase over the winter months, primarily due to providing emergency severe weather provision to rough sleepers, together with a short term reduction in temporary accommodation whilst the new hostel was being completed.

Councillor Scott took this opportunity to praise the Council's team for the very difficult job that it did to alleviate homelessness in South Cambridgeshire. Councillor Howell echoed this and added his thanks to Members of the Council for their support.

11 (d) From Councillor Ben Shelton

Councillor Ben Shelton asked the following question:

“Will the Leader confirm that this Council is doing all it can to help young people with regard to employment opportunities in the district, especially with apprenticeships?”

Councillor Nick Wright, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, outlined that South Cambridgeshire District Council saw apprenticeships as a vital way of introducing and nurturing new talent to a career in local government. Three apprenticeship schemes were currently in operation at the Council, with two also in place at Mears. This tied in with the corporate target to employ at least one apprentice within each of the Council's directorates.

Councillor Wright also reported that there was a commitment as part of the Greater Cambridge City Deal to deliver 420 additional apprenticeship schemes in the Greater Cambridge area over the next five years.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Shelton asked what this Council was doing to promote anyone interested in starting their own business.

Councillor Wright informed Members that the Council was supporting new businesses through a business support workshop programme. Workshops to date had been very well attended and further sessions would be held in March and April. Three sites were also being looked at across the district for the creation of incubator units in order to support starter businesses.

11 (e) From Councillor Hazel Smith

Councillor Hazel Smith asked the following question:

“I am pleased that the senior members responsible for Planning have written to support the Judicial Review into Eric Pickles' decision to remove Section 106 requirements on developments of fewer than 11 houses. Please could the Leader or Planning Portfolio Holder explain where we are with this challenge and how it is affecting planning decisions. How many affordable houses which we expected to get on smaller sites this year will have been lost?”

Councillor Robert Turner, Portfolio Holder for Planning, reported that the Chairman of the Planning Committee had written to the Secretary of State on 23 December 2014 outlining the implications for South Cambridgeshire District Council and asking that South Cambridgeshire be treated as a Designated Rural Area. This would reduce the effect of the Ministerial statement to affect only schemes of five homes or fewer.

West Berkshire Council and Reading Borough Council had sought a Judicial Review of the Government's actions, seeking the quashing of the policy declared in the Ministerial statement and related changes to the National Planning Policy Guidance. The Council was seeking its own Counsel advice regarding possible steps for South Cambridgeshire District Council to introduce the Community Infrastructure Levy ahead of the Local Plan being adopted, which could potentially accelerate Community Infrastructure Levy receipts by a number of months.

Council Turner had recently made a Portfolio Holder decision which stated that the Council would take the following action regarding the issuing of planning applications for sites of fewer than 11 homes with a combined gross floor space of 1,000 square metres:

- a) to issue permissions without a Section 106 Agreement, in accordance with Government policy;
- b) to use a condition requiring an Affordable Housing Scheme for all planning permissions where such a contribution would have been required through a Section 106 Agreement.

The decision also stated that the Council would write to the Department for Communities and Local Government outlining the impact of the 'rule of 5' and seeking an extension to October 2015.

Councillor Smith asked, as a supplementary question, how many affordable houses expected on smaller sites this year will have been lost.

Councillor Turner said that the answer was none.

11 (f) From Councillor Jonathan Chatfield

Councillor Jonathan Chatfield asked the following question:

“Given the proven benefits of cycling for both personal health and the environment, what is being done to promote rural cycling between the villages of South Cambridgeshire?”

Councillor Tim Wotherspoon, Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning and Transportation, outlined that ‘Policy TI/2: Planning for Sustainable Travel’ promoted cycling within the Local Development Framework and emerging Local Plan, as follows:

- development must be located and designed to reduce the need to travel, particularly by car, and promote sustainable travel appropriate to its location;
- provision of new cycle and walking routes that connect to existing networks, including the wider Rights of Way network, to strengthen connections between villages, Northstowe, Cambridge, market towns and the wider countryside;
- provision of secure, accessible and convenient cycle parking in accordance with Policy TI/3.

The Transport Strategy for Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire that supported the two Local Plans also set out hard and soft measures, including infrastructure, such as cycleways and parking, and encouraging behavioural change.

Councillor Wotherspoon cited examples of the funding streams available to facilitate cycleway improvements, together with examples of recently opened routes and high quality provision.

He reported that work was progressing on a Transport and Health Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, which was anticipated for completion in April 2015. The Council was also developing a health referral scheme to offer walks and cycle rides over a period of eight weeks for people with low grade mental health issues.

The BikeBus Explorer service was another example shared with Members, launched by the Council in July 2014, that encouraged walking and cycling between villages via a network of trails on a route grid. Councillor Wotherspoon described other examples of initiatives the Council had promoted or held in order to encourage cycling in South Cambridgeshire.

Councillor Chatfield, as a supplementary question, asked whether the Portfolio Holder stood by the views of the Leader of the Council at a recent meeting of the Greater Cambridge City Deal Executive Board where he said that cycleways were not the answer to reducing congestion for people driving into Cambridge from South Cambridgeshire.

Councillor Wotherspoon stated that the Council itself and the administration and leadership of the Council was committed to promoting cycling in South Cambridgeshire. He provided a lengthy response to the supplementary question, setting out the views of a number of correspondents on the issue of rural cycling, together with statistical analysis by way of 2001 and 2011 census information and data compiled by the Office for National Statistics.

Councillor Wotherspoon outlined his support for what the Leader actually said at the meeting of the Executive Board, which was in relation to Park and Ride and that Park and Ride had two meanings: to park and catch the bus or park and ride a bicycle the remaining two miles into the city centre.

12. NOTICES OF MOTION

No Notices of Motion had been received.

13. CHAIRMAN'S ENGAGEMENTS

Council noted engagements attended by the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman since the last meeting, as set out on the agenda, subject to an amendment with regard to the event on 16 February 2015 which was attended by the Vice-Chairman on behalf of the Chairman.

The Meeting ended at 3.55 p.m.
