

CABINET: MINUTES

Date: 18th May 2004

Time: 10.00 am – 11.23 am

Present: Councillor K Walters (Chairman)

Councillors: S Johnstone V H Lucas
A Melton L J Oliver D R Pegram J A Powley
J Reynolds R Wilkinson and F H Yeulett.

Apologies: None

Also in Attendance:

Councillors: P Downes, S Brinton* J Gluza, A Kent, and
M McGuire.

* For part of the meeting only.

491. MINUTES

It was resolved:

To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 27th April 2004 as a correct record.

492. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None Received

493. ISSUES ARISING FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

A) MEMBER LED REVIEW ON THE EFFECTS OF GENDER ON EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE YEAR 7 TESTING – REPORT OF THE EDUCATION, LIBRARIES AND HERITAGE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chairman invited Councillor Gluza, the Chairman of the Education, Libraries and Heritage Scrutiny Committee to present the report.

It was reported that following the results of a questionnaire sent to all Cambridgeshire schools to seek their views about the proposal the Scrutiny Committee had given further consideration to the original recommendation of the Member Led Review on the implementation of standardised testing at year 7. Having considered all the evidence the Committee's view was that without the introduction of a standardised test across all County Secondary schools, the Council would not be in a position to measure accurately improvements in performance taking place within schools.

Cabinet noted that only 65% of schools had responded to the questionnaire; and that 52% of respondents supported the idea of a Countywide approach to

testing. When asked about supporting the costs of the test, 30% of respondents were prepared to pay the full cost.

In addition to concerns of imposing a requirement that would fetter schools' autonomy, Cabinet considered that more work should be undertaken with schools to explore the costs and benefits of this initiative.

It was resolved:

- 1) To ask officers to undertake further consultation with schools on the potential benefits of a single approach to standardised testing and approaches to meeting the cost of implementation of any such scheme.
- 2) That the officers provide a further report to also include detailed information on the benefits to pupils of undertaking these tests.

**B) POLICY SCRUTINY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE (PSAC) 14TH MAY 2004
CALL-IN OF CABINET DECISION - RESHAPING THE ORGANISATION –
PROCESS**

Cabinet has received a report on the call in of the decisions on the Reshaping the Organisation made at the Cabinet meeting on 27th April to mandate the Chief Executive to begin a process of consulting with Members, Management College and Trade Unions and to draw up outline proposals for organisational change to be presented to the Cabinet in the Summer 2004.

The Chairman of PSAC Councillor Downes was invited to present the report To Cabinet. PSAC having reviewed the decision and being provided with an expanded and up-dated schedule on the proposed process for the review, had decided they did not wish to refer the matter back to the Cabinet for reconsideration, but referred the following views for Cabinet's consideration including:

- That all Members should be provided with opportunities to comment on the proposals.
- That regular progress updates should be provided to Members and staff.
- That a seminar should be held on 18th June to explain the restructuring proposals to Members.
- That the full Council should make the final decisions on the restructuring proposals.

It was resolved:

- 1) To note and support the views expressed by the Scrutiny Committee on the process for reshaping the review; and
- 2) To agree that full Council should make the decision on the restructuring.

C) EDUCATION LIBRARIES AND HERITAGE (ELH) SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 14TH MAY - CALL-IN OF THE CABINET DECISION – PROVISION OF YOUTH SERVICE IN ST NEOTS

Cabinet received a report back on the call-in of the decisions made at the Cabinet meeting on 27th April to approve the provision of youth service facilities in St Neots at Ernulf Community School and Longsands College. This decision had been taken in line with established Council policy to place community facilities, wherever possible and appropriate, on school sites.

Councillor Gluza, the Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee, reported that the Committee, having reviewed the Cabinet's decision, had accepted the rationale for the agreed provision and had therefore not referred the decision back for further consideration. They did however comment, that as both facilities were sited to the east of the river, they wished to support appropriate provision for the community of Eaton Socon, to the west of the river. The scrutiny committee also wished to see further direct consultation with the young people of St Neots, regarding the facilities to be provided at the two agreed sites. In addition Councillor Downes asked that the rationale for the funding arrangements which currently divided the resources on a two thirds basis allocation in favour of Ernuf Community College to only one third to Longsands College should be further looked into.

Cabinet accepted the comments from Scrutiny Committee and the Chairman reported that there would be a further report once officers had received details of the business case from the Town Council regarding a youth centre at Eaton Socon. The report would also pick up on the other points raised by the Scrutiny Committee.

It was resolved:

- 1) To note the views of the scrutiny committee in the provision of Youth Services in St Neots; and
- 2) To note that a further report on the proposals for supporting the Town Council's provision of a youth centre at Eaton Socon would be presented to a future meeting of Cabinet.

494. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN (BVPP) 2004/05

Cabinet received the draft of the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) for 2004/05. Under the Local Government Act 1999 the Council is required to produce an annual Best Value Performance Plan. The Government considers the Plan to be a key vehicle for reporting improvements across all local authority services.

The Plan had been written to meet both the statutory requirements and also as an integral part of the Council's Policy Framework being complementary to the Council's Budget Book and Prospects (Corporate Plan 2004-08) as approved by Council on 30th March 2004. The BVPP would also be used to assess performance against the Council's Public Service Agreement that will form the basis for any interim payments payable in 2004/05.

The Policy Scrutiny and Audit Committee had also considered the BVPP and had highlighted that the use of “Smileys” symbols could be misleading, as the happy/sad face symbols only indicated if targets had been met or missed and could give a misleading impression about performance, especially where performance had greatly improved but may have just fallen short of a specific target. It was agreed that it was too late to radically change the format this year but their use would be reviewed and consideration could also be given to providing a commentary against each performance indicator. As a public document, there was support for continuing with easily recognisable symbols.

The following minor changes were suggested to the Best Value Performance Plan document:

Page 4 under section headed “Community Safety”

In the third line more description required regarding the phrase “under the influence”.

Page 7 First bullet point under “Improving Communications” deleting the word “Out and replacing with “our” so it reads “Listening and involving our public in”

Page 8 - Diagram to be updated to include the Single Education Plan.

Page 9 in the second box on the text relating to enhanced contribution to Lifelong Learning to update the reference to “community education” as this was out of date terminology and required to be changed to include separate references to Adult and Community Learning and the Youth Service.

It was resolved:

To recommend that the Council approves the Best Value Performance Plan for 2004-05 subject to any detailed changes agreed by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council following consideration by Cabinet and the Policy Scrutiny and Audit Committee and the updating of performance data.

495. ACQUISITION OF LAND FOR NEW WASTE MANAGEMENT FACILITIES

Cabinet received a report setting out the land requirements and resourcing implications following the identified need for the County Council, as the Waste Disposal Authority, to acquire sites for the provision of new waste management facilities in the County, as part of the Private Finance Initiative Procurement (PFI) Project.

The Medium Term Service Priorities (MTSP) provision of £0.5M for land acquisition in 2004/05, was only sufficient to finance the options and fees.

The recommended approach was therefore:

- (i) To seek through negotiations with various parties to secure that the PFI contractor funds the purchase. Failing this to –

- (ii) Seek to fund the land purchase through the normal capital programme prioritisation process from capital receipts (or possibly from government-supported expenditure). Failing this to –
- (iii) Fund the land purchase through Prudential Code borrowing, but *only* on the understanding that a positive business case was available, showing that the full costs of this route were lower than those of the alternatives remaining after (i) and (ii) above.

In terms of using compulsory purchase powers to obtain necessary land, Cabinet was reassured that such use would first require agreement by Cabinet.

It was resolved:

- 1) To note the land requirements and resourcing implications, and agree the appointment of agents to take land acquisition forward as set out in section 2 of the officers' report;
- 2) To approve the funding approach set out in §3.2 of the officers' report;
- 3) To endorse the use of Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) processes, subject to the need for them being set out clearly in public communications and that any proposed CPO's would be subject of reports for Cabinet approval.

496. PROPOSED ROUNDABOUT AT JUNCTION OF THE A605/B671 ELTON COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER (CPO)

Between 1999 and 2003 this existing priority junction was the site of 8 accidents involving nine casualties, including one fatality, with the majority of collisions involving vehicles turning right from the side road in front of eastbound traffic.

Following public consultation, the overwhelming majority of local people supported the provision of a roundabout to address fully the current safety concerns. This option was considered the best solution by officers in terms of best value considerations and was also the least environmentally invasive solution. One objection had been received from Sir William Proby of Elton Estates who owned the land required for construction and who put forward an alternative scheme to ban right turns onto and off the A605 at the existing junction, to be supported by a physical barrier. Cabinet also considered the reasons he had provided for opposing the roundabout scheme. Cabinet received advice that this alternative scheme fell outside what was considered standard highway design, and would require more land to implement. The proposal would also create potential hazards as outlined in the officers' report.

There was a request to ensure that the roundabout should be designed to be environmentally sympathetic using timber to ensure empathy with the natural landscape.

Having fully considered the two options and noting the overwhelming public support for the provision of a roundabout,

It was resolved:

- a) To agree to make the Compulsory Purchase Order for the proposed roundabout at the A605 / B671 junction, Elton.
- b) That the Traffic Regulations be approved for advertising and consultation.
- c) To agree to the Portfolio holder for Transport and Waste responding on behalf of the Council to the letter received from Sir William Proby of Elton Estates.

497. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF HIGHWAYS MAINTENANCE AND NETWORK MANAGEMENT

Cabinet received a report setting out the substantive points arising from the Audit Commission's Best Value Review of Highways Maintenance and Network Management.

The report concluded that the Council provides a good two star service that has excellent prospects for improvement. Cabinet asked that its congratulations were passed on to staff in the Environment and Transport Directorate.

The areas identified for further improvement, as set out in the officers' report, were now being addressed in a five years improvement plan and were to be incorporated in the Directorate Delivery Plan, The Divisional Plan and individual appraisal goals.

It was resolved:

To note the findings and the recommendations of the Audit Commission Inspectors.

498. CAMBRIDGESHIRE'S SECOND LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICES AGREEMENT (LPSA)

Cabinet received a report on the progress being made in relation to preparations for Cambridgeshire's second Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA).

A positive response had been received from Central Government to the initial proposed LPSA framework, including improvement themes and supporting topics submitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). The government had invited the Council to make a second LPSA submission covering performance indicators and additional requests for freedoms and flexibilities by end of May 2004.

The report to Cabinet provided the proposed set of performance indicators by which the LPSA could be measured with topic groups covering each area, as set out in an appendix to the bound minutes. It was noted that the County

Council was still in discussion with the Department of Transport regarding shared priorities for transport, particularly in relation to bus use, congestion and accessibility, as possible areas for inclusion within the LPSA. It was stressed that any alternative targets agreed would only be on the basis that they replaced other targets.

It was highlighted that although there were no planned indicators for the more able, gifted and talented children under the section "Improving Educational Attainment", this was being addressed separately by the Single Education Plan.

While Pump priming of approximately £1.3m would be available, there was concern expressed that this might be insufficient to cover the full cost of all topic proposals, officers were therefore asked to seek partner contributions.

It was resolved to:

- a) Note the progress being made towards the agreement of Cambridgeshire's second LPSA.
- b) To delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to approve the submission of Cambridgeshire's LPSA performance indicator set to ODPM including agreeing any substitution of performance indicators subsequently agreed with the Department of Transport.

499. BUDGET MONITORING 2003/04

Cabinet received a report summarising the financial results for revenue, capital and Trading units to the end of March and including forecast outturn results for 2003/04. The report on the outturn would be presented to Cabinet in July, following closure of the accounts in May and June.

Revenue Spending

There was an overall overspend to March 2004 of £4.5m (3%) on services, (Excluding Education Self Managing Institutions (SMIs) and Partnerships . with Health) The principal area of overspend was Social Services but this had continued to reduce as a result of the action plan now in place. The forecast outturn overspend for the year for Social Services would be an overspend of £4.85m. The Learning Disability Partnership was now showing an overspend of £1.362m at year-end which was being addressed by the 3 year recovery plan.

Capital Spending and Forecasting

T Social Services and Environment and Transport were expected to spend in line with their gross budgets. Slippage was anticipated in the Education, Libraries and Heritage and Policy programmes. Overall, the latest forecasts of spending were slightly below budget.

Capital Financing

Expenditure had again been delayed on Devolved schools capital, Cambourne new premises and the development of the Heritage Centre premises. This has resulted in a lower forecast for Education, Libraries and Heritage. The latest forecasts for Social Services and Environment and Transport suggest that the programme would be met without the anticipated slippage.

Capital receipts to the end of March totalled £13.7m, with utilised capital receipts being at the forecast figure of £11m.

It was resolved:

- 1) To note the financial results for Revenue and Capital to the end of March 2004; and
- 2) To note that there might be a change to the forecast outturn figures once the accounts were closed.

500. MONITORING OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF JOINT REVIEW OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Cabinet noted the latest progress report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Joint Review.

Officers estimated that £13m would be required from the County Council and key partners to fully implement the recommendations of the Joint Review and that full implementation of all the proposals was not affordable at the present time. The detail of the breakdown of the £13m was set out in appendix 3 to the officers' report. In setting out the additional resource requirements, it was noted that in the next budget round it would be necessary to assess and prioritise those recommendations requiring additional resources against other priorities.

At the present time Cabinet confirmed that they did not support any reduction in the current level 4 eligibility criteria for adults and older people, noting that other authorities currently operating at level 3 were either in financial difficulties as a result of the raised expectations, or were considering moving to level 4.

It was resolved:

- a) To note the progress being made to implement the recommendations of the Joint Review.
- b) To note that £13m would be required from the County Council and key partners to fully implement the recommendations of the Joint Review which was not affordable at the present time and would require assessment against other priorities in the next budget round.

- c) Not to support the reduction in the eligibility criteria for adults and older people services at the current time.

501. CABINET OUTLINE AGENDA

It was resolved

To note the agenda for the 15th June meeting and the following changes to the to the list published on the agenda:

The Minerals Local Development Plan had been withdrawn.

The following additional reports :

- 1) Premature Retirement in the Interests of the efficient exercise of the Authority's Functions Policy.
- 2) Trading Standards Advice and Enquiries Policy.
- 3) Arbury Camp School – Issue of Public Notice.

Chairman
15.06.04